



Case Report

Camphor ingestion- an unusual cause of seizure

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Abstract

Accidental ingestion of commonly available household toxic substances is a leading cause of emergency room visits in pediatric patients because small children have a tendency to put everything in their mouths. Camphor is one such item that is readily available in many Indian homes and is a potentially toxic compound that is not very well-recognized but can cause severe poisoning even consumed in a small amount. We report a case of one and half-year-old male child who presented with seizure after accidental ingestion of camphor.

Keywords: Status epilepticus, Neurotoxicity

Introduction

Accidental ingestion of commonly available household toxic substances is a leading cause of emergency room visits in pediatric patients because small children have a tendency to put everything in their mouths. A wide variety of medications and substances can cause serious illness or sometimes fatal to a child who ingests just a single dose in a small quantity. Camphor is one such item that is readily available in many Indian homes and can cause severe poisoning even if consumed in a small amount.

Case report

A one and half-year-old male child presented to the emergency room in PBM hospital, Bikaner, Rajasthan with a history of camphor ingestion followed by 3-4 episodes of vomiting & one episode of abnormal body movements of all four limbs with up-rolling of the eyeballs. One episode of generalized tonic seizure occurred in the hospital soon after admission. A strong odour of camphor was present in the mouth. His systemic examination was normal & had no focal neurological signs. On questioning, the mother of the child said they had a pooja at home and the child was playing with camphor cubes. She told that child ingested 1-2 camphor cubes and she gave tea to the child after ingestion of camphor. The child vomited 3-4 times and had abnormal body movements after 1 hour of ingestion of camphor. The child was afebrile and his routine haematological & biochemical investigations were within normal limits. He had no family history of seizures. He was previously normal with no history of perinatal asphyxia. His developmental milestones were normal and immunised as per schedule. He was managed in emergency conservatively. Seizure controlled by intravenous midazolam injection followed by i.v. sodium valproate. After stabilisation, he was shifted to the pediatric intensive care unit and discharged successfully on day 3rd.

Discussion

Camphor is a very toxic compound which can prove fatal for infants and children on ingestion even in very small doses.[1] The strong aroma associated with camphor has attracted its use in many oils, inhalants, and ointments, especially as a remedy for the common cold. It is a component of many preparations available over the counter and has a potential for accidental ingestion by infants and small children. Camphor is also an ingredient for many oils and in its solidified form is commonly used in religious events and prayers.[2]

Within 5-15 minutes patients commonly complain of mucous membrane irritation, nausea,

vomiting and abdominal pain. Generalized convulsions are often the first sign of significant toxicity and can occur soon after ingestion.[3] Camphor-induced seizures can occur after gastrointestinal, dermal or inhalation exposures.[4] One case of status epilepticus is reported following abdominal massage with a camphor-containing product.[5] Other CNS symptoms include headache, dizziness, confusion, agitation, anxiety, hallucinations, myoclonus, hyperreflexia and ataxia. CNS stimulation is followed by depression. Camphor can also cause hepatic and renal damage. Death is usually the result of respiratory failure or convulsions. Neurotoxicity is seen if ingestion of camphor is more than 50 mg/kg.[6]

The mainstay of treatment consists of supportive and symptomatic measures with a focus on airway management and seizure control. Owing to its rapid absorption, the benefit of gastric lavage is uncertain. Consider activated charcoal (50 g for adults; 1 g/kg for children) within 1 hour of ingestion in an adult who has ingested 30 mg/kg camphor or more, or in a child who has ingested any amount.[7]

Conclusion

Camphor poisoning should be considered as a possible cause of seizure in otherwise healthy children, and parents should be questioned about possible camphor ingestion. Camphor is a common ingredient in many cold medications and rubefacients,

so parents' education regarding the dangers of using camphor products is required and it should not be kept on the floor or in low cupboards because a child can easily reach these places.

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