

Picture Story

A case of *Jatropha multifida* poisoning

K Guruge¹, A M R D Seneviratne², C Badureliya³

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On 16/07/2007 at 8.30 a.m. a 3 ½ year old girl from Kaduwela was found by her mother to be ingesting the seed of the Kapum Kiriya (*Jatropha multifida*) plant which was growing near the fence. The mother immediately removed the remaining particles of the seed from the child's mouth. The child spontaneously vomited several times and became drowsy. The parents brought the child to the Lady Ridgeway hospital by about 11.00 a.m. On admission, the child was drowsy and dehydrated. Gastric lavage was given, activated charcoal administered and intravenous fluid therapy started. The child recovered uneventfully and was discharged from the ward after 24 hours. Management was facilitated as the mother brought the flower with a part of the plant.

Jatropha multifida is a large shrub with distinctive large dark green leaves cut deeply into 7-11 narrow lobes, margins of each lobe being dissected into narrow pointed segments¹. Flowers are bright coral red, borne in flat-topped clusters on long stalks held high above the foliage¹ (Figure 1). Fruits 3 lobed, 2.5 cm long, smooth and yellowish (Figure 2). The toxic element is a toxalbumin named jatrophin which causes agglutination and haemolysis of red cells and is also injurious to other cells¹.

¹Consultant Paediatrician, ²Paediatric Registrar, ³House Officer, Lady Ridgeway Hospital, Colombo.

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Figure 1 Leaves, flowers and fruits



Figure 2 Fruit

Reference

1. Lucas G N, De Silva T U N. Poisonous Plants of Sri Lanka. 1st ed. Colombo. Sri Lanka College of Paediatricians 2006. p25