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ALLAMA IQBAL OPEN UNIVERSITY, ISLAMABAD

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Assignment No. 2 (Units 5–9)

SOLVED ASSIGNMENT GUIDE

(For Study & Reference)

Note: This guide is prepared for study and reference purposes. Students are advised to read the relevant units of the course book and write the assignment in their own words.

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Question 1: Causes and Prevention of Foodborne Diseases — Role of Hygiene and Sanitation (20 Marks)

Explain the causes and prevention of foodborne diseases. Highlight the role of hygiene and sanitation.

Introduction

Food is essential for life, but the same food that nourishes us can also make us ill if it carries harmful germs or poisonous substances. Diseases caused by eating contaminated food are called foodborne diseases, and they are among the commonest illnesses in the world: diarrhoea alone causes enormous suffering and kills large numbers of young children, especially in developing countries like Pakistan, where hot climate, unsafe water, flies and poor sanitation make food contamination easy. Foodborne diseases are, however, largely preventable, because contamination usually happens through identifiable failures — dirty hands, unsafe water,

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undercooked food, or food kept too long at warm temperatures. This answer explains the biological, chemical and physical causes of foodborne diseases, describes the routes by which food becomes contaminated, and then sets out the methods of prevention, with special emphasis on personal hygiene and environmental sanitation, which together form the foundation of food safety.

What Are Foodborne Diseases?

A foodborne disease is any illness resulting from the consumption of food or water contaminated with infectious agents (bacteria, viruses, parasites or fungi), their toxins, or harmful chemical or physical substances. Two main patterns are recognised. In food infection, living germs are swallowed with food and then multiply inside the body, causing illness after an incubation period — examples are typhoid, cholera, salmonellosis and hepatitis A and E. In food poisoning (intoxication), the germ grows in the food before it is eaten and produces a toxin (poison); swallowing the toxin causes illness quickly, even if the germ itself is later killed — staphylococcal food poisoning and botulism are examples. Common symptoms of foodborne disease are diarrhoea, vomiting, abdominal pain, fever and dehydration; most cases recover, but in infants, the elderly, pregnant women and people with weak immunity these diseases can be fatal.

Biological Causes

Biological agents are by far the most important causes of foodborne disease. Bacteria such as Salmonella, Shigella, pathogenic Escherichia coli, Vibrio cholerae, Staphylococcus aureus, Clostridium species, Bacillus cereus and Campylobacter contaminate food through faeces, dirty

water, raw meat and milk, or the hands and nose of food handlers. Under warm, moist, protein-rich conditions bacteria multiply with astonishing speed — one bacterium can become millions within a few hours — which is why cooked food left at room temperature in a hot climate becomes dangerous so quickly. Viruses do not multiply in food but are carried by it: hepatitis A and E viruses and norovirus reach food through contaminated water and the unwashed hands of infected handlers, and cause jaundice and vomiting outbreaks. Parasites such as Entamoeba histolytica, Giardia lamblia, tapeworms and roundworms contaminate food and water through faecal pollution and undercooked meat. Certain fungi (moulds) growing on stored grains and groundnuts produce mycotoxins such as aflatoxin, which damages the liver and can cause cancer.

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Chemical and Physical Causes

Chemical contamination occurs when harmful substances enter food accidentally or deliberately: pesticide residues on unwashed fruits and vegetables, excess food additives and prohibited colours, heavy metals such as lead and mercury from polluted water and industrial waste, cleaning chemicals stored near food, and poisonous natural substances such as those in some mushrooms or improperly processed foods. Adulteration of milk, spices and oils — a common problem in our markets — also belongs to this group. Physical contamination means foreign objects in food, such as glass pieces, stones, metal fragments, hair or insect parts, which may injure the mouth or digestive tract and indicate unhygienic handling. Although less common than biological hazards, chemical and physical causes are controlled by the same basic approach: clean sources, careful handling and proper storage.

How Food Becomes Contaminated

Contamination can occur at every step of the food chain — 'from farm to fork'. At production, crops may be irrigated with sewage water, animals may carry Salmonella in their intestines, and milk may be drawn from diseased udders into dirty vessels. During transport and sale, food is exposed to dust, flies, rodents and unclean hands. In the kitchen, the great danger is cross-contamination: germs from raw meat, poultry and unwashed vegetables are transferred to cooked or ready-to-eat food through shared knives, chopping boards and hands. Food handlers who are ill, or who carry germs in the nose, throat, skin boils or faeces, can seed food directly — a single handler with diarrhoea or a septic cut can cause an entire outbreak at a wedding or in a restaurant. Finally, incorrect storage — cooked food kept warm for hours, leftovers not refrigerated, reheating inadequate to kill germs — allows surviving bacteria to multiply to dangerous numbers.

Prevention of Foodborne Diseases

Prevention rests on a few well-tested rules, summarised in the WHO 'Five Keys to Safer Food': keep clean; separate raw and cooked food; cook thoroughly; keep food at safe temperatures; and use safe water and raw materials. Cooking food thoroughly — so that all parts reach at least 70°C — kills most germs, and reheating leftovers until steaming hot throughout makes them safer. Cooked food should be eaten promptly, refrigerated below 5°C if it must be kept, and not left at room temperature for more than two hours. Raw and cooked foods must be kept separate, with different utensils for each. Fruits and vegetables eaten raw should be washed in safe water, and where water quality is doubtful, peeled or cooked. Milk should be boiled or pasteurised, meat bought from clean, inspected sources, and food protected from

flies, rodents and dust by covers and screens. At community level, food laws, inspection of restaurants and slaughterhouses, licensing of food handlers and their medical examination, and health education all support prevention.

The Role of Personal Hygiene

Personal hygiene of the food handler is the single most important line of defence, because hands are the main vehicle carrying germs from faeces, nose, soil and raw food to cooked food. Hands must be washed with soap and clean water at every critical moment: after using the toilet, after changing a baby, after touching raw meat, garbage or animals, and always before preparing, serving or eating food. Handwashing with soap alone can reduce diarrhoeal disease by roughly a third to nearly a half, making it one of the cheapest health interventions known. Beyond hands, hygienic practice includes keeping nails short and clean, covering cuts and boils with a waterproof dressing, wearing clean clothes and an apron, keeping hair tied or covered, not coughing, sneezing or spitting over food, not handling food while suffering from diarrhoea, vomiting, jaundice or skin infection, and using clean utensils rather than hands to serve food. In the home, the mother or cook who follows these habits protects the whole family, and teaching children to wash hands before eating and after the toilet builds protection for life.

The Role of Sanitation

Sanitation means the safe management of the environment — water, excreta, refuse and waste water — so that germs cannot reach food and drink. Safe drinking water is the basis of all food hygiene: water used for drinking, cooking and washing utensils must come from a protected source or be made safe by boiling, chlorination or filtration. Proper disposal of human excreta

through latrines and sewerage breaks the faecal–oral chain by which cholera, typhoid, hepatitis and worm eggs travel from one person's faeces to another person's food, usually through water, fingers, flies and fields (the well-known 'five Fs'). Kitchens and food shops must have washable surfaces, drainage that does not allow waste water to pool, covered dustbins that are emptied regularly, and protection against flies, cockroaches, rats and stray animals. Markets and eating places need regular cleaning and inspection. Good sanitation also includes drainage of stagnant water, safe disposal of slaughterhouse and market waste, and fly control, because flies feed on faeces and then walk on food, mechanically carrying millions of germs.

Conclusion

In conclusion, foodborne diseases are caused mainly by bacteria, viruses, parasites and their toxins, and secondarily by chemical and physical contaminants, which reach food through unsafe water, dirty hands, cross-contamination, sick food handlers and poor storage at any point from farm to fork. They are prevented by a chain of simple measures: thorough cooking, separation of raw and cooked food, prompt consumption or proper refrigeration, and the use of safe water and sound raw materials. Above all, personal hygiene — especially handwashing with soap — and environmental sanitation — safe water, latrines, refuse disposal and fly control — attack the roots of contamination. Where hygiene and sanitation improve, foodborne disease falls dramatically, which is why these two measures remain the most powerful and economical tools of food safety in the home and in the community.

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Question 2: Bacterial Foodborne Diseases — Bacillus cereus and Enterobacteriaceae (20 Marks)

Discuss bacterial foodborne diseases with special reference to Bacillus cereus and Enterobacteriaceae.

Introduction

Bacteria are the most important single group of agents causing foodborne disease. They are microscopic, single-celled organisms present everywhere — in soil, water, air, the intestines of animals and man, and on skin and raw foods. Most bacteria are harmless or even useful, but a minority are pathogens that cause illness either by multiplying in the intestine after being eaten (food infection) or by producing toxins in food before it is eaten (food intoxication). Bacterial foodborne diseases are especially common in warm countries because heat speeds bacterial multiplication, and they typically cause outbreaks in which many people who shared the same dish fall ill together. In this answer, the general features and classification of bacterial foodborne diseases are first described, and then two topics are discussed in special detail, as required: Bacillus cereus, a spore-forming bacillus associated with rice and starchy foods, and the Enterobacteriaceae, the large family of intestinal bacteria that includes Salmonella, Shigella and pathogenic E. coli.

General Features and Classification

Bacterial foodborne diseases can be classified into three groups according to mechanism. (1) Intoxications, in which a preformed toxin in the food causes illness: examples are Staphylococcus aureus enterotoxin in cream, milk and cooked meats; Clostridium botulinum

toxin in improperly canned foods, causing the paralytic and often fatal disease botulism; and the emetic toxin of Bacillus cereus in reheated rice. (2) Infections, in which living bacteria colonise the intestine: Salmonella, Campylobacter, Shigella, Vibrio cholerae and pathogenic E. coli belong here; they usually cause fever as well as diarrhoea because the body reacts to invading organisms. (3) Toxin-mediated infections, in which bacteria eaten with food produce toxin inside the intestine — for example enterotoxigenic E. coli, Vibrio cholerae (cholera toxin), and the diarrhoeal type of Bacillus cereus illness.

The speed of onset gives a useful clue to the cause: intoxications strike within a few hours (often 1–6 hours) with vomiting prominent, whereas infections usually begin after 12–72 hours with fever and diarrhoea. Whether illness occurs depends on the dose of organisms, their virulence, and the resistance of the person; the very young, the elderly and the immunocompromised become ill most easily and suffer most severely. The conditions bacteria need to multiply in food are conveniently remembered as warmth, moisture, food (especially protein), time, and a suitable acidity — most food-poisoning bacteria thrive between about 5°C and 60°C, the 'danger zone', which is why controlling time and temperature is central to prevention.

Bacillus cereus: The Organism

Bacillus cereus is a Gram-positive, rod-shaped bacterium that forms spores. This spore-forming ability is the key to its behaviour in food: spores are extremely resistant to heat, drying and disinfectants, and they are widespread in soil and dust, so they commonly contaminate raw cereals (especially rice), pulses, vegetables, spices, milk and dried foods. Ordinary cooking kills

the vegetative cells but may not destroy the spores; indeed, the heat of cooking can activate ('heat-shock') spores so that they germinate afterwards. If the cooked food is then kept warm or at room temperature for several hours — the classic situation being boiled rice left standing in a kitchen or restaurant — the bacteria multiply rapidly and produce toxins. Reheating the rice may kill the bacteria but, in the case of the emetic toxin, does not make the food safe, because that toxin is highly heat-stable.

Bacillus cereus: The Two Syndromes

Bacillus cereus causes two distinct types of food poisoning. The emetic (vomiting) syndrome is an intoxication caused by cereulide, a toxin produced in the food before eating. It begins quickly, within about half an hour to six hours of the meal, and consists of nausea and vomiting, sometimes with abdominal cramps; it resembles staphylococcal food poisoning and usually settles within a day. It is classically associated with cooked rice — particularly fried rice in restaurants, giving it the nickname 'fried rice syndrome' — and also with pasta and other starchy foods kept too long after cooking. The diarrhoeal syndrome is a toxin-mediated infection: spores or cells swallowed with food produce enterotoxins in the small intestine. It begins later, about 8–16 hours after eating, with watery diarrhoea and abdominal cramps, little or no vomiting and usually no fever, resembling Clostridium perfringens food poisoning; it is associated with a wider range of foods including meats, soups, sauces, vegetables and milk products, and also resolves within about 24 hours. Both syndromes are usually mild and self-limiting, so treatment is mainly fluid replacement; but their frequency makes B. cereus one of the commonest causes of food poisoning outbreaks linked to canteens, weddings and restaurants. Prevention is simple and entirely based on time and temperature: cook rice and

other starchy foods in small quantities, serve them promptly, refrigerate leftovers quickly at below 5°C, never keep cooked rice standing warm for hours, and reheat thoroughly and only once.

Enterobacteriaceae: The Family

Enterobacteriaceae is a large family of Gram-negative, rod-shaped bacteria that live mainly in the intestines of humans and animals (the name comes from the Greek enteron, intestine). Members of the family are facultative anaerobes that ferment sugars, and many are normal inhabitants of the healthy gut. However, the family also includes some of the most important foodborne and waterborne pathogens of mankind. Because these organisms are shed in faeces, their presence in food or water is a marker of faecal contamination; indeed, ordinary E. coli is used worldwide as the standard 'indicator organism' — if it is found in drinking water, that water is considered faecally polluted and unsafe, even before any specific pathogen is identified.

Important Pathogenic Members

Salmonella is the best-known member. Non-typhoidal Salmonella species, spread mainly through poultry, eggs, meat and milk, cause salmonellosis: fever, diarrhoea, abdominal pain and vomiting beginning 12–36 hours after eating, usually lasting a few days but dangerous in infants and the elderly. Salmonella Typhi and Paratyphi, spread only from human cases and carriers through food and water, cause typhoid (enteric) fever — a prolonged, serious fever with the risk of intestinal perforation — which remains a major problem in Pakistan. Shigella species cause bacillary dysentery, with bloody, mucoid stools, fever and painful straining;

Shigella needs only a very small dose to infect, so it spreads easily person-to-person and through food handled by carriers. Pathogenic E. coli strains cause several illnesses: enterotoxigenic E. coli is the chief cause of travellers' diarrhoea and much infant diarrhoea; enterohaemorrhagic E. coli (such as O157:H7), spread through undercooked beef and contaminated vegetables, causes bloody diarrhoea and can destroy the kidneys (haemolytic uraemic syndrome), especially in children. Other members of the family encountered in food and water include Yersinia enterocolitica (from pork and milk), Klebsiella, Proteus and Enterobacter, which are more often opportunists and spoilage organisms but also signal poor hygiene.

Comparison of Bacillus cereus and the Main Enterobacteriaceae Pathogens

Organism	Type of illness	Typical Foods / Source	Main Features
Bacillus cereus (emetic type)	Intoxication (heat-stable toxin in food)	Cooked and reheated rice, pasta, starchy foods	Onset 0.5–6 hours; vomiting prominent; brief illness
Bacillus cereus (diarrhoeal type)	Toxin produced in intestine	Meats, soups, sauces, vegetables, milk products	Onset 8–16 hours; watery diarrhoea and cramps
Salmonella (non-typhoidal)	Food infection	Poultry, eggs, meat, raw milk	Onset 12–36 hours; fever, diarrhoea, vomiting
Salmonella Typhi	Food/water infection (human source)	Food and water contaminated by cases/carriers	Typhoid fever: prolonged fever, serious complications
Shigella	Food infection	Food handled by carriers; contaminated water	Bloody dysentery; very low infective dose
Pathogenic E. coli	Infection / toxin-mediated	Undercooked beef, raw milk, contaminated vegetables and water	Watery or bloody diarrhoea; kidney failure in severe EHEC cases

Diagnosis, Treatment and Prevention

Diagnosis of bacterial foodborne disease is usually clinical — a history of shared food, the incubation period and the dominant symptoms point to the agent — supported in outbreaks by laboratory culture of the suspected food, stools and vomit, which guides public health action. Treatment for most cases is supportive: replacement of fluid and salts with oral rehydration solution (ORS) is life-saving in diarrhoeal illness, and antibiotics are reserved for specific infections such as typhoid, dysentery and severe salmonellosis, since they are useless in intoxications and unnecessary in mild cases. Prevention unites all the organisms discussed: cook food thoroughly, avoid cross-contamination between raw and cooked foods, refrigerate promptly, keep cooked food out of the danger zone, wash hands, use safe water, exclude ill food handlers, and control flies and rodents. For Enterobacteriaceae, safe disposal of faeces and protection of water supplies are fundamental, since the whole family travels by the faecal–oral route; for Bacillus cereus, the emphasis falls on not holding cooked cereals warm and on rapid cooling and refrigeration of leftovers.

Conclusion

To conclude, bacterial foodborne diseases arise either from toxins formed in food or from living bacteria that infect the intestine, and they flourish wherever food is kept warm, handled with dirty hands or contaminated with faecal material. Bacillus cereus illustrates the spore-former that survives cooking and poisons starchy foods — especially rice — held too long after cooking, causing a rapid vomiting illness or a later diarrhoeal one. The Enterobacteriaceae illustrate the great faecal–oral family: Salmonella and typhoid, Shigella dysentery and pathogenic E. coli all spread from intestines to food and water and back to new victims. Both are controlled by the

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same chain of hygiene, sanitation, thorough cooking and correct time–temperature control, which is why bacterial food poisoning, though common, is among the most preventable of all diseases.

Question 3: Detailed Notes on Hookworm and Roundworm Infections (20 Marks)

Write detailed notes on hookworm and roundworm infections.

Introduction

Worms that live inside the human body — the helminths — are among the most widespread parasites of mankind. The soil-transmitted helminths infect hundreds of millions of people, mainly in warm, poor regions where sanitation is inadequate and human faeces contaminate the soil. Two of the most important are the common roundworm, Ascaris lumbricoides, and the hookworms, Ancylostoma duodenale and Necator americanus. Although both are intestinal nematodes spread through contaminated soil, they enter the body by quite different routes and harm their host in different ways: the roundworm is swallowed and chiefly damages by its bulk, migration and competition for food, while the hookworm actively penetrates the skin and damages mainly by sucking blood, causing anaemia. This answer gives detailed notes on each infection — the parasite, its life cycle, how it spreads, its symptoms and effects, diagnosis, treatment and prevention — and ends with a brief comparison.

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Roundworm (Ascaris lumbricoides): The Parasite and Its Life Cycle

The common roundworm is the largest intestinal nematode of man: the female measures about 20–35 cm and the male 15–30 cm, round, smooth and pinkish-white, resembling an earthworm. Adult worms live free in the lumen of the small intestine, where a single female lays an enormous number of eggs — around 200,000 per day — which pass out with the faeces. In warm, moist, shaded soil the eggs develop over two to three weeks into the infective stage containing a larva; in this stage they can survive in soil for many months. Infection occurs when these mature eggs are swallowed — on raw vegetables and salads fertilised or contaminated with faeces, on dirty hands, in contaminated water, or by children playing in and eating soil.

The life cycle inside the body involves a remarkable migration. The swallowed eggs hatch in the small intestine; the larvae penetrate the intestinal wall, enter the blood and are carried through the liver to the heart and lungs. In the lungs they break into the air spaces, climb up the windpipe, are swallowed again, and reach the small intestine a second time, where they mature into adults within about two to three months of the original infection. Adult worms live for about one to two years.

Roundworm Infection: Symptoms and Effects

Light infections often cause no symptoms at all and are discovered only when a worm is passed in the stool or vomited. During the lung migration phase, a heavy infection may cause a transient pneumonia-like illness (Löffler's syndrome) with cough, wheezing, fever and breathlessness as larvae pass through the lungs. In the intestine, a moderate to heavy burden — common in children — causes vague abdominal pain and distension, loss of appetite, nausea

and disturbed sleep. Because the worms consume the host's food and interfere with absorption, heavy ascariasis contributes significantly to protein-energy malnutrition, vitamin A deficiency and growth failure in children.

The most dangerous effects of roundworm are mechanical complications. A tangled mass of many worms can block the intestine, causing intestinal obstruction — a surgical emergency seen mostly in children — and individual worms may wander into wrong passages: into the bile duct or pancreatic duct (causing jaundice, cholangitis or pancreatitis), into the appendix, or up into the stomach and out through the mouth or nose. Migration is often provoked by fever, anaesthesia or unsuitable medicines.

Roundworm: Diagnosis, Treatment and Prevention

Diagnosis is usually made by finding the characteristic eggs in a stool sample under the microscope; sometimes an adult worm passed by the patient is itself the diagnosis, and blood tests may show raised eosinophils during the migration phase. Treatment is simple and effective with modern anthelmintic drugs: albendazole (a single 400 mg dose) or mebendazole are the usual choices, and they are also used in mass deworming programmes for schoolchildren. Intestinal obstruction may require hospital treatment and, occasionally, surgery. Prevention depends on breaking the faecal–oral cycle: using latrines and never defecating in fields or near homes, safe disposal of children's faeces, washing hands with soap after defecation and before eating, washing raw vegetables and fruits thoroughly or cooking them, protecting food from flies and dust, and health education — particularly teaching children not to put dirty fingers and soil into the mouth.

Hookworm: The Parasite and Its Life Cycle

The hookworms that infect man are Ancylostoma duodenale (the Old World hookworm, common in Pakistan and the Middle East) and Necator americanus (the New World hookworm). They are much smaller than roundworms — about 1 cm long — and live attached to the wall of the small intestine by their mouthparts, which in Ancylostoma are equipped with teeth and in Necator with cutting plates; hence the name 'hookworm'. The female lays thousands of eggs daily (about 10,000–30,000 depending on species), which pass out in the faeces. In warm, moist, loose soil the eggs hatch within a day or two into larvae, which feed and moult, and after about a week become infective, non-feeding, thread-like (filariform) larvae that can survive in soil for several weeks.

Infection occurs not by swallowing but by active skin penetration: when a person walks barefoot, sits or works with hands in contaminated soil — in fields, gardens, mines or latrine surroundings — the larvae pierce the skin, enter the blood vessels, and are carried to the heart and lungs. Like Ascaris, they break into the air sacs, climb the windpipe, are swallowed, and reach the small intestine, where they attach to the wall, mature, mate and begin laying eggs about five to seven weeks after infection. (Ancylostoma larvae can also infect through the mouth, and can remain dormant in tissues.)

Hookworm Infection: Symptoms and Effects

At the site of skin entry, larvae may cause an itchy, red, blistering rash known as 'ground itch', most often between the toes or on the hands. During lung passage there may be cough and mild pneumonia-like symptoms. The principal damage, however, occurs in the intestine and is

caused by blood loss. Each attached worm sucks blood — roughly 0.15–0.25 ml per day for Ancylostoma — and also leaves bleeding points when it moves to a new site, aided by an anticoagulant substance it secretes. With hundreds of worms, daily blood loss becomes serious, and because blood contains iron and protein, the results are iron-deficiency anaemia and low blood protein (hypoproteinaemia).

The patient with significant hookworm disease therefore looks pale, tires easily, becomes breathless on exertion, and may develop palpitations, swelling of the face and feet, and in severe cases heart failure. Children suffer impaired growth, poor school performance and reduced learning; pregnant women become dangerously anaemic, endangering both mother and baby; and labourers lose working capacity — hookworm has rightly been called a disease of great economic importance because it silently drains the strength of agricultural communities. Some patients develop pica (craving to eat earth), and the skin may take on a sallow, earthy tint.

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Hookworm: Diagnosis, Treatment and Prevention

Diagnosis rests on finding hookworm eggs in the stool; the degree of anaemia is assessed by haemoglobin estimation, and blood films show the typical picture of iron deficiency. (The eggs of the two species look identical, so the species is usually not identified in routine work.) Treatment has two parts: an anthelmintic — albendazole or mebendazole — to expel the worms, and iron (with folate and a protein-rich diet) to rebuild the blood, because killing the worms alone does not correct established anaemia. Severe anaemia may need hospital care. Prevention is directed at the skin–soil contact and at soil contamination: wearing shoes or

sandals and gloves for farm work, using sanitary latrines so that faeces never reach the soil around homes and fields, safe disposal of faeces, and health education. Mass deworming of schoolchildren and treatment of heavily infected occupational groups are effective community measures, but without sanitation the worms return, because reinfection from contaminated soil is rapid.

Comparison of Roundworm and Hookworm Infections

Feature	Roundworm (Ascaris lumbricoides)	Hookworm (Ancylostoma / Necator)
Size of adult	Large: 15–35 cm	Small: about 1 cm
Route of infection	Swallowing mature eggs (food, water, hands)	Larvae actively penetrate skin (bare feet, hands)
Main damage	Malnutrition, lung migration illness, intestinal obstruction, wandering into bile duct	Blood sucking → iron-deficiency anaemia and low blood protein
Key symptoms	Abdominal pain, distension; often none in light infection	Ground itch, pallor, weakness, breathlessness, oedema
Treatment	Albendazole / mebendazole	Albendazole / mebendazole plus iron therapy
Prevention	Latrines, handwashing, washing raw vegetables	Latrines, wearing shoes, avoiding skin contact with contaminated soil

Conclusion

In conclusion, roundworm and hookworm are both soil-transmitted nematodes rooted in poor sanitation, but they differ in almost every other respect. The roundworm is large, is swallowed as eggs on contaminated food and hands, migrates through the lungs, and harms mainly by competing for food, provoking allergic lung symptoms and mechanically blocking or wandering from the intestine. The hookworm is small, enters actively through the skin of bare feet, and harms mainly by chronic blood loss, producing iron-deficiency anaemia, weakness and lost

productivity. Both are easily treated with albendazole or mebendazole — hookworm patients needing iron as well — and both are prevented by the same foundation of sanitary latrines and safe faeces disposal, supported by handwashing, washing of raw foods, and wearing shoes. Deworming without sanitation gives only temporary relief; sanitation makes the cure permanent.

Question 4: Role of Diet in the Prevention and Treatment of Goitre (20 Marks)

Explain the role of diet in the prevention and treatment of goiter.

Introduction

Goitre is the visible swelling of the thyroid gland in the front of the neck, and in most parts of the world — including the mountainous northern areas of Pakistan — its commonest cause is a simple dietary deficiency: too little iodine in the food and water. Few diseases illustrate the power of diet so clearly, because goitre can be prevented by a nutrient needed only in microgram quantities, and its early stages can be reversed by restoring that nutrient. At the same time, certain foods contain substances that interfere with iodine use, so diet also plays a part in causing the condition. This answer explains the relationship between iodine, the thyroid gland and goitre; describes iodine requirements and dietary sources; discusses the role of iodised salt and other dietary measures in prevention; explains dietary management in treatment; and notes the goitrogenic foods that must be handled with care.

The Thyroid Gland, Iodine and the Cause of Goitre

The thyroid gland, situated in the front of the neck below the Adam's apple, produces two hormones — thyroxine (T4) and tri-iodothyronine (T3) — that control the body's metabolic rate, growth and brain development. Iodine is an essential raw material of these hormones; indeed, most of the iodine in the body is concentrated in the thyroid. When the diet supplies too little iodine, the gland cannot make enough hormone. The pituitary gland senses the low hormone level and releases more thyroid-stimulating hormone (TSH), which orders the thyroid to work harder and grow more cells to trap more iodine. The gland therefore enlarges — this enlargement is the goitre. In its early stage the enlargement is diffuse and soft; if deficiency continues for years it becomes nodular and permanent, and the gland may eventually fail, causing hypothyroidism.

The consequences of iodine deficiency extend far beyond the neck swelling, and are collectively called iodine deficiency disorders (IDD). In pregnancy, severe deficiency damages the developing brain of the baby, causing cretinism — irreversible mental retardation, deaf-mutism and stunted growth — and milder deficiency lowers children's intelligence by measurable amounts; iodine deficiency is the leading preventable cause of intellectual disability in the world. Deficiency also increases miscarriages and stillbirths. Iodine deficiency is worst in mountainous and flood-prone regions, where iodine has been leached from the soil over centuries, so that local crops and water are poor in iodine — this is why goitre was historically common in Pakistan's northern areas and other mountain regions of the world.

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Iodine Requirements and Dietary Sources

The daily requirement of iodine is very small — measured in micrograms — but it must be met every day because the body stores only a limited amount. Recommended intakes are approximately 90 µg per day for young children, 120 µg for older children, 150 µg for adults, and higher amounts — about 220–250 µg in pregnancy and 250–290 µg during lactation — because of the needs of the baby's brain. The richest natural food source is the sea: sea fish, shellfish and seaweeds contain abundant iodine. In inland areas, milk, dairy products and eggs contain moderate and variable amounts (partly because animal feeds are supplemented), while cereals, pulses, vegetables and fruits grown in iodine-poor soil contain very little. Drinking water contributes according to the iodine content of local soil. Because inland populations cannot reliably obtain enough iodine from ordinary local foods, a fortified vehicle — iodised salt — becomes necessary, as described below.

Prevention of Goitre Through Diet: Iodised Salt

The cornerstone of prevention is universal salt iodisation: adding iodine (usually as potassium iodate, which is stable in hot climates) to all salt meant for human and animal consumption, at a level of roughly 15–40 parts per million at production. Salt is the ideal vehicle because everyone eats it daily in small, regular amounts, it is produced in a limited number of factories where quality can be controlled, and iodisation is extremely cheap and does not change the taste or appearance of salt. Pakistan, like most countries, has adopted salt iodisation as its main IDD-control strategy, and where coverage with adequately iodised salt is high, goitre rates in schoolchildren fall dramatically within a few years.

Households must handle iodised salt correctly to benefit from it: buy salt labelled as iodised, store it in a closed container away from heat and moisture, and add it towards the end of cooking or at the table, because iodine is gradually lost from salt stored in open, damp or hot conditions and to some extent during prolonged cooking. Alongside iodised salt, the diet should include, where available, milk and dairy products, eggs and (in coastal areas) sea fish, and pregnant women — whose need is greatest — may be given iodine supplements in severely deficient areas under medical advice. Public health measures supporting the dietary approach include legislation making iodisation compulsory, monitoring of iodine in salt at factory, market and household level, and urinary iodine surveys in schoolchildren to check that the programme is working.

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Dietary Management in the Treatment of Goitre

Diet is also part of treatment, although its power depends on the stage of the disease. A simple diffuse goitre in a child or young person, caused by recent iodine deficiency, will usually shrink gradually once iodine intake is restored to normal through iodised salt and an iodine-containing diet; this is why early detection in school health surveys matters. The diet during treatment should be a normal, balanced diet with adequate energy and protein — because general malnutrition aggravates thyroid dysfunction — using iodised salt for all cooking, and including milk, eggs and other available iodine sources. Iodine supplements or iodised oil may be prescribed by a doctor in specific situations, but self-medication with large doses of iodine is unsafe: excess iodine can itself disturb the thyroid, provoking thyrotoxicosis or hypothyroidism in susceptible people, so supplements must be taken only on medical advice.

Long-standing nodular goitres, very large goitres pressing on the windpipe or gullet, and any goitre with suspicion of cancer do not respond to diet and need medical or surgical management: thyroid hormone tablets (levothyroxine) may be used to suppress TSH and shrink the gland or to replace hormone after surgery, and surgery is required for pressure symptoms or cosmetic and diagnostic reasons. Diet continues to support these treatments by maintaining iodine sufficiency so that the remaining gland is not driven to enlarge again. In hypothyroidism resulting from iodine deficiency, the dietary principles are the same — adequate iodine, balanced nutrition — combined with regular hormone replacement and follow-up.

Goitrogens: Foods That Interfere with Iodine

Certain foods contain natural substances called goitrogens that interfere with iodine uptake by the thyroid or with hormone formation. The best-known are the glucosinolates in cruciferous vegetables of the cabbage family — cabbage, cauliflower, mustard, radish, turnip and similar plants — and substances in cassava (which releases cyanide converted to thiocyanate), millet, soya and some other foods. In a diet that contains enough iodine, ordinary amounts of these vegetables are harmless and they remain valuable, nutritious foods. They become a problem only when iodine intake is already low and such foods dominate the diet. Practical advice is therefore not to ban them but to ensure iodine sufficiency through iodised salt, to eat a varied diet, and to remember that cooking reduces goitrogen activity considerably. This balanced view — sufficiency of iodine first, sensible handling of goitrogenic foods second — is the correct dietary approach.

Iodine in the Diet — Requirements, Sources and Practical Points

Item	Details
Daily requirement	Children 90–120 µg; adults 150 µg; pregnancy ~220–250 µg; lactation ~250–290 µg
Rich sources	Sea fish, shellfish, seaweed
Moderate sources	Milk, yogurt, cheese, eggs
Main preventive vehicle	Iodised salt (iodine added as potassium iodate), used by the whole population
Household practice	Buy iodised salt; store closed, cool and dry; add near end of cooking
Foods to use sensibly	Cabbage-family vegetables, cassava, millet — safe if iodine intake is adequate; cooking reduces goitrogens

Conclusion

To conclude, goitre is in most cases a dietary disease — the visible result of the thyroid gland's struggle to make hormone without enough iodine — and diet is therefore central to both its prevention and its treatment. Prevention rests on ensuring the tiny daily requirement of iodine for everyone, most reliably through universal salt iodisation, supported by iodine-containing foods such as milk, eggs and sea fish, by correct household storage and use of iodised salt, and by special attention to women before and during pregnancy, so that children's brains are protected. In treatment, restoring iodine sufficiency shrinks early diffuse goitres and supports medical management, while long-standing nodular goitres require hormone therapy or surgery; goitrogenic foods need not be banned but should be balanced by adequate iodine. The goitre story is one of nutrition's great lessons: a trace element costing almost nothing, delivered through the daily diet, can prevent a disfiguring disease and protect the intelligence of a generation.

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Question 5: Feeding Methods in Illness — Liquid, Soft and Normal Diets (20 Marks)

Describe different feeding methods in illness. Explain liquid, soft, and normal diets with examples.

Introduction

Illness changes both the body's nutritional needs and its ability to take and use food. A patient with fever burns more energy; a patient after surgery may be unable to chew or swallow; a patient with a diseased gut may be unable to absorb a normal meal. Feeding the sick is therefore a deliberate part of treatment, not merely a matter of hospitality: the right food, given by the right route, in the right form and amount, supports recovery, prevents malnutrition in hospital, maintains strength and immunity, and sometimes — as in diabetes or kidney disease — is itself the main treatment. Wherever possible the natural route, the mouth, is used; when the mouth or gut cannot be used, feeding is given through tubes or directly into the blood. This answer describes the main methods of feeding in illness — oral feeding, enteral (tube) feeding and parenteral (intravenous) nutrition — and then explains in detail the three basic consistencies of oral diet used in hospitals: the liquid diet, the soft diet and the normal (regular) diet, with examples of each.

Oral Feeding: The Preferred Route

Oral feeding means taking food and fluids by mouth in the normal way, and it is always preferred when the patient can swallow safely and the digestive tract is working, because it is natural, safe, cheap, keeps the gut functioning and gives the patient pleasure and a sense of

normality. In illness the ordinary diet is modified to suit the patient's condition: its consistency may be changed (liquid or soft instead of solid), its energy and protein content raised or lowered, particular nutrients such as salt, fat, sugar or fibre adjusted, and meals made smaller and more frequent for weak or nauseated patients. Patients confined to bed often need help with feeding, an upright sitting position to prevent food entering the airway, and attractive, well-timed meals to encourage appetite. Oral nutritional supplements — milk-based or commercial drinks rich in energy and protein — can be added between meals when ordinary food is not enough.

Enteral Feeding: Tube Feeding

Enteral nutrition means delivering liquid food directly into the stomach or small intestine through a tube, for patients who cannot eat enough by mouth but whose gut still works — for example, unconscious patients, patients with stroke or severe weakness who cannot swallow safely, patients with cancers of the mouth or throat, and some patients after surgery. The usual route is a nasogastric tube passed through the nose into the stomach; nasojejunal tubes end in the small intestine, and for long-term feeding a gastrostomy tube may be placed through the abdominal wall directly into the stomach (PEG feeding). Feeds may be home-prepared blends (milk, egg, cereal flour, oil and sugar liquefied) or commercial formulas of defined composition, given as intermittent boluses or by continuous slow infusion with a pump. Enteral feeding is far safer and cheaper than intravenous feeding and maintains the health of the gut lining, but it needs care: the tube position must be checked, the patient kept propped up to prevent reflux and aspiration into the lungs, and hygiene observed to avoid infection and diarrhoea.

Parenteral Nutrition: Feeding by Vein

Parenteral nutrition means supplying nutrients directly into the bloodstream through a vein, bypassing the digestive tract completely. It is used only when the gut cannot be used at all or cannot absorb enough — for example in severe intestinal failure, after removal of large parts of the bowel, in complete intestinal obstruction, severe pancreatitis, or certain fistulae. A concentrated solution containing glucose, amino acids, fats (as lipid emulsion), electrolytes, vitamins and trace elements is infused, usually through a large central vein near the heart because the solution is too strong for small veins; this is called total parenteral nutrition (TPN). Parenteral feeding is life-saving in the right patients, but it is expensive, technically demanding and carries risks of infection of the line, blood-sugar and electrolyte disturbances and liver problems, so it is reserved for clear indications and supervised by specialists. As soon as the gut recovers, feeding is shifted back step by step to the enteral or oral route.

Liquid Diets

A liquid diet consists of foods that are liquid or become liquid at room or body temperature, leaving very little residue in the intestine. It has two forms. The clear liquid diet includes only transparent fluids: water, strained fruit juice, clear soup and meat broth, weak tea, barley water, glucose water, whey and carbonated drinks. It supplies fluid, some salts and a little energy but almost no protein, fat or fibre, so it is used only for one or two days — after surgery, in acute vomiting and diarrhoea, before certain bowel examinations and operations, and as the very first step of feeding after a period of no oral intake. The full (or free) liquid diet includes everything liquid or liquefied: milk, custard, thin porridge, strained soups and dals, milkshakes, ice cream, yogurt drinks (lassi), egg nog and strained vegetable and fruit juices. With careful

planning and frequent servings it can supply considerably more energy and protein, and it is used for patients who cannot chew or swallow solids — for example with jaw injuries, mouth surgery, or severe throat inflammation — but it is still inadequate for prolonged use without supplements.

Soft Diet

The soft diet is the bridge between the liquid diet and the normal diet. It consists of foods that are soft in consistency, easy to chew, easy to digest, lightly seasoned and free from coarse fibre, tough skins, seeds and strong spices, while being nutritionally complete — with adequate energy, protein, vitamins and minerals — so that it can be used for long periods. It is prescribed for patients recovering from surgery or acute illness, patients with dental problems or weakness of chewing, and those with mild digestive upsets who are not yet ready for a full diet. Examples include soft khichri, dalia (porridge), boiled rice with well-cooked dal, mashed potatoes and vegetables, soft-cooked eggs, minced or ground meat, steamed fish, yogurt and curd, custard and kheer, ripe banana and stewed fruits, white bread without crust, and biscuits softened in milk or tea. Foods avoided are fried items, whole raw salads, whole spices and chillies, tough meat, nuts, and coarse whole-grain products with husk. As the patient improves, the texture is gradually normalised.

Normal (Regular) Diet and the Progression of Diets

The normal or regular diet — sometimes called the full or house diet — is an ordinary, balanced diet that meets the patient's nutritional requirements without restriction of consistency or content, though in hospital it is usually planned to be light, digestible and moderate in fat and

spice. It includes all food groups: cereals and roti, milk and dairy products, meat, egg or pulses, vegetables, fruits and moderate oil or ghee, served as regular meals, for example roti with salan and yogurt, rice with dal and vegetables, egg or paratha-type breakfasts in suitable patients, and fruit or milk between meals. It is given to patients whose illness does not require dietary modification, and it is the final goal of dietary progression for recovering patients.

The classic hospital sequence illustrates how these diets fit together: after an operation or acute illness the patient begins with clear liquids, advances to full liquids, then to a soft diet, and finally to the normal diet, moving to the next stage only when the previous one is tolerated without vomiting, pain or distension. This step-by-step progression protects the recovering gut from sudden overloading while restoring full nutrition as quickly as is safe. Alongside these standard consistencies, hospitals also use specially modified normal diets — high-protein, low-salt, diabetic, low-fat and similar therapeutic diets — but these too are usually built upon one of the three basic consistencies described here.

Liquid, Soft and Normal Diets Compared

Feature	Liquid Diet	Soft Diet	Normal (Regular) Diet
Consistency	Fluid only; clear liquids are transparent, full liquids include milk and custards	Soft, mashed, easy to chew; no coarse fibre or tough parts	Ordinary consistency; all textures allowed
Examples	Clear soup, strained juice, tea, barley water; milk, custard, thin porridge, lassi (full liquid)	Khichri, dalia, mashed potato, boiled egg, minced meat, yogurt, ripe banana, custard	Roti, rice, salan, dal, meat, vegetables, fruits, milk — a regular balanced diet
Nutritional adequacy	Clear liquid: inadequate, 1–2 days only. Full liquid: better but still limited	Adequate if well planned; can be used for long periods	Fully adequate; meets all requirements
Common uses	After surgery, acute	Recovery phase,	Patients needing no

	vomiting/diarrhoea, before bowel tests, first step of re-feeding	chewing problems, mild digestive disorders	dietary modification; final stage of diet progression

Conclusion

In conclusion, feeding in illness is planned according to what the patient can safely take and absorb. The oral route is preferred whenever the gut works; when swallowing or intake fails, enteral tube feeding delivers liquid food into the stomach or intestine; and when the gut itself cannot be used, parenteral nutrition supplies nutrients directly into a vein, at greater cost and risk. Within oral feeding, the three standard consistencies form a ladder: the liquid diet (clear, then full) for the acutely ill and immediate post-operative period; the soft diet — nutritionally complete but gentle and easy to chew — for recovery; and the normal, regular diet as the final goal. Moving the patient up this ladder as recovery permits, while keeping nutrition adequate at every stage, is a central skill in the dietary management of disease and a real contribution to healing.

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