

# Eating plenty, missing essentials: A case report of modern-day scurvy in an obese child

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## ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** Scurvy, although reported uncommon in the modern world, still remains relevant in present-day clinical practice. Children with restrictive eating behaviours and autism spectrum disorder (ASD), are at risk of micronutrient deficiencies. The recent SEANUTS II survey highlighted “triple burden of malnutrition”, where micronutrient deficiencies coexist with undernutrition and overnutrition, while vitamin C deficiency remains under-recognised in children, particularly in Southeast Asian population. **Case Presentation:** We report a 7-year-old obese boy with ASD and intellectual disability who presented with one-week history of progressive lower limb weakness, deteriorating from walking with support to complete inability to ambulate. The upper limbs were unaffected. His parents also noted a loose tooth. Dietary history revealed restrictive eating behaviour of high-carbohydrate food with minimal fruits and vegetables intake. There was no history of trauma, infection, neurological symptoms and family history of neuromuscular disorders. Examination showed perifollicular petechiae, follicular hyperkeratosis, gingival bleeding, and gum hypertrophy. Neurological assessment revealed preserved tone, reflexes, and sensation. Investigations showed hypochromic microcytic anaemia, normal creatine kinase levels, normal hip and knee radiographs. Clinical diagnosis of scurvy was made, with subsequent improvement following vitamin C supplementation. **Conclusion:** This case illustrates the coexistence of obesity and micronutrient deficiency due to poor diet. Scurvy may mimic neuromuscular conditions. Careful clinical assessment, accurate diagnosis, and prompt vitamin C supplementation, leads to full recovery and prevents complications. Scurvy remains an important differential diagnosis for lower limb weakness. Although often considered a disease of the past, clinician awareness is important for timely recognition and effective treatment.