



It is better to remain prepared for the monsoon and prevent host of problems that the rainy season brings with itself. Team Viva tells you how

Cooling Off



Okay, the summer sun is still making us sweat and sapping our energies. It'll continue to do so till the monsoon arrives. And when it does, the rains will surely be a welcome relief, tempting you to go out have a splash and gorge on hot *pakodas*, *chatpata chaat*, sweets, and ever-larger helpings at mealtimes.

So far, so good! But with rains also come the host of irritants and if care is not taken, then they can lead to problems and diseases. "Lifestyle modification is a must in the monsoons for people owing to the weather, tend to laze around and indulge in less physical activity," says Mukesh Batra, founder, Dr Batras' Positive Health Clinic. So it is time we take note of what all we need to do during the rainy days to prevent any discomfort in the coming season for as they say, make hay as the sun shines, literally.

Health

As the rains come, the air is washed of pollutants, enabling you to breathe in a whiff of fresh air. But that doesn't last long. Says Batra, "A lot of respiratory diseases and allergies occur due to change in temperature and poor hygienic practices that are common during the monsoon. Conditions like a running nose, sneezing, headache, and recurrent throat infections tend to be rampant. Diseases that are common are asthma, amoebiasis, gastroenteritis, leptospirosis and malaria."

The major concern is prevention of mosquito-related diseases of which Chikungunya fever tops the list. "The only way to prevent the spread of this disease is by controlling the proliferation of mosquitoes by taking precautions like evacuating water accumulation on the roofs, covering water tanks, disposing water holding objects such as tyres, cans *et al*. Other precautions include covering oneself properly with long clothes, using mosquito nets and repellents," says RS Mishra,

senior consultant physician, Max Healthcare.

For elderly and people with ailments like diabetes mellitus, lung problems, heart diseases or rheumatism, there are chances of catching infections easily. It becomes essential to pay extra attention to eating habits during the season as your digestive system is susceptible to infections. Says Anuja Agarwala, nutritionist at AIIMS, "As diseases are mostly water-borne, you need to be particularly careful with the water that you drink."

Diet

You need to ensure that you do not get tempted by street vendors selling juices, *golas* and *kulfis*. Monsoon is the harbinger of breeding bacteria in food items and as such you should avoid eating from outside. "Go for packaged juices as they are the safest and contain no preservatives. Eating salads from outside might also induce indigestion as germs thrive on vegetables that aren't fresh and unwashed," says Agarwala.

To avoid indigestion, one should opt for home made spices. "According to Ayurveda, spices that enhance digestion and metabolism, cleanse body and prevent digestive disorders such as gas and bloating are: Cumin, *asafoetida* (*hing*), *ajwain*, dried powdered ginger, coriander, fennel, mint, black pepper, cardamom, turmeric, cinnamon, and nutmeg. Therefore always eat light food and avoid spicy and fried foods. For any indigestion episode, one must opt for natural digestives such as *jeera*, *ajwain*, *hing*, papaya, *trifala* and ginger," says Shashi Bala, head of department of Ayurveda, Moolchand Medicity.

Fitness

If rains don't permit you to go to the gym, no need to worry. There are some indoor workouts that can convert your home into a gym. Says fitness expert Namita Jain, "Working out at home has definite advantages over working out in a gym. You don't have

Exercises with home props to get you in shape

Two water bottles (as dumbbells)

■ **Bent-over rows** (works the mid-back) — Stand tall lean forward from your hips. Hold bottles in each hand. Keeping elbows slightly bent, slowly lift your hands squeezing your shoulder-blades and then lower. Do two sets of 12-16 counts.

■ Waist bends

Stand tall with water bottles in each hand. Bend from your waist to the right and return back to the upright position. Repeat and switch sides.

■ A chair

■ **Lag extension** (works the front of the thigh) Sit in chair, abs in. Extend left leg until level with hip. Hold for two seconds, repeat with the other leg.

■ Chair dips (works the triceps)

With your back to a chair, position your feet in front of you. Grip the edge of the chair and bend your elbows so that you descend towards the floor. Use your triceps to push back up to starting position. Do two sets of 12-16 counts.

■ A wall

■ **Wall sit** (works the hip and thighs) Lean with your back against the wall. Bend your knees forming a 90-degree angle and lower yourself as you are sitting on an imaginary chair. Hold in this position for 30 to 50 seconds.

■ Wall press-ups (works the front of the shoulder, chest, triceps)

Stand tall, and place your hands on the wall (keeping them wider than shoulder-width apart). Bend your elbows as you bring your chest closer towards the wall and return to starting position. Do two sets of 12-16 counts.

■ A carpet or mat

■ Chest flies (works the chest)

Lie on a carpet or mat with your knees bent. Hold the water bottles in your palms, arms extended over the chest and elbows bent. Open your arms to the sides, until elbows are aligned with the shoulders. Then slowly return back up. Do two sets of 12-16 counts.

to bother about the rains, haul a gym bag around, swap sweat with your companions, wait in the line to use equipment or worry about traffic on the roads." Before commencing on home strength workouts, she suggests to start with a five minute warm-up by walking. "Exercising is important, but it's also important to eat nutritious food. Eat three or more pieces of fresh fruit and salad each day, vary their colour as much as possible. Consume five to six small, healthy meals every day as your body needs more calories to break down the food in monsoons, thereby helping to raise your body

metabolism. Eat slowly, to give your body time to release the enzymes that tell your brain you've had enough. Cut back on salt intake as the body requires only one teaspoonful of salt per day, excess of salt can cause water retention and high blood pressure. Eat foods with high water content, such as watermelon, oranges, pineapples, tomatoes and cucumber," adds Jain

Skin

Have you noticed how during the rains, your skin tends to wrinkle up, shrink, and develop acne? But, before all this happens to your skin be prepared in advance to fight it out. Fungal infections are common during the monsoons because of dampness and the possibility of coming in contact with filthy water. "Since fungal infections are rampant in monsoons, one should wear fully-dried clothes and avoid walking bare-footed. The moisture present in the environment helps the fungi to grow and thrive, especially in skin folds such as the groins or between the toes. Follow the cardinal rule of cleansing, toning and moisturising your skin, because if proper care is not taken, clogging of the skin pores could make it more prone to acne, fungal infections and allergies," says Batra.

But, there has to be a proper procedure to take care of the skin, suggest beauty expert Shahnaz Husain. "The skin care routine should be

adjusted according to the season. After cleansing the skin, use cleansing grains or a scrub. Facial scrubs or cleansing grains can be mixed with a skin tonic and rubbed gently on the skin, using a circular motion. Then, rinse off with plenty of plain water. Besides the outer cleaning a good skin tonic is a must. A rose based skin tonic is ideal." Husain also tells that oily skin demands special attention during the monsoons, because an oily skin looks more greasy due to sweat and oil secretions being deposited on the skin.

"An oily and sweaty skin attracts dirt and pollutants as they are more prone to eruptions during hot and humid weather. The skin should be refreshed several times a day with a skin tonic or freshener," informs Husain.

Hair

Dandruff and hair fall are quite common in monsoon. A little care everyday could keep hair troubles at bay. To avoid a flat, damp or frizzy look, conditioning and neatly tying a pony tail is a favourable solution. A therapeutic and rejuvenating hair massage can help to revitalise those damp roots. Use a scarf to protect your hair. Oiling and washing your hair at least thrice a week with lukewarm water is advisable. Use only mild shampoos or herbal-based shampoos rather than lathering shampoos as the latter tend to dry and roughen your hair and preferably dry your hair with thin towels.

Says Husain, "Oily hair requires utmost care. For that an herbal hair rinse with tea and lemon is good. Boil used tea leaves in water. Strain and cool the liquid. Add juice of a lemon and use as a rinse after your shampoo. One can also apply the white of an egg before your shampoo, leaving it on for half an hour. This not only gives body to the hair, but is also a wonderful cleanser, cutting down on oiliness. Weekly henna treatments would help to keep the hair clean."

