Chapter- 12

Suspensions-I

Ms. Neha Goel
Associate Professor,
Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Pharmacy,
Faculty of Pharmaceutical Science & Technology,
AKS University Satna, (M.P.)

ABSTRACT

Suspensions are heterogeneous mixtures in which fine solid particles are dispersed in a liquid medium. Unlike solutions, the solid particles in suspensions are not dissolved but are suspended throughout the liquid, requiring occasional shaking to maintain homogeneity. These formulations are used when the drug is insoluble or poorly soluble in the chosen solvent. The advantages of suspensions include the ability to administer insoluble drugs in a palatable liquid form, improved stability of drugs that may degrade in solution, and the ability to mask unpleasant tastes. They also allow for flexibility in dosing and can be used for both oral and topical applications. However, suspensions have several disadvantages. They can be less stable than solutions, with a tendency for particles to settle over time, leading to dosage inconsistencies. Proper formulation and frequent shaking are required to maintain uniformity. They can also be bulkier and more difficult to transport and store compared to solid forms. Suspensions can be classified based on the particle size of the dispersed phase, the nature of the dispersed phase and the dispersion medium, and the application method. Common classifications include coarse suspensions (particle size >1 micron), fine suspensions (particle size <1 micron), oral suspensions, topical suspensions, and parenteral suspensions. The preparation of suspensions involves several key steps. First, the solid drug is finely powdered to ensure uniform dispersion. Wetting agents may be used to improve the wettability of the particles. The powdered drug is then mixed with a portion of the liquid vehicle to form a paste, which is gradually diluted with the remaining vehicle under constant stirring. Stabilizers, preservatives, and suspending agents may be added to enhance stability and prevent microbial growth. The final product is homogenized to ensure uniform particle distribution and then filled into appropriate containers for dispensing.

12.1 Introduction

Suspensions are a type of heterogeneous mixture where solid particles are dispersed in a liquid medium. They are a common form of pharmaceutical preparation used to administer medications that are insoluble or poorly soluble in water. Here's a detailed introduction to suspensions:

1. **Definition:** A suspension is a liquid dosage form that contains solid particles dispersed throughout a liquid. The solid particles are usually larger than 1 micron and can settle over time.

2. Characteristics:

a. **Particle Size:** The solid particles in suspensions are typically larger than 1 micron. This size is crucial for the stability and effectiveness of the suspension.
b. **Settling:** The particles in a suspension tend to settle over time due to gravity, making shaking or stirring necessary before use.
c. **Appearance:** Suspensions can be opaque or cloudy, depending on the particle size and concentration.

3. Types of Suspensions:

a. **Pharmaceutical Suspensions:** Used to administer drugs that are not soluble in their intended liquid form. These can be oral, topical, or injectable.
b. **Topical Suspensions:** Applied to the skin or mucous membranes, often used for localized treatment.
c. **Injectable Suspensions:** Designed for intramuscular or subcutaneous injection, requiring careful preparation and administration.

4. Components:

a. **Active Ingredient:** The drug or therapeutic agent in the solid form.
b. **Suspending Agent:** A substance that increases the viscosity of the liquid to help keep the solid particles evenly dispersed. Examples include cellulose derivatives, xanthan gum, or alginates.
c. **Vehicle:** The liquid medium in which the solid particles are dispersed, often water or a suitable oil.
d. **Stabilizers:** Additives that prevent the particles from clumping together or settling too quickly. They can include surfactants or emulsifiers.
e. **Preservatives:** Agents added to prevent microbial growth and extend the shelf life of the suspension.

5. Preparation:

a. **Dispersion Method:** The solid particles are dispersed into the liquid vehicle, often using mechanical agitation.
b. **Wet Granulation:** The solid particles are granulated with a small amount of liquid to improve dispersion.
c. **Milling:** The particles may be milled to achieve a finer size and better uniformity.

6. Stability:

a. **Sedimentation:** Over time, particles can settle out of the liquid. Proper formulation and storage conditions can minimize this issue.
b. **Aggregation:** Particles may clump together, leading to a non-uniform suspension. Stabilizers are used to prevent this.
c. **Viscosity:** The viscosity of the suspension affects its ease of use and stability. It should be high enough to keep particles suspended but low enough to allow for easy pouring or administration.

7. Advantages:

a. **Controlled Release:** Suspensions can offer controlled release of the drug.
b. **Improved Taste:** For oral suspensions, the solid particles can help mask unpleasant tastes.

c. **Versatility:** Suitable for administering drugs that are insoluble or unstable in solution.

8. Disadvantages:

a. **Inconvenience:** Requires shaking before use to ensure proper distribution of the active ingredient.
b. **Stability Issues:** Suspending agents and stabilizers must be carefully selected to ensure stability over time.
c. **Accuracy:** Dosage can be less accurate compared to solid dosage forms or solutions, especially if not shaken properly.

9. Applications:

a. **Oral Suspensions:** Commonly used for pediatric or geriatric patients who have difficulty swallowing tablets or capsules.
b. **Topical Suspensions:** Used for dermatological conditions or localized treatments.
c. **Injectable Suspensions:** Used when a slow release or extended duration of action is desired.

10. Examples:

a. **Oral Antacids:** Such as magnesium hydroxide suspension.
b. **Antibiotic Suspensions:** Like amoxicillin suspension for children.
c. **Topical Corticosteroids:** For treating skin conditions.

12.2 Definition of Suspensions

A **suspension** is a type of heterogeneous mixture in which solid particles are dispersed throughout a liquid medium. These particles are generally larger than 1 micron in diameter and do not dissolve in the liquid, leading to a system where the solid particles are suspended within the liquid rather than being dissolved.

Key Aspects of Suspensions

1. **Heterogeneous Mixture:**
   a. Suspensions are not uniform throughout; the solid particles and liquid phase are distinctly separate. This heterogeneity means that the mixture appears cloudy or opaque.
2. **Particle Size:**
   a. The solid particles in a suspension are larger than those found in solutions or colloids. They typically range from 1 micron to several millimeters in diameter. Because of their size, these particles will eventually settle out of the liquid if the suspension is left undisturbed.
3. **Settling and Sedimentation:**
   a. Over time, the solid particles in a suspension will settle to the bottom of the container due to gravity. This sedimentation occurs because the particles are denser than the liquid. The suspension needs to be shaken or stirred before use to redistribute the particles evenly.
4. **Dispersion Medium:**
   a. The liquid in which the solid particles are dispersed is called the dispersion medium or vehicle. Common dispersion media include water, oils, or other solvents, depending on the intended use and the properties of the active ingredient.

5. **Stability:**
   a. Stability is a critical aspect of suspensions. Formulating a stable suspension involves preventing the particles from clumping together (aggregation) or settling too quickly. This is often achieved using suspending agents or stabilizers that increase the viscosity of the liquid and keep the particles evenly dispersed.
6. **Examples:**
   a. **Pharmaceutical Suspensions:** Medicines like antibiotic suspensions (e.g., amoxicillin) are commonly formulated as suspensions for easier administration, especially in children or patients who cannot swallow tablets.
   b. **Topical Suspensions:** Used for skin treatments, such as anti-inflammatory creams or lotions.
   c. **Injectable Suspensions:** Medications for injection that require a slow-release formulation, such as some vaccines or depot hormone treatments.

12.3 Advantages of Suspensions

1. **Controlled Release:**
   a. **Extended Duration:** Suspensions can provide a controlled or sustained release of the active ingredient. This is useful for drugs that need to act over an extended period.
   b. **Adjustable Release Profiles:** The release rate can be adjusted by modifying the formulation, such as changing the viscosity of the medium or using specific excipients.
2. **Improved Solubility:**
   a. **Insoluble Drugs:** Suspensions are ideal for drugs that are poorly soluble or insoluble in water. By suspending these drugs in a liquid, they can still be administered effectively.
   b. **Enhanced Bioavailability:** For some drugs, suspending them in a liquid can improve their bioavailability compared to other forms, such as tablets or capsules, due to better dissolution rates.
3. **Taste Masking:**
   a. **Palatability:** Suspensions can mask the unpleasant taste of certain drugs, which is particularly beneficial for oral medications, especially for pediatric or geriatric patients who may have sensitivity to taste.
4. **Ease of Administration:**
   a. **Suitable for Difficult Swallowers:** Suspensions are easier to swallow than tablets or capsules, making them suitable for children, elderly patients, or those with swallowing difficulties.
   b. **Flexible Dosing:** Dosages can be adjusted more easily compared to tablets or capsules. This allows for precise dosing based on patient needs or conditions.
5. **Versatility:**
   a. **Various Applications:** Suspensions can be formulated for different routes of administration, including oral, topical, and injectable forms. This versatility makes them useful for a wide range of therapeutic areas.
   b. **Adaptability:** They can be adjusted for various therapeutic needs by changing the concentration of the active ingredient or the formulation components.

6. **Reduced Irritation:**
    a. **Local Effect:** For certain drugs, suspensions can provide a localized effect with reduced systemic absorption, minimizing side effects and targeting treatment to a specific area.
7. **Stability of Active Ingredient:**
    a. **Protection from Degradation:** Some active ingredients are more stable in a suspension than in solution. This can help preserve the efficacy of the drug and extend its shelf life.
8. **Customizable Formulation:**
    a. **Additives and Excipients:** The formulation can include various additives such as sweeteners, flavorings, and preservatives to enhance the stability, taste, and shelf life of the suspension.
9. **Non-Aqueous Suspensions:**
    a. **Special Requirements:** In cases where water is unsuitable, non-aqueous suspensions (using oils or other solvents) can be used to accommodate specific drug properties or administration needs.

12.4 Disadvantages of Suspensions

1. **Sedimentation:**
    a. **Particle Settling:** Over time, the solid particles in a suspension tend to settle out of the liquid due to gravity. This settling requires the suspension to be shaken or stirred before use to ensure uniform distribution of the active ingredient.
    b. **Re-Suspension Challenges:** Proper re-suspension can be challenging, particularly if the particles have aggregated or formed a hard sediment layer.
2. **Aggregation:**
    a. **Clumping of Particles:** Particles in a suspension may clump together, forming larger aggregates that can affect the uniformity of the mixture. This can result in uneven dosing and reduced effectiveness.
    b. **Stability Issues:** Aggregation can also affect the overall stability of the suspension, leading to a decrease in the efficacy of the drug over time.
3. **Viscosity:**
    a. **Increased Viscosity:** To keep particles suspended, suspensions often require thickening agents or suspending agents, which can increase the viscosity of the liquid. High viscosity can make the suspension difficult to pour or administer.
    b. **Consistency Problems:** Changes in temperature or storage conditions can alter the viscosity, affecting the ease of use.
4. **Dosage Accuracy:**
    a. **Inconsistent Dosing:** If the suspension is not properly shaken before each use, the concentration of the active ingredient can vary, leading to inaccurate dosing. This can affect the therapeutic outcome and safety.
    b. **Measurement Challenges:** Accurate measurement of doses from a suspension can be more difficult compared to solid dosage forms or solutions.
5. **Storage and Stability:**
    a. **Shelf Life:** Suspensions generally have a shorter shelf life compared to tablets or capsules due to potential changes in particle size, sedimentation, or microbial contamination.

b. **Temperature Sensitivity:** Storage conditions such as temperature can impact the stability and consistency of the suspension, potentially leading to issues with effectiveness.

6. **Preparation Complexity:**
   a. **Formulation Challenges:** Creating a stable and effective suspension requires careful formulation of the suspending agents, stabilizers, and other excipients. This can increase the complexity and cost of production.
   b. **Manufacturing Issues:** Ensuring consistent quality and uniformity in large-scale production can be challenging.
7. **Appearance and Aesthetics:**
   a. **Visual Appeal:** Suspensions can appear cloudy or opaque, which might not be visually appealing to some patients. This can affect patient compliance, particularly in pediatric populations.
8. **Potential for Irritation:**
   a. **Local Irritation:** Certain suspensions, especially those with high concentrations or irritating agents, can cause local irritation at the site of application or injection.
   b. **Systemic Effects:** If not properly formulated, the particles may have unintended systemic effects when administered.
9. **Compliance Issues:**
   a. **Patient Adherence:** The need to shake the suspension before use and the potential for dosing inaccuracies may lead to lower patient adherence compared to more convenient dosage forms.

12.5 Classifications of Suspensions

Suspensions can be classified based on various criteria, including their physical properties, intended use, and the nature of the dispersed phase. Here's a detailed classification of suspensions:

1. Based on Physical State of Dispersed Phase:

a. **Coarse Suspensions:**
   i. **Description:** These suspensions contain relatively large particles, typically larger than 10 microns. The particles are visible to the naked eye.
   ii. **Examples:** Oral antacids (e.g., magnesium hydroxide), some topical suspensions.

b. **Fine Suspensions:**
   i. **Description:** The particle size is smaller, generally ranging from 1 to 10 microns. These suspensions appear more uniform and may have better stability than coarse suspensions.
   ii. **Examples:** Some injectable suspensions, certain pharmaceutical formulations.

2. Based on Method of Administration:

a. **Oral Suspensions:**
   i. **Description:** Intended for oral intake. These are often used for medications that are insoluble in water or for those that need to be administered in liquid form.

ii. **Examples:** Antibiotic suspensions (e.g., amoxicillin), antacids, and antiemetics.

b. **Topical Suspensions:**
   i. **Description:** Applied to the skin or mucous membranes for localized treatment. These suspensions are designed to treat dermatological conditions or provide symptomatic relief.
   ii. **Examples:** Corticosteroid creams, acne treatments.

c. **Injectable Suspensions:**
   i. **Description:** Administered via injection, usually intramuscularly or subcutaneously. These suspensions are formulated for controlled release or prolonged action.
   ii. **Examples:** Depot hormone injections (e.g., certain contraceptives), some vaccines.

3. Based on the Nature of Dispersed Phase:

a. **Solid-in-Liquid Suspensions:**
   i. **Description:** The solid particles are dispersed in a liquid medium. This is the most common type of suspension.
   ii. **Examples:** Oral antibiotic suspensions, topical creams.

b. **Liquid-in-Liquid Suspensions:**
   i. **Description:** One liquid is dispersed in another liquid. These are less common and can be more complex to formulate.
   ii. **Examples:** Certain emulsions or formulations used in specific industrial applications.

4. Based on Stability and Formulation:

a. **Stable Suspensions:**
   i. **Description:** Formulated with stabilizers, suspending agents, and other additives to prevent sedimentation and aggregation. These suspensions remain uniform over time with minimal settling.
   ii. **Examples:** Many modern pharmaceutical suspensions designed for long-term use.

b. **Unstable Suspensions:**
   i. **Description:** Susceptible to issues such as rapid sedimentation or aggregation. These require careful handling and formulation to improve stability.
   ii. **Examples:** Some suspensions that may require frequent shaking or have a limited shelf life.

5. Based on the Purpose of the Suspension:

a. **Therapeutic Suspensions:**
   i. **Description:** Designed for the treatment of medical conditions. These are often formulated to deliver drugs that are not soluble in their intended liquid form.
   ii. **Examples:** Suspensions for antibiotics, anti-inflammatory drugs.

b. **Diagnostic Suspensions:**
   i. **Description:** Used in diagnostic procedures to aid in imaging or testing.
   ii. **Examples:** Contrast agents in certain imaging techniques.

c. **Cosmetic Suspensions:**
   i. **Description:** Used in cosmetics for topical application, often for aesthetic or therapeutic purposes.
   ii. **Examples:** Some lotions and creams for skin care.

6. Based on Particle Size Distribution:

a. **Monodisperse Suspensions:**
   i. **Description:** The particles are of uniform size, leading to more predictable behavior and stability.
   ii. **Examples:** Certain laboratory formulations and specialized pharmaceutical products.

b. **Polydisperse Suspensions:**
   i. **Description:** The particles vary in size, which can affect the stability and uniformity of the suspension.
   ii. **Examples:** Many over-the-counter pharmaceutical suspensions.

12.6 Preparation of Suspensions

The preparation of suspensions involves several key steps to ensure that the solid particles are evenly dispersed in the liquid medium and that the suspension remains stable over time. Here's a detailed overview of the preparation process:

1. Selection of Ingredients

a. **Active Ingredient:** The drug or substance that needs to be suspended.
b. **Suspending Agents:** Additives that increase the viscosity of the liquid to help keep the particles dispersed. Examples include cellulose derivatives (e.g., methylcellulose), xanthan gum, and alginates.
c. **Vehicle or Dispersion Medium:** The liquid in which the particles are dispersed. Common vehicles include water, oils, or other solvents depending on the intended use.
d. **Stabilizers:** Agents that prevent aggregation and sedimentation of particles, such as surfactants or emulsifiers.
e. **Preservatives:** Added to prevent microbial growth and extend the shelf life of the suspension. Examples include benzalkonium chloride or parabens.
f. **Flavoring and Sweetening Agents:** Used in oral suspensions to improve taste, especially for pediatric or geriatric patients.

2. Preparation Steps

a. **Particle Size Reduction:**
   i. **Milling:** The solid particles are often milled or ground to achieve the desired particle size. This can be done using various methods such as ball milling, jet milling, or colloid mills.
   ii. **Sieve Analysis:** The particle size is checked to ensure it meets the specifications for uniformity and stability.

b. **Preparation of the Suspension Medium:**
   i. **Mixing:** The dispersion medium (e.g., water or oil) is prepared by mixing it with suspending agents and stabilizers. The medium should be free from impurities and appropriately adjusted to the desired pH and viscosity.

ii. **Dissolution:** If the formulation includes soluble components, they should be dissolved in the vehicle before adding the solid particles.

c. **Dispersion of Solid Particles:**
   i. **Incorporation:** The finely milled solid particles are added to the prepared medium. This can be done using mechanical stirrers, high-speed mixers, or homogenizers to ensure uniform dispersion.
   ii. **Wet Granulation:** In some cases, particles are granulated with a small amount of the liquid to enhance dispersion and prevent clumping.

d. **Adjustment of Viscosity:**
   i. **Thickening Agents:** Add suspending agents to adjust the viscosity of the suspension. The viscosity must be high enough to keep particles suspended but low enough to allow for easy administration or pouring.
   ii. **Mixing:** Ensure thorough mixing to achieve a uniform consistency.

e. **Incorporation of Additives:**
   i. **Flavoring and Sweeteners:** For oral suspensions, add flavorings and sweeteners to mask unpleasant tastes.
   ii. **Preservatives:** Add preservatives to the suspension to prevent microbial growth.

f. **Homogenization:**
   i. **Final Mixing:** Homogenize the suspension to ensure that the particles are evenly distributed and to achieve a consistent texture.
   ii. **Quality Control:** Perform tests for uniformity, particle size, and stability.

g. **Filling and Packaging:**
   i. **Sterilization:** For injectable or sterile suspensions, ensure that the suspension is sterile, using methods like filtration or heat sterilization.
   ii. **Filling:** Transfer the prepared suspension into containers such as bottles, vials, or tubes. Containers should be clean and appropriate for the type of suspension.
   iii. **Labeling:** Clearly label the containers with information on dosage, storage conditions, and expiration date.

3. Quality Control

a. **Physical Tests:** Check for uniformity, sedimentation rate, and viscosity.
b. **Chemical Tests:** Ensure the active ingredient concentration is correct and that the pH is within the acceptable range.
c. **Microbial Testing:** For sterile suspensions, perform tests to ensure that the suspension is free from microbial contamination.

4. Stability Testing

a. **Storage Conditions:** Evaluate the suspension under various storage conditions (e.g., temperature, light exposure) to ensure stability over time.
b. **Shelf Life:** Determine the shelf life based on stability testing to ensure that the suspension remains effective and safe throughout its intended period of use.

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