

BMC WARNS AGAINST UNNECESSARY DENGUE TREATMENT

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The dengue-spreading *Aedes Aegypti* mosquito has created havoc in the city, after more than 1,500 people were admitted in hospitals this month. However, the civic body has confirmed only 122 cases so far. One of the main symptoms of dengue is the drastic fall of blood platelets. However, in a circular sent to all blood banks and private hospitals, the civic body has said that platelet transfusions should be made only when their level falls below 10,000 and there is an indication of bleeding.

"We sent out the circular as a precautionary message. We don't want the overtransfusion of platelets by physicians, even when the disease can be tackled without it," said BMC's executive health officer Dr Minnie Khetarpal, adding that a meeting of blood banks, private practitioners and hospitals was also held to convey the same.

"So far, the cases are under control and the number of deaths has declined as compared to the last few years," she added.

While September has seen a spurt in the number of cases, this is a trend observed every year. "I call my patients daily and do Complete Blood Count (CBC) tests daily," said physician Dr Mehul Bhatt who practices in Malad. Dr Bhatt said that he has been getting at least two confirmed cases of dengue every day for the past month. "Most of them were treated without hospitalization and platelet transfusion," he said.

The normal platelet count is anywhere between 1,50,000 and 4,50,000 platelets per microliter of blood. Platelets are blood cells that help the blood to clot. Therefore, in patients where there is an indication of internal or external bleeding, a low platelet count can prove fatal. "If patients are closely observed for risks of bleeding, a transfusion will never be required as the platelet count will automatically rise as the patient recovers," explained Dr Bhatt.

General physician Dr Pratit Samdani who practices in south Mumbai hospitals has been seeing 4-5 confirmed dengue cases every day. According to him, unnecessary platelet transfusions can lead to unwanted infections and other antigenic side effects. "Other indicators of the disease should be watched thoroughly before deciding on a transfusion," said Dr Samdani. Doctors are also seeing many cases where the dengue virus is attacking the liver, leading to a condition called dengue hepatitis. While the normal level of liver enzymes is from 35 to 40, dengue hepatitis causes these enzymes to shoot up 10 to 20 times higher.

This happened in the case of 39-year-old Kavita Jain, a housewife from Mumbai Central, while she was fasting for paryushan. "On the last day of the fast she got fever. Blood tests showed that she was dengue positive. After 48 hours, her enzyme count was 9,200," said Kavita's husband Mahavir. She was shifted to the intensive care unit (ICU) of Saifee hospital. "If not treated early or properly, the dengue virus attacks organs like liver, kidney and even the brain," said Dr Anil Pachnekar, a family physician from the Sion-Dharavi area.