

32-inch hairball removed from 10-yr-old's abdomen

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: Doctors at a Mira Road hospital removed a 32-inch long hairball from the abdomen of a 10-year-old girl, who is feared to have developed the disorder of eating her own hair around three years back. The child was admitted to BhaktiVedanta Hospital early this month after she could no longer eat or drink.

The girl started complaining of stomach ache and discomfort about a month back. Her father said she vomited at least once a day. The parents initially thought they were symptoms of exam fever till her condition started getting acute. Early this month, she completely stopped eating. "If we force-fed her, she would vomit soon after," the father said.

The family went to two paediatricians before the problem was diagnosed at the Mira Road hospital. An abdominal ultrasonography and an upper gastrointestinal endoscopy helped

IT CAN BE FATAL

▶ Trichophagia is the compulsive eating of hair associated with hair-pulling



▶ People also ingest the hair they pull; in extreme (and rare) cases it can lead to a hair ball

▶ Rapunzel syndrome, an extreme form, can be fatal

▶ The hair can collect in the gastrointestinal tract, causing indigestion and stomach pain

▶ In some cases, surgery may be required to remove it

doctors to confirm the uncommon medical condition, trichotillomania, also known as hair-pulling disorder.

"The girl was suffering from trichotillomania and trichophagia (Rapunzel's syndrome), an associated condition where the person pulls and consumes hair," said Dr B C Shah, who recommended immediate surge-

ry. "From the hairball's size, it seems she was eating hair since many years," he added.

Dr Shah said the 32-inch long hairball had formed a complete cast of nearly the entire stomach, duodenum and upper small intestine. A surgery was carried out on November 4 when the lump of hair was removed in one piece. The girl has recovered and gone home. "But we had sent her for counselling. Trichotillomania indicates that the child is under stress or anxiety and is pulling out her hair to relieve it. The root cause of stress or anxiety needs to be determined," said the doctor.

The parents, both teachers, said they never noticed their daughter eating hair. "We live in a joint family. Nobody has seen her doing that," the father said, adding that such a disorder was beyond their imagination.

Dr Shah said less than 120 such cases have been reported in medical literature from the world over.

Dr. (Prof.) B. C. Shah measuring the 32-inch long Trichobezoar



Rapunzel Syndrome - 32-inch long Trichobezoar forming a complete cast of nearly the entire stomach, duodenum and upper small intestine