

Flu frenzy grips Capital parents

AS H1N1 begins to strike school students, parents are taking no chances. At the slight hint of a cough or a sneeze, children are being taken to medical clinics for treatment



FIGHTING H1N1

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DELHI: In Delhi, 22 children have been infected by swine flu — technically called influenza H1N1 — so far. Fifteen of them have returned to school after treatment.

The fear of the disease, however, is prompting parents to drag their children to paediatricians at the very first sign of cough or fever.

Patients in paediatric clinics have doubled over the past week, with most paediatricians seeing more than 50 children a day with symptoms of fever, well over the usual average of 20.

Almost all cases, they say, are related to seasonal flu.

"It's not new," said Dr Krishan

PATIENTS IN PAEDIATRIC CLINICS HAVE DOUBLED OVER THE PAST WEEK, WITH MOST PAEDIATRICIANS SEEING MORE THAN 50 CHILDREN.

GETTING THE FACTS RIGHT

On June 11, 2009, the WHO declared the outbreak had become a pandemic. Other facts about the flu:

How dangerous is swine flu?

324 people have been infected in India, but there have been no deaths. Only one 66-year-old woman, who had acute asthma, needed critical care for two days.

What the symptoms?

Fever, lethargy, lack of appetite and coughing, with some people reporting a runny nose, sore throat, nausea and/or vomiting.

How can I protect myself?

Apart from avoiding travel to infected countries, the best

defence is maintaining personal hygiene: washing hands frequently, avoiding contact with infected surfaces and covering your mouth while sneezing.

When will the vaccine be ready?

Five manufacturers are developing the vaccine, which, the World Health Organization says, will be "ready within months".

Where can the tests be done?

11 hospitals collect samples for testing, which are sent to labs identified by the Union Health Ministry.

Chugh, head of department, Paediatrics at Sir Ganga Ram hospital.

"Every season when the weather behaves unusually, kids fall sick and parents worry. But this year, the level of concern among parents is quite high and that's because of the flu outbreak."

Dr Chugh examines about 50 children suffering from fever in a

day. He feels the number is no different from last year, only that this year he has to be doubly cautious with the diagnosis.

"Though the major cause for fever is either the usual viral or gastrointestinal disorder, parents don't want to take chances and neither do we," he said.

Dr Rahul Nagpal, head of department of paediatrics at Max



Dr Rahul Nagpal of Max Hospital gets a call every 15 minutes from parents who think their child has contracted swine flu.

hospital in Saket gets a call every 15 minutes from an anxious parent thinking the child has contracted "the" flu.

"Even the mildest of symptoms trigger a panic reaction among parents these days. Though we try hard to convince them that the fever could be due to various other reasons, they don't seem to leave any room for doubt," he said.