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Stomach ailments affect cognitive growth of children, say 90% doctors

If you consider your child's poor hygiene habits and recurrent stomach ailments a minor health concern, think again. A survey conducted among over 500 paediatricians across India has found that simple unhygienic habits such as eating without washing hands regularly could potentially affect cognitive development of a child under five years of age. This is because frequent stomach infections lead to less absorption of nutrients, which has a direct impact on a child's brain development.

The survey was conducted by Doctors Republic, an association of doctors with more than 25,000 members across India.

"We found that over 90% doctors believe that recurrent waterborne and food infections such as diarrhoea, typhoid could affect cognitive development in children," said Delhi-based Dr Sanjeev Bagai, senior paediatrician and lead investigator of the study. The findings correspond to observations of the World Health Organisation, which says that waterborne diseases are the biggest reason for morbidity and mortality among children under age of five years in south Asia.

"These infections result in depletion of vital nutrients and also affects absorption of micro nutrients which have direct impact on cognitive development of a child," said Dr Rajiv Redkar consultant pediatric surgeon at Wadia Children's Hospital and Lilavati Hospital.

Doctors point out that 80% of a child cognitive development occurs till the age of two and the remaining 20% till the age of five.

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