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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
3253	11.01.2016	13.01.2016	Mumbai Maharashtra	www.timesofindia.com/English http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/mumbai/Outbreak-of-chicken-pox-feared-in-city/articleshow/50538235.cms
Title:	Outbreak of chicken pox feared in Mumbai, Maharashtra			
Action By CSU, IDSP -NCDC	Information communicated to DSU-Mumbai, SSU-Maharashtra			

Winter has brought in an unusual deluge of chicken pox cases and hospital admissions in the city over the past few weeks. Kasturba Hospital for Infectious Diseases at Chinchpokli has admitted 78 patients in the first 10 days of January itself, besides treating around 10-15 cases in the outpatient department daily. Physicians are surprised that the extremely contagious viral ailment has made an arrival much before its usual time in March and April, or when there is a season change.

A significant chunk of the affected patients at Kasturba are adults, said doctors at the hospital. Even private clinics are treating very few children for chicken pox.

The disease takes a much serious form in adults, who may take longer to heal and even suffer from the occasional complication.

At Kasturba, at least seven patients have suffered complications, which while not life-threatening, required advanced medical care. "A few patients needed oxygen support while some others had developed pneumonitis (inflammation of the lung tissue). These are not unknown but unusual complications seen in a very minuscule percentage of patients," a doctor told TOI.

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

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Infectious disease consultant Dr Om Srivastava said there has been a marginal spurt in cases. "The virus that causes chicken pox tends to replicate well in cold climate, overcrowding, in decreased immunity and among people who are malnourished. The best way to contain it is to isolate the patient."

He further said that skin manifestations are only a third of the burden of the illness. "Chicken pox can affect anything from the gut, lungs, eyes, kidneys and even the brain. The systemic involvement of the lung is quite common," he added. Between 30% and 40% of the adult patients require admission. Srivastava said the infection is easily treatable with antivirals. "The disease is responsive if you arrest it in early stages," he said.

A doctor from one of the civic hospitals said they have been asking patients to quarantine themselves at home as not everyone can be accommodated in a hospital. The shedding of the virus is at its peak before the lesions appear. "That is when the person is most contagious and should remain isolated," said the doctor. Once the vesicles are formed, it takes around four to five days for the lesions to crust. The infectivity of a patient drops to 20% after crusting.

"A dip in temperature over the past one month could have brought in the infection early," said Dr Vasant Nagvekar, infectious disease consultant at Lilavati Hospital. He said in patients who are immuno-compromised, often acyclovir, the standard antiviral to treat chicken pox, has to be administered intravenously. Goregaon-based physician Dr Shekhar Shirvaikar said in the past eight days, he has treated more than ten patients with the disease, of whom only two were children. "Usually, we see such volumes in March and April just before summer," he said. The BMC officials, though, said there is nothing to panic. "It is not a notifiable disease, so it is not mandatory for hospitals or doctors to report cases to the BMC. Besides Kasturba, we have been informed of nearly 20 more confirmed cases from a few hospitals. People need to isolate themselves and seek treatment on time," said Dr Minnie Khetrpal, head of BMC's epidemiology cell.

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