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Media alert from the Media Scanning & Verification Cell, IDSP-NCDC.

Alert ID	Publication Date	Reporting Date	Place Name	News Source/Publication Language
3923	19.03.2017	20.03.2017	Kashmir	www.tribuneindia.com/English http://www.tribuneindia.com/news/jammu-kashmir/-unknown-viral-infection-grips-thousands-of-children/378987.html
Title:	Unknown viral infection' grips thousands of children in Kashmir			
Action By CSU, IDSP -NCDC	Information communicated to SSU- Kashmir			

An "unknown" viral infection has gripped the Kashmir valley where thousands of children are being taken to hospitals. However, doctors have advised parents not to panic as the infection could be seasonal and would go away with simple medication. At the Kashmir's lone tertiary care children hospital, GB G B Pant Children Hospital, the rush of viral-infected children has increased manifolds.

"There is a huge rush of patients these days. For the past one week, the number of patients in the Out Patient Department has exceeded by 1,500 per day, while the rush in the Causality Department during night has gone up from 100 to 800," said the Medical Superintendent of GB Pant hospital, Dr KK Pandita.

Pandita said the infection would go as the weather would start improving.

In every district, hospitals are flooded with children suffering from viral infection. Many parents have stopped sending children to schools. "I have three kids and all are suffering from viral infection. They are under medication and I have stopped them from going to school for the past three days," said Altaf Hussain of Wagoora Baramulla in north Kashmir.

After complaints of viral infection came from across Kashmir, the Directorate of Health Services Kashmir (DHSK) issued a public advisory asking people not to panic.

Save Water- Save Life, Save a tree- Don't print unless it's really necessary!

Disclaimer:- This is a media alert subject to verification.

**Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP), National Centre for Disease Control,
Ministry Of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India**

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"Please stay home from work or school if you are sick and limit contact with others to avoid infecting others," reads the advisory.

"Viral infection is in the community for the past 14 days. There is no doubt about it. We have sent samples to the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), New Delhi, to identify the virus," said Dr Rehana Kousar, Epidemiologist, Kashmir.

Dr Kausar said the NCDC report on the identification of the virus was expected to reach the state government on Monday. She advised parents not to send infected children to schools, which have become main source of spread of the viral infection.

However, she said the infection has plateaued with the improvement in the weather. Officials in the DHSK said hospitals in Kashmir had adequate supply of drugs available to treat the epidemic of viral infection. The DHSK has given symptoms of the infection as cough, fever, chills, sore throat, headache, fatigue and running or stuffy nose. Reports of thousands of children infected with this virus, which is thought to be airborne, has come from all districts of Kashmir.

"The out patient departments in hospitals across Kashmir are flooded with children complaining of sore throat, cough, fever, diarrhoea and dizziness. It is a viral infection and has attacked mostly children," several health officials said. Acute viral respiratory tract infection is a contagious illness that spread every year from October through spring season. It is commonly caused by viral pathogens like rhinovirus and influenza. Dr Suhail Nayak, a paediatrician in Sopore sub-district hospital, said a few patients might need admission for hydration or fever control. "People should not panic because it is not swine flu. They can manage their children at home by giving paracetamol and lots of fluids," he said, adding that his OPD rush has increased from 100 to 300 per day. The Doctors Association Kashmir said, "Don't panic about the present epidemic of flu. It is seasonal and will go with the improvement in weather."

'People should take universal precautions'

Dr Muhammad Salim Khan, Head of Department, Preventive and Social Medicine, Government Medical College, Srinagar, said people should follow the universal precautions like covering the mouth and nose with a handkerchief while coughing or sneezing and avoid visiting crowded places unnecessarily.

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