

Hindustan Times

# Fever isn't always dengue

People panic, crowd hospitals; undergo tests first, advise doctors



PHOTOS: VIPIN KUMAR/HT

Dengue patients 14-year-old Sushant (left) and Abhishek Upadhaya at Apollo Hospital.

**Rhythmia Kaul**  
New Delhi, August 28

DENGUE HAS created such a scare that some hospitals, big and small, have started turning away patients.

Vibha Malhotra, a resident of DLF-I in Gurgaon, says she was shocked when a hospital in her neighbourhood refused to admit her son after his platelet count dropped to 72,000.

Her son, Shubham Malhotra, a student of DPS Sushant Lok, was celebrating his 14th birthday on August 18 when he felt feverish. When the fever did not come down for two days, the family rushed him to Paras Hospital in Gurgaon.

"They said there's no need for him to get admitted and sent us back. How could they say this? I know how serious the disease is. Even after so many awareness campaigns running, I realised how ignorant I was about the disease till my son was detected with it," says Malhotra.

"My house and locality is absolutely clean (Malhotras boast of being the neighbours of cricketer Yuvraj Singh) but you can't be sure of the areas away from home," she adds.



Each day I get calls from fretful parents who tell me they got their child's platelet count done because the child was running temperature. I have to keep explaining that a fever could mean so many things, not necessarily dengue.

**DR ANUPAM SIBAL,**  
Paediatrics Haematologist,  
Indraprastha Apollo Hospital

So scared is Malhotra of the disease that when yesterday her daughter also complained of fever, she wasted no time in asking the doctor to get the tests done to check if it was dengue.

"I know what I have gone through all these days with my son in the hospital. I can't take a chance with my daughter now," says Malhotra.

Perhaps with reason, dengue has created a panic in the city with everyone with the first signs of fever suspecting it to be dengue and rushing to get their blood tested.

Parents of ill children top the anxiety charts, forcing doctors to ask people to take it easy. Not every fever is dengue, they say.

"Each day I get calls from fretful parents who tell me they got their

child's platelet count done because the child was running temperature. I have to keep explaining that a fever could mean so many things, not necessarily dengue," says Dr Anupam Sibal, paediatrics haematologist, Indraprastha Apollo Hospital.

Any viral infection can cause fever and even if it is dengue, the test will not be positive for dengue on the first day.

"Once the child starts running fever, parents should wait for at least a day to let other symptoms appear before they go in for any kind of tests," says Dr Sibal.

Even if the test shows a platelet count of one lakh — the normal platelet range is 1.5 lakh to 4.5 lakh/mm<sup>3</sup> — they think they are about to die and start demanding

transfusion. The need for platelet transfusion is only if the count drops to under 20,000 or if there is active bleeding in the patient.

Abhishek Upadhaya, an IT professional and a resident of South Extension-I, still finds it hard to believe that he has tested positive for dengue for the second time, the first time in 2006.

The experience has been no less scary this time. "I took the fever casually and realised the problem only when I vomited blood on Friday. I went straight to Apollo, as money isn't an issue when it comes to health," he says.

"There's a lot of fear among people. But because there is some awareness now, they themselves demand that tests to be done at the earliest even if the doctor asks them to wait for a little more time to ensure that the test reports are accurate," says Dr Monica Mahajan, Senior Consultant of internal medicine, Max Hospital.

"There is no medication as dengue. It's a spontaneous process of self-recovery. People need to maintain their calm and follow the advice of the doctor properly," says Dr Mahajan.

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