PROTECTING YOURSELF FROM DENGUE
What do you need to do?

Mohali, April 16, 2017: Dengue, now a seasonal menace every year in India, has arrived rather early this year in some parts of the country.

With health authorities gearing up for vector-borne diseases in the tricity, months before monsoons, it is important to be cautious.

According to the WHO, there are about 190 million cases of dengue worldwide with 96 million cases needing treatment. In India too, there is 25% increase each year, mainly attributed to heavier monsoons and ineffective preventive steps to check mosquito breeding.

A record number of cases were reported from Panchkula and Mohali last year, as a result of which the authorities concerned have already started sensitising residents to take precautionary measures.

In this scenario, what can be done? What steps can citizens take?

Dengue is a tropical disease that originates from four different viruses. Carried by the *Aedes egypti* mosquito, symptoms include fever, headache, muscle and joint pains as well as skin rash. While there is currently no vaccine for dengue, it can be prevented by improving hygiene levels and prevention of mosquito breeding.

Dr Parvinder Chawla, Consultant, Internal Medicine, Fortis Hospital Mohali, gives some useful information and tips below:

Why are some people more susceptible to Dengue?

- They live in a high-risk zone which has dingy, unclean surroundings with stagnant water that encourages mosquito breeding
- People who have been infected with dengue before as they have low immunity

What are the most commonly associated symptoms that could be associated with the onset of Dengue?

- Severe headache
- Pain behind the eyes
- Nausea and vomiting
- Muscle and joint pain
- Skin rash

- High fever reaching 40°C/ 104°F

A probable diagnosis can be made by assessing:

- The temperature
- Associated symptoms such as nausea and vomiting
- Rash and general pain

The common tests used in dengue diagnosis are:

- Complete Blood Count. A falling hematocrit in the initial days of fever is a very strong pointer towards the diagnosis of dengue fever and the likelihood of developing severe dengue.
- ELISA test for dengue NS1 Ag
- PCR for detecting viral DNA
- Serum IgG and IgM test
- Platelet count is usually normal during the initial days of fever and thus does not have diagnostic value in this phase.

Suggested approach on Treatment:

- Please seek medical advice immediately if common symptoms persist
- Drink plenty of fluids
- Symptomatic relief can be sought using paracetamol
- Do not take aspirin or ibuprofen / other NSAIDS (Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) since they can increase the risk of bleeding
- Follow instructions of medical practitioners diligently

If Dengue fever progresses to severe dengue, look out for these symptoms:

- Severe pain in the abdomen
- Nausea and vomiting
- Bleeding from any site
- Difficulty breathing
- Severe Headache

How to prevent dengue:

- Make sure all egg-laying habitats of mosquitoes, such as open and stagnant water sources are cleaned up
- If there are any open water sources you cannot eliminate, cover them and apply appropriate insecticides

- Use protections such as window screens, long-sleeved clothes, insecticide-treated materials, coils, vaporizers and repellant creams to avoid being bitten by mosquitos
- A person can suffer from dengue a second time if the viral strain is different from the initial infection. The second episode of dengue is usually more severe than the first one. Hence ensure adequate protection

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