

MidDay



Heart of the flu

A 35-yr-old cardiac patient, suspected of suffering from swine flu, reinforced doubts that the H1N1 virus aggravates such conditions

FLUPRINT

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ON June 15, 35-year-old Sushil Kumar from Patna was admitted at Max Hospital, Saket, in south Delhi after he complained of a breathing problem. Medical investigations revealed he was suffering from flu-like symptoms.

A cardiac patient, Kumar was immediately put under observation, as doctors feared the flu could worsen his condition.

As suspected, Kumar's cardiac ailment deteriorated and his heart rate increased.

Though more tests revealed Kumar was not suffering from the swine flu, his case reinforced doubts that patients with cardiac ailment are at a greater risk of being infected by the swine flu.

Heart duress

According to doctors, flu exerts more than normal (about 30 per cent) pressure on the heart. Under such circumstances, medication for the heart can't be administered until the flu is cured.

Swine flu is believed to increase the heart rate of a person from normal to 70, 80 or even 110 beats per minute. Due to this, the person's cardiovascular system is stressed and this can lead to even a cardiac failure. "Heart attacks are

divided into four classes according to their severity - I, II, III, IV. But there are chances that a person with flu-like symptoms can slip from class II to III and even IV," said Dr Viveka Kumar, senior consultant, Cardiology, Max Hospital.

Low immunity, higher risk

People suffering from any ailment have weak immune systems and are more susceptible to the swine flu virus. But experts say the chances of a cardiac patient or a diabetic to catch the virus is ten times more than others. "The chances of any bacterial infection increases if there is stress in the body because of a long-term illness like diabetes or a cardio-vascular ailment," said Dr JPS Sahani, cardiologist, Sir Ganga Ram Hospital.

People with high blood sugar levels and those taking steroids are also vulnerable.

Doctors say it is difficult to treat diabetics because any infection in the blood shoots up a patient's sugar levels drastically.

However, doctors also warn people against panicking and self-medication. "Though immune-related problems may make the treatment swine flu difficult, people should not panic. Tamiflu should be taken only after consulting a doctor," said Dr Dharma Prakash, general secretary of IMA (Indian Medical Association).