

BfR Case report Breadseed Poppy

- Severe health impairment in the case of a 6-week-old infant temporally related to the ingestion of boiled breadseed poppy seeds (as suggested by a baking book recipe)

The Poison Control Centre Erfurt communicated to the BfR information followed by a medical report and the results of toxicological examination referring to a case of severe health impairment in a 6-week-old female infant who had suffered from respiratory depression, culminating in respiratory arrest. The infant had been fed the strained milk of breadseed poppy by her mother, who had intended to help her sleep through the night, following advice given in a baking book. In that baking book entitled 'Backen ohne Schnickschnack' (No-frills baking) by Günter Richter (Edition XXL), the following recommendation is given:

'Grandmother told us that in Silesia, people used to give their babies the strained milk from poppy seeds. This made them sleep through the night.'

The infant had been given 75 mL of strained milk from a mixture of 200 g poppy seeds boiled in 500 mL milk and with some honey added. According to the information given by the poison control centre, the mother had fortunately used only half the amount of poppy seeds recommended (amount stated in the recipe: 400 g poppy seeds).

The infant had to be respirated and administered an antidote. After 10 days, she could be discharged from hospital in a healthy condition.

Manifestations / course

After the mother had given her baby the infusion prepared from poppy seeds at about 23 h with the intention to have her sleep through the night, the little girl cried for a short period at about 2 h and subsequently fell asleep again. Shortly afterwards, her breath became irregular with a rasping sound. She was brought to hospital by an emergency ambulance.

On admission, the infant's general condition was critical. Her consciousness was clouded and she hardly responded to pain stimulus. Inspiratory stridor sound was heard, the contracted pupils did not react to light, and the skin was of a pale, grey, cyanotic, marbled appearance.

Increasing respiratory insufficiency was observed associated with a repeated dropping of oxygen saturation to a level of 67 % in the absence of oxygen supply. Due to imminent respiratory arrest, artificial respiration was performed using an oxygen mask. Any aspiration could be excluded. Since opiate poisoning was suspected, an i.v. antidote treatment with naloxone was performed by administration of a total of six single doses, which resulted in a persistent effect, i.e. sufficient spontaneous respiration.

The suspected poisoning was confirmed on the same day by urine analysis revealing a morphine level of 18200 µg/L and a codeine level of 317 µg/L. On the following day, the morphine level in the serum was 4.3 µg/L. The level of morphine in the urine had dropped to 627 µg/L and that of codeine, to < 5 µg/L.

In the further course, increased temperature and diarrhoea were observed. After 10 days, the child could be discharged in a good general condition and referred to outpatient care.

The poppy seeds used were also subjected to analysis. The level of morphine detected was 0.1 %, and that of codeine, 0.003 %.

Evaluation of the case described

In the case described above, a causal relationship between the ingestion and the manifestations observed has been rated as confirmed on the basis of the information given as to the temporal relationship and the absence of other causes for the manifestations.