



FLU SCARE

Ayurvedic remedies gain ground in India

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The rising death toll from swine flu in India is driving some people to buy remedies made of cow-urine extract, clarified butter and herbal potions to ward off the disease, as the government restricts Tamiflu and other drugs.

Since India reported its first

swine flu death in Pune on 3 August, at least 100 people have died from the virus. The government is controlling access to Roche AG's Tamiflu antiviral to ensure hospital supplies in case of an epidemic. Residents have switched to traditional Ayurvedic healing, as well as unproven remedies being sold to take advantage of the outbreak, doctors say.

The health ministry depart-

ment that deals with traditional medicines on 21 August advised citizens with severe flu-like symptoms to visit designated hospitals for testing and treatment with drugs such as Tamiflu. The department said people with mild or no symptoms can take traditional medicines to boost their immunity.

"I have nothing against traditional medicine but I think before anything can be prescribed to a patient, there should be an adequate evidence to prove the claim," Rahul Nagpal, head of the pediatrics department at Max Healthcare hospital in Saket, New Delhi, said over phone.

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