General Circular No. 02-161/2013

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Office of the Director General of Health Services,
Ministry of Health,
Suwasiripaya,
Rev. Baddegama Wimalawansa Thero Mawatha,
Colombo 10.
18th October 2013

All Provincial Directors of Health Services
All Regional Directors of Health Services
All Directors of Teaching Hospitals & Provincial General Hospitals
Director NIHS
All Medical Superintendents of District General Hospitals and Base Hospitals
All Heads of Institutions
All Medical Officers of Health

Zn Supplementation in Managing Diarrhoea among Children Under Five Years of Age

Zn supplementation for diarrhoea management has been identified as an evidence based intervention to reduce the severity of the episode, thus reducing morbidity and mortality due to diarrhoea, reduce the duration of illness and lower the incidence of diarrhoea in the following 2–3 months by improving immune response. This recommendation was discussed at the Maternal and Child Nutrition Subcommittee chaired by the DDG PHS II and the subcommittee recommended the adoption of this evidence based intervention in Sri Lanka which was endorsed by the Nutrition Steering Committee chaired by the Secretary, Ministry of Health.

Hence the following Zn supplementation regime to be started from the onset of diarrhea is recommended in the management of diarrhea among children under five years of age. Zn supplements for this purpose are made available by the Medical Supplies Division of the Ministry of Health for the government sector health institutions. These Zn supplements should not contain other minerals (especially iron and calcium) that may compete for absorption.

Age group	Dose	Frequency	Duration
Infants less than 6 months of age with diarrhoea	**Elemental Zinc – 10mg/day**	**Daily 1 hour before or 2 hours after a meal**	**10-14 days**
Children 6-60 months of age with diarrhoea	**Elemental Zinc – 20mg/day**	**Daily 1 hour before or 2 hours after a meal**	**10-14 days**

Zn preparations and mode of administration:

Zn supplements are available as either syrup or water dispersible tablets. Strength of tablet should be elemental Zn 10mg or 20mg and syrup - elemental iron 10mg/5ml or 20mg/5ml.

Water dispersible tablets should be dissolved in 5 ml (one tea spoonful) of expressed breast milk, ORS or clean water when given to infants. For older children, tablets can be chewed or dissolved in a small amount of clean water. If vomiting is associated with diarrhoea, and the child vomits the Zinc tablet waiting till vomiting subsides before giving another tablet is recommended.

Side effects:
Very rarely nausea and vomiting can occur. If vomiting occurs as a side effect of Zinc supplementation, it should be reported to a medical officer or the area Medical Officer of Health (MOH).

Please ensure that the children who present with diarrhea at Out Patients' Department (OPD), clinics or wards are treated for a total of 10-14 days with zinc and the required supply is issued to the child.

Please bring the contents of this circular to the notice of all relevant health staff.

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