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*Article*

# Knowledge and Practice of Mothers About Giving of Home Remedies for Her Children

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**Abstract:** Home remedies are commonly used to treat common childhood illness. There are a variety of treatments that are based on traditional knowledge and personal experience, but they may not be effective or safe. The knowledge and practices of mothers in the use of home remedies is therefore important since mothers are the ones who make the initial decision on health care for their child. The aim of the study: To evaluate mothers' knowledge and practices in home remedies for their children in Iraq. A cross sectional study was performed in Tikrit Teaching Hospital from December 2024 to December 2025. A convenience sample of 435 mothers participated in the study. A structured questionnaire was prepared in Arabic and fine-tuned after conducting a pilot assessment to make the questions clearer. The questionnaire had items related to demographic characteristics, home remedies, sources of information, perceived benefits, type of remedy, health condition treated, reasons for using home remedies, whether they were used in conjunction with medical management, adverse effects of home remedies and health seeking behavior. 345 (79.31%) mothers from the 435 who took part in the study indicated that they were using home remedies for their children. The main sources of information were, personal experience (59.71%) and the internet (37.68%). Cold compresses (47.71%) and herbs like anise, chamomile, and mint (18.89%) were the most commonly used home remedies. Fever (56.32%) was the most prevalent home treatable condition followed by diarrhea (23.07%) and respiratory tract infections (20.00%). The most commonly cited benefits of using home remedies were that they were thought to be less harmful than medical treatment (45.20%). No side effects occurred in the majority of users (91.30%), and most of them went to hospital when the child got worse (84.00%). Home remedies use was very high among mothers in Iraq. Knowledge of personal experiences and safety concerns seemed to be significant factors in their use of home remedies. The results indicate the necessity of child health education about appropriate and safe home remedies use and the importance of timely medical consultation in the developments of the child's illness.

**Keywords:** Home remedies; Mothers; Children; Traditional medicine; Maternal knowledge

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## 1. Introduction

Home remedies are preparations and practices that are easily available, but are not usually prescribed and not directly supervised. These are often prescribed to treat minor health conditions and can consist of foods, herbs, drinks, physical interventions, and other traditional treatments. The more that individuals perceive the therapeutic value of these remedies, the more they use them, and their use is also influenced by personal experiences, cultural beliefs, and information passed on through the generations [1].

Home remedies have a long history of use and continue to be practiced in many cultures. For generations there has been a long-standing tradition of treating fever,

digestive symptoms, respiratory complaints and any minor ailments with traditional remedies [1,2]. The persistent use of these remedies could be due to their availability, relative ease of cost, familiarity and the perceptions that natural products are less harmful than conventional products [3].

There are many different home remedies. She has been used as a herb or in food products like mint, honey, ginger, garlic, cinnamon for various symptoms and health conditions [4-13]. Besides, cold compresses and ice packs are widely used to alleviate pain, fever and swelling [14]. Some of the home remedies have also been used traditionally for respiratory and gastrointestinal symptoms. Herbal teas, natural products with honey content and other natural products could be used for cough and sore throat; ginger and food containing probiotics could be used for nausea, digestive discomfort and diarrhea [9,15,16].

Although home remedies are used a lot, they do not necessarily mean that they are free from risks. Specific treatments will be safe and effective if the child's medical condition, dosage, route of administration, and/or age is appropriate. Certain remedies may either delay the proper medical attention or may have side effects. Therefore, it is important to know how and why mothers use home remedies for their children to see potential gaps in the knowledge and to discuss safe practices in health care.

Home remedies and traditional medicine have been previously reported to be extensively used in various populations. The use and availability of remedies, as well as the socio-cultural factors that influence the choice of remedy, however, may differ across cultures and societies [17-20]. Since mothers often make the first decisions about how children's common ailments will be dealt with, their knowledge and practice can substantially impact how children seek care. Thus, the current study set to evaluate the level of mothers' knowledge and practice of home remedies on the children in Iraq.

## 2. Materials and Methods

### 2.1 Study Design and Period

This was a cross-sectional study which examined the knowledge and practices of mothers in the use of home remedies for their children. This study was carried out at Tikrit Teaching Hospital in the city of Tikrit in Iraq from December 2024 to December 2025.

### 2.2 Study Population and Sample Size

This study was conducted on 435 mothers living in Iraq. A convenience sampling technique was chosen to recruit the participants.

### 2.3 Data Collection Tool

A questionnaire was used in collecting data which was structured in Arabic language. There were two major parts to the questionnaire. The first part gathered information about demographics such as age, education level and living status. The second component measured variables associated with the use of home remedies, such as use, source of information, maternal beliefs about the benefits of home remedies, types of home remedies, health conditions treated, reasons for use, use of the home remedies concurrently with medical treatment, adverse effects, and admission to the hospital after use of home remedies.

### 2.4 Questionnaire Development and Pilot Assessment

The questionnaire was reviewed and pretested in the preliminary stage of the study. Changes were made to clarify and simplify questions that participants had difficulty answering or understanding.

### 2.5 Data Collection Procedure

The researcher team was briefed on the data collection procedure, to ensure questionnaires were filled with care and consistency and to minimize possible bias in the data collection process.

2.6 Statistical Analysis

The data collected were processed and analyzed with the help of appropriate statistical tools SPSS. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the characteristics of the study participants and their responses, using frequencies and percentages. The results are tabulated and graphed.

## 3. Results

3.1 Demographic Characteristics of the Study Participants

In Table 1, the demographic data of the mothers involved in the study is presented. The age group 18-27 years old was the largest group accounting for 38.62% of the participants followed by 28-37 years old accounting for 33.79% of the participants. The majority of the participants were educated at the institute level or above (68.96%) and only 3.21% of them could not read or write. As far as residence, the majority of mothers were residing in urban areas (72.87%).

**Table 1.** Demographic Characteristics of the Study Participants (N = 435)

| Characteristic | Category | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Age group (years)** | 18–27 | 168 | 38.62 |
| | 28–37 | 147 | 33.79 |
| | 38–47 | 68 | 15.63 |
| | 48–57 | 41 | 9.42 |
| | 58–67 | 8 | 1.83 |
| | ≥68 | 3 | 0.68 |
| **Educational level** | Unable to read and write | 14 | 3.21 |
| | Primary school | 23 | 5.28 |
| | Intermediate school | 31 | 7.12 |
| | Secondary school | 67 | 15.45 |
| | Institute or above | 300 | 68.96 |
| **Residency** | Urban | 317 | 72.87 |
| | Rural | 118 | 27.12 |

Table 1 shows that the study population was mostly younger mothers and the participants had relatively high educational attainment. Almost three-fourths of the study sample was urban residents.

3.2 Knowledge and Practices Regarding Home Remedies

The distribution of participants based on their knowledge and practices about home remedies is summarized in Table 2. In total 345 mothers reported using home remedies for their children (79.31%) while 90 mothers reported that they did not use home remedies (20.68%) (Fig.1). For mothers who used home remedies, the most common source of information was personal experience (59.71%) followed by the Internet (37.68%) and television (2.60%). The participants thought that home remedies were useful (71.00%) (Fig. 2).

**Table 2.** Knowledge and Practices of Mothers Regarding Home Remedies

| Questionnaire Item | Response | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Use of home remedies** | Yes | 345 | 79.31 |
| | No | 90 | 20.68 |
| **Source of information** | Internet | 130 | 37.68 |
| | Television | 9 | 2.60 |
| | Personal experience | 206 | 59.71 |
| **Belief in the benefits of home remedies** | Yes | 309 | 71.00 |

| Questionnaire Item | Response | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Type of home remedy used** | No | 126 | 28.96 |
| | Cold compress | 293 | 47.71 |
| | Steam inhalation | 79 | 12.86 |
| | Lemon and honey | 85 | 13.84 |
| | Garlic | 39 | 6.35 |
| | Herbs (anise, chamomile, and mint) | 116 | 18.89 |
| | Other remedies (olive oil) | 2 | 0.32 |

Table 2 indicates that the home remedies used was fairly common among the mothers who participated in the study. The top remedy given was cold compress, followed by herbal preparations and lemon with honey.

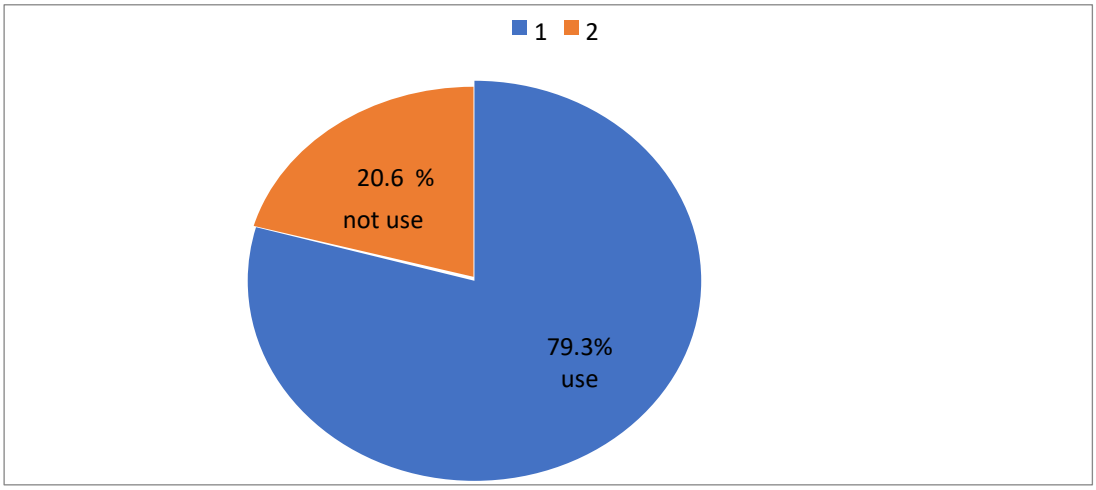



**Figure 1.** Using of the Home Remedies

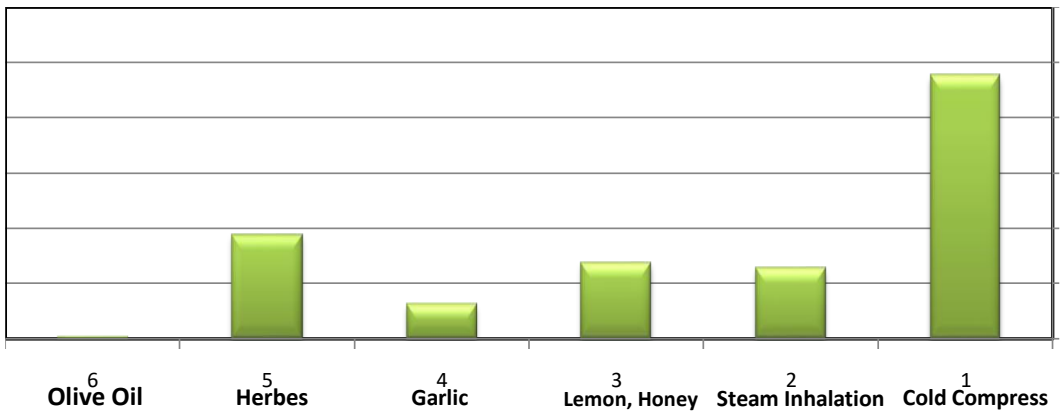



**Figure 2.** Types of home remedies

3.3 Health Conditions Treated and Reasons for Using Home Remedies

Table 3 indicates the health conditions in which mothers used home remedies and the reasons why they were choosing to use these remedies. The home remedies most commonly used were for fever (56.32%), diarrhea (23.07%) and respiratory tract infections

(20.00%). Few people reported treating ear pain at home with remedies (Fig. 3). As far as the reasons for use of home remedies, safety, as in not using medication, (45.20%) was the most common reason followed by availability (44.00%).

**Table 3.** Health Conditions Treated and Reasons for Using Home Remedies

| Variable | Response | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Health condition treated** | Fever | 227 | 56.32 |
| | Respiratory tract infection | 81 | 20.00 |
| | Diarrhea | 93 | 23.07 |
| | Ear pain | 2 | 0.49 |
| **Reason for using home remedies** | Considered safer than medical treatment | 156 | 45.20 |
| | Available | 152 | 44.00 |
| | Less expensive | 21 | 6.08 |
| | Faster effect and less harmful | 16 | 4.63 |

Table 3 demonstrates that mothers most commonly relied on home remedies for fever and that perceptions of safety and availability were the principal reasons for their use.

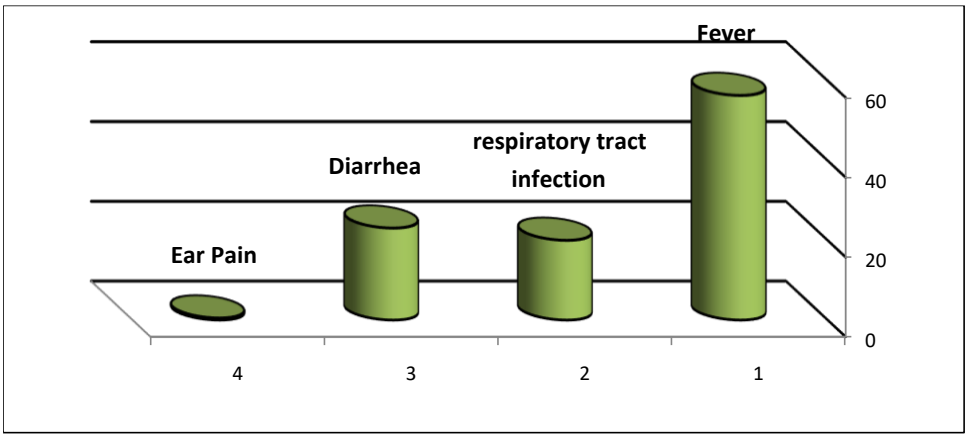



**Figure 3.** Health Issues Treated with Home Remedies.

3.4 Concurrent Use with Medical Treatment and Reported Adverse Effects

Concurrent use of home remedies with medical treatment and reported undesirable effects are shown in Table 4. In the mothers who used home remedies, 68.10% said that they used them in addition to medical treatment. The majority of the participants (91.30%) mentioned that they didn't experience any negative side effects after using home remedies. Adverse effects were reported by some of those saying there were problems, with allergy being the most commonly reported effect.

**Table 4.** Concurrent Use of Home Remedies with Medical Treatment and Reported Adverse Effects

| Variable | Response | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Use of home remedies with medical treatment** | Yes | 235 | 68.10 |
| | No | 110 | 31.88 |
| **Occurrence of adverse effects** | Yes | 30 | 8.69 |

| Variable | Response | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Type of adverse effect** | No | 315 | 91.30 |
| | Allergy | 23 | 6.66 |
| | Inactivity | 7 | 2.02 |

As indicated in Table 4, concurrent use of home remedies and medical treatment was common. Although adverse effects were infrequently reported, allergic reactions constituted the most frequently reported adverse event.

3.5 Healthcare-Seeking Behavior Following the Use of Home Remedies

The healthcare-seeking behavior of mothers after using home remedies is presented in **Table 5**. Most mothers (84.00%) reported taking their child to the hospital when the child's health condition worsened, whereas 15.94% sought medical care because of adverse effects following the use of a home remedy.

**Table 5.** Hospital Visits Following the Use of Home Remedies

| Reason for Hospital Visit | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Worsening of the child's health condition | 290 | 84.00 |
| Occurrence of side effects | 55 | 15.94 |

As shown in **Table 5**, worsening of the child's health condition was the main reason for seeking hospital care after the use of home remedies.

## 4. Discussion

The present study aimed to evaluate the knowledge and practices of the mothers related to the use of home remedies for their children in Iraq. The present study was designed to estimate the knowledge and practices of mothers in relation to the use of home remedies for their children in Iraq. The results showed that the use of home remedies was very common with about 80% of the mothers in the study using them. This discovery suggests that the practice of home healthcare continues to be a relevant aspect in the decision-making process of mothers when their children have frequent health issues.

In the present study, 79.31% of the mothers used home remedies. This ratio is higher than the one reported from a German cross-sectional study, where around 66% of participants reported using home remedies [17]. Variations in the use of home remedies could be due to cultural variations in practice, access to health care services, beliefs, and attitudes.

Participants in the present study were mostly adults aged between 18-27 years, while those aged between 28-37 followed. Most mothers also received an institute or higher level of education and the majority were urban residents. These are significant as education, age and where people live can impact their access to health information and choices about how to manage childhood illnesses. Similar demographic differences and educational levels of users of traditional remedies were also observed in Ethiopia in previous studies [18].

The most frequent sources of information about home remedies in the present study was from personal experience and the internet. This discovery indicates that mothers' choices are often driven by past experiences, rather than medical or health care recommendations. However, research in Geneva found family members as an important source of information about the use of non-pharmacological home remedies [19]. Increased use of the internet as a source of health information could also help spread both helpful and misleading information regarding home treatments.

In the present study, most of the mothers felt that home remedies were helpful. These beliefs can lead to their continued use and may help to explain why mothers use these remedies before or in addition to formal medical treatment. A similar variation in

attitudes towards traditional and herbal medicine has been found in earlier research [18,20].

In the present study, cold compresses were the most common home remedy followed by herbal preparation. Fever was the most common health problem for which home remedies were used. This is not surprising as fever is a common child symptom, and may be treated at home in the initial stages. But home remedies must be accompanied by the necessary knowledge about the signs of which they should warn and when they should be evaluated by a medical professional.

The most frequently cited benefit of the home remedy was that they were believed to be less harmful than a doctor's treatment, and this was closely followed by the fact that they were available. While some home treatments might be suitable for minor ailments, it's not always safe to assume that every home remedy or traditional treatment is safe. Safety depends upon the kind of remedy, the way that it's prepared, and the child's age and health.

Over two-thirds of mothers were using home remedies in combination with medical treatment. This discovery implies that complementary health care is viewed as a complementary health care rather than an alternative, or full replacement for, conventional health care. However, home remedies should be explored by a healthcare professional as they could affect adherence to medication or lead to increased side effects if used in conjunction with other medical conditions.

The majority of mothers indicated that there were no negative effects after using home remedies. But allergic reactions were reported by some participants. Negative results do not necessarily mean that there are no adverse effects, especially when the adverse effects are mild or delayed and thus not recognized or blamed on the remedy applied.

Lastly, when the child's health deteriorated most mothers indicated that they brought the child to the hospital. This behavior is a sign of understanding that professional medical care is important if they do not. However, it is important to increase the awareness of mothers about the early signs and situations where immediate medical help should be sought.

## 5. Conclusion

This study showed that the use of home remedies among mothers in the treatment of common childhood health problems is high in Iraq. More than half of the mothers reported that "firsthand experience" was the most important source of information and the majority had a positive opinion on the benefits of home remedies. Home remedies included cold compresses and herbal remedies, and the most common health condition treated at home was fever.

One of the reasons for their use was the belief that they were safer and more readily available than pharmaceuticals. Although most mothers reported no adverse effects, some allergic reactions and other effects were observed. In addition, the majority of mothers went to the hospital when the child's condition worsened. The results of these findings are significant and underscore the need to educate the mothers with accurate, evidence-based information about the proper use and potential hazards of home remedies and the necessity of obtaining prompt medical attention if needed.

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