

A glass full of deadly water

INFECTED Dirty water is the most common cause of diseases like diarrhoea and gastroenteritis that have hit the Capital this year.

THE DISEASE CHART

Till the end of June, this year, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) has recorded 131 cases of cholera, of which 113 have been reported from Delhi; most cases have been reported from the Civil Lines zone (40) in north Delhi, followed by Sadar Pahargunj (25).

DISEASE	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007
CHOLERA	140*	756	1066	932	1214
DIARRHOEA	**	159†	1066	932	1214
GASTRO-ENTERITIS	—	**	53,959	53,608	50,402
JAUNDICE	—	**	359	312	279

*until June, †July, **discontinued data collection

WATER SAMPLES

Water samples	Lifted	Unfit
2007	60,702	1,061
2008	60,946	1,201
2009	34,041	2,345
2010	15,647	1,768 (July)
2011	20,618	2,084 (July)

Source: MCD

TOMORROW

A look at how mosquitoes lay siege to the city during the monsoon season.

Jaya Shroff Bhalla

jaya.shroff@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: Summer, that time of the year when swimming pools are brimming with people who've either come to beat the heat or to swim a few laps and keep themselves fit. What is little known about swimming pools is that they are perfect breeding grounds for diseases if proper care is not taken.

Take Sabina Kamal's case. Her two sons—Farhaan (8) and Ayaan (4)—landed in the Intensive Care Unit of a city hospital after their usual swimming session at the neighbourhood club in New Friends Colony.

"The next day, Ayaan had a headache and Farhaan was running a fever. By evening both had high fever, which continued for 4-5 days with loose motions. Ayaan couldn't take the stress, started vomiting and spat blood twice. Then we rushed both the boys to the emergency at Max Hospital," said Kamal.

"How much can one protect their children? While I am extremely careful about the water they drink, who could fathom that they would catch an infection from the pool?" she said.

While the sudden onset of rains may have brought relief from the rising mercury for Delhiites, it has also brought with it a bundle of stomach problems.

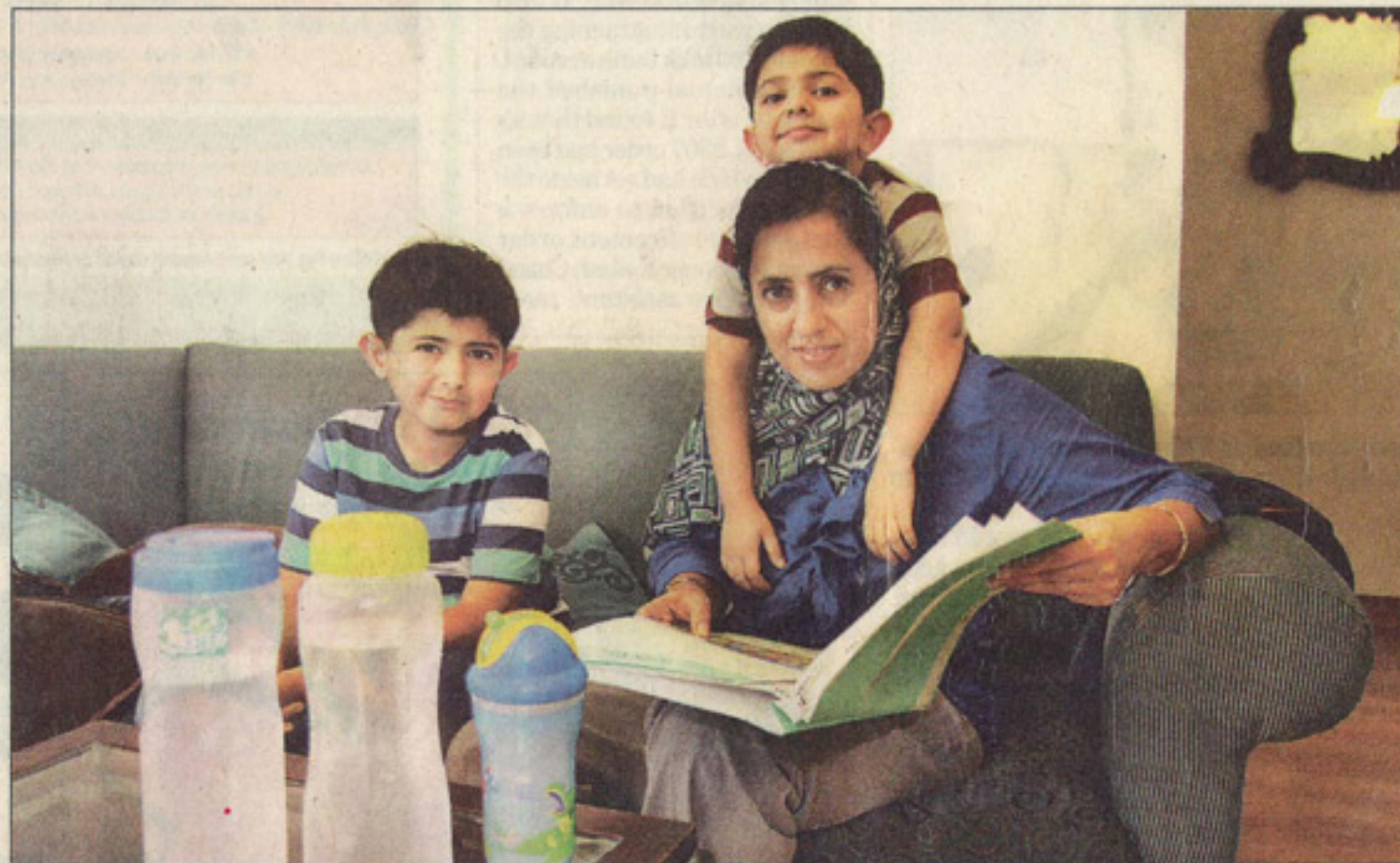
Diarrhoea, jaundice, gastroenteritis, cholera and typhoid cases' have started coming in big numbers in the medicine departments across hospitals.

"We are seeing a surge of gastroenteritis cases with the arrival of monsoon—these could be viral or bacterial. Sometimes when it is toxin related, it causes food poisoning," says Dr Rahul Nagpal, head of department of paediatrics at Max Healthcare. He also treated Kamal's children.

"Flooding causes sewage to mix with the drinking water—the commonest causes of diarrhoea. Children less than five years are more prone to diarrhoea as they consume this water while brushing or bathing," he says.

LEAKING TROUBLE

The MCD records show that 13 out of 448 water pipelines passing through



■ Sabina Kamal is very particular about the water her two sons drink. Both her sons were hospitalised when they fell ill after their usual swimming session at a swimming pool where they contracted an infection.

ARJIT SEN / HT PHOTO

UNTIL JULY, THE MCD LIFTED AND TESTED 20,618 SAMPLES OF WATER, OF WHICH 2,084 SAMPLES WERE FOUND TO BE UNFIT FOR DRINKING.

drains were reported to be leaking—causing the drinking water to mix with sewer lines—of which only two were repaired. Until July, the MCD had lifted 20,618 samples of water for testing, of which 2,084 samples, about one-tenth of the total water samples, were found unfit for drinking.

Residents in several colonies across Delhi have been complaining of sewer mixed water. "The situation of drinking water is really bad in Krishna Nagar area. For more than a month now, the tap water has been emanating a foul smell. It is impossible to drink that water even after boiling," says Savita

Jain, resident of Radhepuri colony in Krishna Nagar. "This is resulting in patients falling prey to Hepatitis A infection," she says.

This trend is also being noticed in many hospitals in the city.

"Gastroenteritis and hepatitis A cases are not unusual at this time of the year, as people, especially children, are not careful about the water they drink," says Dr Sushum Sharma, senior consultant and head, preventive health programme at Max Healthcare.

"Viral hepatitis, which is a liver disease usually spreads through the faecal-oral route; transmitted person-to-person by ingestion of contaminated food or water. Hepatitis A infection, is completely preventable as there is a vaccine unlike Hepatitis E," he says.

PROTECTING YOURSELF

Avoid drinking unfiltered water or unhygienic food. "Most diseases this season are waterborne, hence, one must exer-

cise extreme caution in what they are eating and drinking," says a senior doctor at AIIMS.

"Bad water leads to development of exotoxins in the body which result in almost instantaneous food poisoning leading to diarrhoea. People should drink a lot of filtered water and avoid eating roadside food during this period," says Dr Richa Diwan, professor in the department of Medicine, Lok Nayak.

"Unfiltered water, roadside juices, ice, cut fruits and salad intake is best avoided. And if at all one is sick, rehydration is usually the only cure and self-medication of antibiotics should be completely avoided," she says.

TALK TO US

■ What precautions are you taking this rainy season to keep diseases at bay? Write to us at

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TAKE THESE PRECAUTIONS

Safeguards to follow to keep all diseases and infections at bay:

- Eat home-cooked food as much as possible
- Drinking water should be boiled and properly filtered
- Cook the vegetables well and steam them properly to kill all germs
- Avoid eating roadside food, especially cut fruits and fresh juices
- Never buy or consume readymade ice
- Avoid frozen meats as it may get infected during thawing
- Avoid eating salads in restaurants
- Don't allow mosquitoes to breed near your home
- Clean your coolers and ensure you don't leave any water in them
- If your water supply is unclear lodge a complaint with the MCD and the Delhi Jal Board.

IF YOU ARE SICK

- Oral re-hydration: drink lots of water (mix salt and sugar)
- Eat bland food: mashed potatoes, khichdi, lentil soup
- Rest
- Don't take antibiotics as most fevers this season are viral infections
- If your condition doesn't improve, see a doctor

COMMON DISEASES AT THIS TIME OF THE YEAR

HEPATITIS A (Viral infection)

Cause: water and food
Symptoms: Fever, abdominal pain, nausea, diarrhoea, weight loss, jaundice

GASTROENTERITIS (Viral infection)

Found in improperly treated water
Symptoms: abdominal pain, nausea, diarrhoea, vomiting and malaise

ADENOVIRUS INFECTION (Viral)

Cause: Unfiltered water
Symptoms: Common cold, pneumonia, sore throat

TYPHOID (Bacterial infection)

Cause: Ingestion of water contaminated with faeces of an infected person
Symptoms: Sustained fever up to 104°F, sweating, enlargement of spleen and liver