

Watch out for red spots in your child's m

By **Neetu Chandra**
in New Delhi

IT'S NOT chicken pox. It's not foot-and-mouth disease. It's known as hand, foot and mouth disease.

With the onset of summer, a number of children have been diagnosed with the disease in the Capital. It affects children aged 10 years and below.

"In the past one month, the number of cases has increased compared to the past years. We have received 10 cases this month alone," Dr Sanjeev Bagal, director and head of the department of paediatrics at the Rockland Hospital, said.

The viral disease has symptoms similar to that of chicken pox. The disease is also confused with foot-and-mouth found in cattle, sheep and pigs, delaying diagnosis.

Doctors said the two diseases are not related to each other and that one cannot contract hand, foot-and-mouth disease from animals.

As cases pour in, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi is contemplating clubbing the disease in the category of infectious diseases.

Hand, foot & mouth disease strikes city kids

The symptoms: high fever and sore throat followed by small spots developing inside the mouth, leading to ulcers.

Gradually, the spots develop on the skin. The small lumps usually appear on the hands and feet and sometimes on the buttocks and legs.

These spots are very similar to those associated with chicken pox, but are smaller.

"People confuse hand, foot and mouth disease with chicken pox and start conventional treatment that can be dangerous," Dr Bir Singh, professor of community medicine at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), said.

But the disease is not deadly. The fever and spots go away within a few days to a week, but the mouth ulcers and sore throat can be painful. Sometimes, the disease can affect the heart, lung or brain.

There is no treatment for the disease, with only the symptoms being treated. Doctors advise good hygiene in order to lessen the chances of contracting the disease.

neetu.chandra@mailtooday.in

DISEASE I

What is hand, foot and mouth disease?

It is a common illness caused by a virus. The symptoms are similar to that of chicken pox. It affects children 10 years and less.

Why is it difficult to diagnose the disease?

It is usually confused with chicken pox. It is also confused with foot-and-mouth disease found in cattle that sometimes infect humans.

What are the symptoms?

Low fever and tiredness. Sore throat. Tiny red spots appear on the tongue, gums and cheeks.