



Monsoon Ailments

Monsoon affects most of us in two ways; First the romantic feel-Alas! Not for all to enjoy. But even those, who enjoy wading through water huddled under a small umbrella with a loved one, the fun can never compensate for the agonies in store, if God forbid you are hit by one of monsoon ailments!

The title “**Monsoon Ailments**” does not mean to convey that these ailments occur only in monsoons! Most of these are found round the year but they have a higher incidence during rain months, due largely to either a. Getting drenched; b. Water logging; c. Higher chances of food contamination

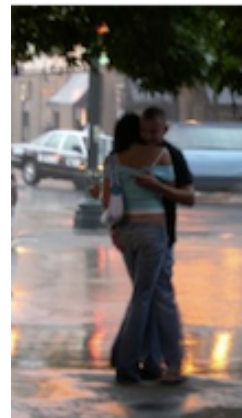
‘So, what else is new?’ You may ask **‘Why more emphasis now?’**

...Because you must take extra care both in preventing these and when truly ‘down’ a few steps in self-care will go a long way toward reducing suffering. And who better than your virtual family doctor to empower you?

Getting drenched in the rain does not always lead to colds or fever. Those otherwise susceptible to get colds, sinus trouble are more at risk of getting these during rain season. Higher incidences of viral fevers found during these months occur independently of getting drenched.

Ailments that occur with increased frequency during these months can be broadly divided into vector (the ubiquitous mosquito) borne viz. Malaria, Dengue; bacterial (Leptospirosis-a true monsoon fever as it occurs largely between July and September and that too following water logging) and water borne (fecal-oral transmission) ailments viz, typhoid, hepatitis-jaundice, gastro enteritis and dysentery.

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Common Monsoon ailments: What you **MUST** know!

Malaria

We have been fighting Malaria for decades but have failed to contain it. Although the disease is largely preventable and curable, the harsh reality is that it kills millions of people in the country every year.

A delay in specific treatment is the major cause of death due to malaria.

It is well known that malaria spreads through a bite of an infected *Anopheles* mosquito (the night mosquito). The signs and symptoms of the disease vary from very mild to very severe and this is where most people fail to grasp the seriousness of the condition and the delay in seeking medical aid. People perceive malaria to be a condition of very high fever accompanied by severe shivering; well this is just a book picture of the disease. However, in practice one does see malaria without shivering and at times even a fever below 100°F. Malaria is known to present itself with throat irritation, stomach pain, and diarrhoea. Any fever that has lasted beyond 24 hours with home remedies or self-medication necessitates a physician contact – either a visit or a call to your family doctor.

In India, we have two types of malaria, i.e. that caused by *P. vivax* & *P. falciparum*, which is always known to be more virulent and can lead to cerebral malaria/ acute kidney failure or ARDS – all life threatening medical emergencies. Lately even *P.*

Vivax is also proving fatal with just thrombocytopenia (low platelets).

Tip: 40% malaria will not show in blood tests; it is the high index of clinical suspicion of the treating doctor. So, please, no self-medication!

Dengue

Dengue fever is another of febrile ailments of monsoons. Dengue is transmitted to humans by the *Aedes aegypti* (the day mosquito).

Dengue is also manifested by a sudden onset of fever, with severe headache, muscle and joint pains — severe pain gives it the name break-bone fever along with rashes. Some cases develop much milder symptoms, with no rashes, and are easily misdiagnosed as flu or other viral infection. The classic picture is high fever with no localizing source of infection, a petechial rash with low platelets and relatively low white blood cells (WBC).

After 3-4 days, the person usually feels better for a few hours to two days. Then illness may return for 1-2 more days, often with a rash that begins on the hands and feet. The rash spreads to the arms, legs, and body (but usually not the face).

There is no specific treatment for dengue/ severe dengue. The mainstay of treatment is supportive therapy. Good oral intake, especially of oral fluids. If not possible intravenous fluids may be necessary to prevent dehydration.

**One may have
Malaria / Dengue
even with normal
reports!**



**Do not STOP
treatment half
way, whatever the
ailment!**



Common Monsoon ailments: What you **MUST** know!

Early detection and access to proper medical care lowers fatality rates below 1%. Dengue prevention and control solely depends on effective mosquito control measures. The second attack of Dengue is more dangerous and deaths, if occur, are due to Dengue Shock syndrome or Dengue haemorrhagic fever (bleeding all over)

Tip: Be careful if you have to walk through water logging in rains.

Water borne ailments

Before you reach out for that yummy plate of pani-puri or bhel, think about the possibility of contracting typhoid, jaundice, gastro enteritis, which all spread through consumption of contaminated food/ water

Typhoid

Typhoid fever has again become a life threatening disease. The symptoms begin similar to malaria/ dengue. But in this fever generally is persistent and may fluctuate between very high (104°F) and low fever (100°F) for a short period of time. In patients without any complications the condition subsides in about three to four weeks after appropriate treatment.

Typhoid essentially has ulcers in the intestines; thus care to avoid spicy/ oily foods. In about 10% of people, it may relapse after about a week. In severe cases one may suffer from intestinal perforations or internal bleeding, diarrhoea or constipation. Prompt and immediate treatment can prevent complications of the disease.

Tip: If diagnosed with typhoid, should not discontinue their medication unless advised to do so, since it has a high rate of relapse. Taking Typhoid vaccine is highly recommended (valid for 3 years); even for those who have been treated for the same.

**Roadside food/
water is the main
culprit of water
borne ailments!**

Tip: It is very important to avoid Aspirin and NSAIDs (Ibuprofen, Nimesulide, Diclofenac) as they can aggravate the bleeding tendency associated with some of these infections. Patients should receive ONLY Paracetamol.

Leptospirosis

Leptospirosis is a true monsoon ailment that occurs from Aug to Sept. The carrier is rat. It is contracted through either after wading through collected water that is infected by rat urine or by ingesting rat feces contaminated food or water.

It begins with flu-like symptoms. The symptoms seem to improve by the fifth to ninth day.

Some patients may also develop meningitis, liver damage, breathing difficulty or kidney failure. Since it causes a wide range of symptoms, there are chances for wrong diagnosis of the infection.



Common Monsoon ailments: What you **MUST** know!



Gastro enteritis

Vomiting and/ or diarrhea is still the second biggest killer of children globally; sadly a quarter of these deaths occur in India. Not to be taken lightly – bland food for few days, some OTC drugs and back to junk food! Hundreds of thousands in the country

are hospitalized and a large number succumb to the innocuous sounding ‘food poisoning’.

These are a lot more common during monsoon due to the favorable climatic conditions that contribute to parasite growth. Equally or more important than the prescribed medication and recommended diet, is preventing dehydration & electrolyte imbalance (the cause of Bodyache/ cramps) that occurs when the body is losing more water & salts than taking in. Severe dehydration can cause the kidneys to shut down. Dehydration can be particularly dangerous in

children and the elderly.

Tip: Water rehydrates the body. But water alone doesn’t replace the essential salts required by the body for fluid balance and other functions. Oral rehydration solutions are recommended. Mental count – your intake should be 500 ml more than your output (in 24 hour)

Jaundice

Jaundice itself is not a disease but is a sign of hepatitis. Viral hepatitis A & E are commonly found in monsoons as they transmit by feco-oral route. The characteristic features include orange-yellow tinge of eye and dark yellow urine.

Continuous nausea/ vomiting, extreme weakness, +/-fever are common symptoms. Various laboratory investigations are performed to identify the exact cause of jaundice. Mainstay of treatment – enough glucose (as it helps liver recover), avoid alcohol, pain killers (damage liver), physical rest. Jaundice is a social disease – all friends/ relatives have a ready cure!

Avoid Chutney as it is largely made from contaminated water!



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Healthy Monsoon Recipes

Palak khichari



Ingredients:

1-cup rice
½ cup moong dal, green split
1 bunch of palak (puree)

1 onion (chopped)
1 tomato (chopped)
1 tsp. ginger garlic (paste)
1-2 green chilies (chopped)
¼ tsp. turmeric (powder)

1 tbsp curd
Red chili powder to taste
Salt to taste

Preparation time: 10 min; **Cooking time:** 20 min

Heat oil in the pan and add ginger garlic paste and green chilies, fry until light brown.

Now add onion, tomato, palak puree, curd, salt, chili powder and turmeric powder. Stir-fry for 2-3 minutes on high flame. Add rice and fry well for another 5 minutes. Add sufficient water and pressure cook for 7-8 minutes (approx. 3 whistles). Open lid when pressure reduces and allow cooling.

Serve the palak khichari hot with chilled raita.

Your body burns water (fever) and loses water (diarrhoea);

Ensure intake of 8-10 gl of water; 2-3 fruits, milk, curd, soups etc. Take light lime juice/ ORS if vomiting/ diarrhoea

Bottle gourd (Dudhi) Soup

Ingredients

1tbsp. low fat Butter
1 Onion (finely chopped)
1 Garlic clove (finely chopped)

1 cup boiled bottle gourd puree (dudhi)
1tsp. wheat flour

1tbsp lemon juice

Black pepper powder as required
Salt to taste

Preparation time: 10 min;
Cooking time: 5 min

Heat the pan, add butter and melt it, add finely chopped onion and garlic, sauté till onion turns slightly golden brown. Then add bottle gourd puree and lemon juice, sauté till it is half cooked (for few minutes). Add 2-cups of water and bring it to a boil. Mix wheat flour in a little water and add to the soup. Cook for a few more minutes.

Add salt and pepper powder to taste. Serve hot.

