

Headline: Leptospirosis – an infection to stay away from during monsoons

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Monsoons are finally here bringing relief from the scorching summer months! However, with the joys, monsoons also bring with them an army of infections that can lower down your immunity. A number of infections are known to thrive during this season as a result of increased moisture in the atmosphere. Children, as well as adults, need to take precautions to avoid falling victims to the host of such infections that affect the health during these months.

The widest spreading among the bunch of infections during the rainy season is Leptospirosis.

What is Leptospirosis?

Leptospirosis is a bacterial infection caused by Leptospira bacteria. This infection builds its ground post an exposure to grimy water bodies that develop in rains as well as coming in close contact with animal's excreta. The disease is often transmitted by the urine of infected animals from many species, both domesticated, such as dogs and horses; and wild, such as rodents or wild boars. The bacteria can survive in the water and soil for months. In this disease, bacteria enter the body through contaminated food and water which reaches the gut and spreads into the blood causing infections. This disease can produce a wide range of symptoms. Some patients may develop a skin infection, fever, kidney or liver failure, respiratory failure, meningitis, or in worst cases, even death.

What are leptospirosis symptoms and signs?

Symptoms can occur about two days to four weeks after exposure to the bacteria and they may appear phase wise.

- Phase-I of the infection: High fever, chills, headache, muscle aches, fatigue, sore throat, abdominal pain, vomiting, pain in the joints or muscles, rash, and reddish eyes

- Phase-II of the infection: Diarrhea, jaundice, renal failure, pulmonary hemorrhage, cardiac arrhythmias, pneumonitis and Septic shock

If it's not treated on time, it may not resolve for several months, and some patients may develop long-term complications such as kidney and lung problems. Further complications may result in death; however, the death rate due to this disease is about 1%-5%.

Who are at risk of exposure?

- People who are connected to the occupation like farming, sewer cleaning, mining, fishing, animal caretaking, etc.
- Kids playing in muddy fields and dirty roads during rains
- People associated with swimming, paddling, kayaking, and rafting in contaminated lakes and rivers
- Campers or those who participate in outdoor sports
- Families who drink unpurified water during rains
- People consuming vegetables and fruits grown in contaminated water

“It has been noticed that the incidences of Leptospirosis infection among urban population appears to be increasing because of improper maintenance of sewage pipes that result in leakage, water logging, and accumulation of garbage on roads and near housing societies. Therefore, it is our responsibility to make sure that we keep ourselves safe from such infections by taking necessary preventive steps,” Ms. Kanchan Naikawadi, Preventive Healthcare Specialist, Indus Health Plus.

Measures to prevent this disease:

- Avoid eating outside food especially seafood during monsoons
- Keep yourself away from muddy areas and places where there is dirty water
- Wear protected footwear and clothing while working outside or during recreational activities
- If you have any wounds or cuts on your body, then properly cover them during rainy season
- Wash vegetables and fruits properly
- Wash hands frequently
- Drink purified or boiled water

The article has been contributed by Ms. Kanchan Naikawadi, Preventive Healthcare Specialist, Indus Health Plus