



Eco News



Letter

The rain's here

Monsoon is here again bringing with it many ailments. Diseases like dengue, leptospirosis and a host of other viral and bacterial infections surface. High humidity during the season also aggravates chronic problems such as asthma and arthritis. With so many illnesses round the corner, you have to protect yourself by taking proper precautions.

• Beware of water borne illnesses

Water borne illnesses such as acute gastroenteritis, typhoid, cholera, viral hepatitis, dengue, malaria and leptospirosis are all common during monsoon, for which contaminated food and water are the culprits. Flies during rains are carriers of cholera and typhoid.

• Gastroenteritis

Several viruses can cause gastroenteritis, an intestinal infection during rainy season. Food preparers or handlers who have viral gastroenteritis, if they do not wash their hands regularly after using the bathroom, may contaminate food. Seafood, especially shellfish, may be contaminated by sewage, and persons who eat raw or undercooked fish harvested from contaminated waters

may get diarrhea. Drinking water can also be contaminated by sewage and be a source of spread of these viruses.

Immediate treatment is to prevent dehydration or loss of fluids and electrolytes (salts and minerals) from the body. Allow your gastrointestinal tract to settle by not eating for a few hours.

• Typhoid and cholera

You can get typhoid fever if you eat food or drink beverages that have been handled by a person who is infected or if sewage contaminated with the bacteria gets into the water you use for drinking. It is treatable with antibiotics. Typhoid vaccine is also available.

Cholera, an infection of the intestine caused by bacterium *Vibrio cholerae* is more common in the lower socio-economic groups because of inadequate treatment of sewage and drinking water. Immediate replacement of fluids and salts lost through diarrhoea is necessary.

• Hepatitis

Amongst the many types of hepatitis virus, hepatitis A and E virus infection is very common during rains mostly due to lack of sanitation. Jaundice, the symptom of

hepatitis shows due to liver damage. It causes yellowing of eyes, urine and skin. The symptoms may last for a few days to several weeks.

• Malaria

Stagnant pools of water serve as breeding grounds for mosquitoes spreading malaria. The female anopheles mosquito carries the malarial parasites microorganisms called plasmodia and disease is transmitted by its bite. Headache, periodic chills, high fever are a few signs of malaria. Anti-malarial drugs can be taken as preventive measures if an epidemic is in the offing.

• Leptospirosis

There is a surge of leptospirosis every monsoon when garbage piles up, drains get clogged, and there is wet soil due to heavy rains. The wet soil is contaminated with leptospirabacteria present in the animal urine, especially that of dogs and rats. The bacteria enter through cuts and abrasions for instance if you are gardening with bare hands or walking barefoot in wet soil. Mild illness settles down soon but severe illness can cause jaundice, bleeding at multiple sites on the body, muscle ache, fever etc.

• Dengue

Dengue fever comes in mostly during and shortly after the monsoon. Fever along with rash on the body, reduction in the white blood cells and platelet count in the blood are hallmark signs of dengue.

• Remaining wet is a bad idea

The rains are a welcome respite for the sufferers of prickly heat, and kids with the

summer boils. But it can also start or aggravate existing skin conditions. Wet skin means a macerated skin, easily damaged and prone to infections.

The first rains, usually dissolve a lot of airborne pollutants including industrial fumes etc, which can cause an irritant dermatitis on sensitive skins resulting in itchy rashes and itchy scalps.

• It's an epidemic

Rains bring with it pink eye out of the blue. The conjunctivitis virus gets active and causes an inflammation of the conjunctiva. The eye turns red, starts watering and you experience a prickling sensation, burning and watering. The infection spreads to the other eye in two days time and then completely wanes off. Medicated eye drops as well as cold compresses help. Wear dark glasses to reduce people's distress.

• Monsoon blues in children

Surprisingly, we see that the spate of gastroenteritis is much less this year, which of course is a relief. Instead, there is a peak in the Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV), which triggers bronchial infections and wheezing in children during rainy season. In addition to the cough and colds, ear infections too get aggravated in children.

Regarding preventive measures for children against hepatitis, doctors recommend hepatitis A vaccine to be taken in two doses, six months apart, although advisable not to use it as a routine. Typhoid vaccine too is available, which needs to be taken once in three years.

Children with wet shoes are prone to skin infections and contact dermatitis. Pre-

existing fissures on soles, on contact with dirty water can get infected giving severe pain. Feet constantly enclosed in plastic shoes can cause the feet to become hot, sweaty and uncomfortable. Ensure that the child carries a pair of dry socks to school during rains.

All in all, a little caution is what is required during the rainy season to overcome the trouble that these ailments will cause.

So what can you do yourself to protect against these monsoon maladies?

"Drink only boiled water, avoid eating road-side and exposed foods, cover-up water tanks, wear fullsleeved shirts and full length trousers to avoid mosquito bites and avoid wading in stagnant, filthy water," adviser Dr. Jayant Telang, Executive Health Officer of the BMC.

He also seeks to clear the misconception that mosquitoes breed in filthy water. "Mosquitoes breed in clean, stagnant water, so, make sure that if you have vases at home, you change the water everyday. Building owners should ensure that the overhead water tanks are covered."

Take A Dengue Test

• How are we infected by Dengue ?

Dengue fever virus is transmitted by the bite of infected mosquito vectors *Aedes aegypti* & *Aedes albopictus*.

• How soon after exposure do symptoms occur ?

The first symptoms of the disease occur about 5-7 days after the infected bite.

• Symptoms :

Dengue fever usually starts suddenly with a high fever, rash, severe headache, pain behind the eyes, and muscle & joint pain. Nausea, vomiting and loss of appetite are common. A rash usually appears 3 to 4 days after the start of the fever. The illness can last up to 10 days, but complete recovery can take as long as a month. Older children and adults are usually sicker than young children.

• Early Diagnosis :

There is no specific treatment for dengue fever. However, early diagnosis is essential & helps to determine accurate treatment to control the disease. Persons with dengue fever should rest and drink plenty of fluids. They should be kept away from mosquitoes for the protection of others.

Prevention :

Use a mosquito repellent / net. Keep your surroundings clean and never allow water to stagnate. Use disinfectants if necessary.

Test For Diagnosis :

1) Dengue Antibodies Screen IgG & IgM- (ELISA) : The dengue antibody (IgM) becomes detectable by the 3rd - 5th day of fever.

SC no to honking, crackers at night

In what could provide a big relief to citizens, the Supreme Court has banned the use of vehicular horns near residential areas between 10 pm and 6 am.

In its order on curbing noise pollution, a bench of Chief Justice R C Lahoti and Justice Ashok Bhan has said that no loudspeaker should be used in the specified period of the night "except in public emergencies". It put restrictions on the use of loudspeakers even during day time. Observing that anyone who wishes to live in peace, comfort and quiet within his house has the right to prevent pollutant noise reaching him, the judgment said: "Any noise which has the effect of materially interfering with ordinary comforts of life judged by the standard of a reasonable man is nuisance".

The 88-page verdict, written by the CJI, was a fallout of a batch of PILs against noise pollution, including one which highlighted the plight of a rape victim, saying that her cries for help went unheard due to the blaring music over loudspeakers in the neighbourhood.

Maintaining that nobody could be compelled to listen and nobody could claim that he has a right to make his voice trespass into the

ears or mind of others, the court said: "Nobody can indulge in aural aggression."

The apex court exploded the myth that certain religious celebrations such as Diwali cannot be complete without noise and said no religious book says that the festival has to be celebrated by bursting crackers.

Rejecting the plea by the Rs 400-cr Tamil Nadu fire cracker industry to allow nightlong bursting of crackers on Diwali day, the bench declined the "shelter" of religion to it. The court said any restriction on the time to burst crackers would not violate the right to practice the religion of one's choice.

The fire cracker industry had argued that "interference with the date and time of celebrating festivals amounts to infringement of religious rights under Articles 25 and 26". The bench said Diwali is considered a festival of lights, not noise. "Shelter in the name of religion cannot be sought for bursting firecrackers and that too at odd hours".

The court said noise-making crackers could be burst before 10 pm, but light emitting ones could be burst upto 6 am. The bench directed that firecrackers for exports may be made bearing higher noise levels, subject to the conditions that permission could only be granted if the manufacturer had an export order.

- Courtesy: TOI

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