

Malnutrition : Introduction

For its sustenance on the earth, every living organism requires food, which is quite essential for carrying out its physical and mental activities, growth and development. For normal growth and development, man requires some specific nutrients like carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins, minerals, roughage and water in right proportion and sufficient quantity, which he gets through the food he eats. The food, which provides all these essential nutrients in proper amounts, is called balanced diet. The deficiency or even excess of any of these in a person's diet results into disorders regarding nutrition, which may be collectively, called malnutritional disorders.

The condition in which the people become weak and sick because of insufficient and unbalanced food is called malnutrition. A large no of people in our country and other developing countries suffer from malnutrition because of poverty, lack of education, wrong notions and frequent pregnancies. The main cause of malnutrition is poverty. The deficiency diseases are of three types:

1. Protein energy malnutrition (PEM)-the condition of being nourished on low protein and low energy diet is called Protein Energy Malnutrition or PEM. So, deficiency of carbohydrates, fats and proteins in PEM. It is the most important nutritional disorder affecting Indian children, in the age of period 1-3 years. The symptoms of PEM are:

- (A) Loss in weight and height
- (B) Poor muscular development

(C) Susceptible to many diseases of respiratory and gastro intestinal systems.

2. Mineral deficiency disease (Anemia, Goiter and Rickets): these are caused due to the deficiency of either iron or iodine. The symptoms are: either he will feel tiredness easily or there will be swelling in his throat region of neck. Goiter is an endemic disease (the diseases, restricted to a given region and arising from its specific environmental condition are called endemic diseases) which is more common in hilly areas because soil of hilly areas is poor in iodine. Due to this the drinking water as well as food grown in this area is deficient in iodine. So, it leads goiter among them.

3. Vitamin deficiency disease: the diseases which are caused due to the deficiency of Vitamins in diet are called Vitamin Deficiency diseases. Some of the diseases that are caused due to the deficiency of Vitamins are Night blindness, Exophthalmia, Beri-Beri.

(A) Night Blindness and Xerophthalmia: these are caused due to the deficiency of Vitamin A (retinol).

(B) Beri-Beri: the deficiency of vitamin B1 causes beri-beri. Vitamin B1 is also called anti beri-beri or antineuretic factor

Types of Malnutrition

In human beings, these disorders may be classified into three categories-UNDER NUTRITION, which means the malnutrition, caused due to the availability of less

food for a long period. For example slow starvation, which is found most in extremely poor or low income group people.

Excessive nutrition that means disorders developed due to overfeeding or over-eating for a long time. For example obesity (or motapa). Such disorders are more evident in the families belonging to the middle class families or rich category.

Deficiency disease which are caused due to the lack of a specific nutrient in our diet. For example protein energy malnutrition, mineral deficiency diseases like anemia etc. such diseases may be found in nearly every family-rich, middle class or poor. It is thus evident that the problem of malnutrition is not confined to poor families alone but is spreading fast even in the middle and rich class families. If the increasing level of diseases in children due to the malnutrition is not taken care off than this may result into excessive weakness or obesity after a few years. We must not forget that malnutrition affects the immune system of a child which may cause frequent sickness, increase the possibility of infections from communicable diseases like cold and cough etc. So, malnutrition must be checked in the childhood itself.



Importance of studying malnutrition

Today we are living in computer age. The work that required a long time to be completed can now be done with in a few seconds. In other words man is progressing in his mental abilities, but if we measure the physical standards, we will find he is becoming physically weak and now he is not so able as he used to be.

Now, the question arises what is the cause behind this physical disability, that even after attaining complete independence in the field of agriculture, children of our country are suffering from malnutrition. Malnutrition in children can prove as an obstruction in the progress of any country because today's children are tomorrow's future. Therefore for the progress of a country it is necessary that its children are healthy.

Malnutrition is found in rich and middle class families also. Although, the type and level is different from the one found in poor families still it is a serious problem.

Causes and solutions

There are two reasons for Malnutrition in middle and high class families –

1. Inbalanced diet
2. Ignorance of wrong food habits in children by parents.

It is also found that some parents are totally unaware of what a balanced diet should consist of. They don't know the importance of balanced diet. They only care that their children eat adequate diet.

If child wants to eat chips, samosas, maggi, chowmin, pastries, their parents do not resist. parents themselves also eat junk food and allow their children also.

Children don't want to eat green vegetables. They only prefer food items made of potatoes which increases their weight. Cold drinks, chocolates, coffee etc. that give sufficient calories but don't give nutrition.

Therefore, parents need to improve food habits of their children. They should take balanced diet.

Earlier boys and girls were treated differently. So, girls were found to suffer from malnutrition. But, today that is not the case.

Suggestions for preventions

Malnutrition in children is a major obstruction in progress of a nation. In our country about 60% children are suffering from malnutrition. Therefore, it is very important to eradicate this problem completely. After working on this project we suggest the following ways to prevent malnutrition:

1. Guardians, themselves must change their food style, as children learn their food habits from their home.
2. Mothers should breast feed their children for adequate period.
3. Children should be provided medical check up from time to time.
4. Teachers must give information to students on how to prevent disease from malnutrition.
5. All the people should eat the food which is sufficiently boiled.



What we came to know after preparing this project

All the data collected for the project revealed that most of the children suffer from malnutrition due to their wrong food habits and eating imbalanced diet. If the parents show a little concern towards their children, this problem can also be eradicated. Meetings between parents, teachers and child specialist doctors would be of much help in solving this problem. All these steps should be taken in a hurry because today's children are tomorrow's future.

Collected data

In a survey which was held in our own school last year, it came to light that :

1. only 5% students in the age group of 3-7 years like green vegetables.
2. 3% students like pulses.
3. only 2% students like milk.
4. 5% students like fruits.
5. 40% students like maggi /chowmin.
6. 40% students like cold drink.
7. 5% students like juice.

In this survey study of malnutrition in students was done according to the weight of the children. It was found that 15% children are weighing above the normal weight,

70% children are weighing below the normal weight and only 15% children are found with the normal weight.

Also in this survey it was found that 20% students have low frequency of infection while 80% students have high frequency of infection.

Also the activities of the children were examined and were observed which revealed that 35% children were lazy while 65% were found active.

Bibliography

- Internet Source : www.google.com www.yahoo.com