

# Swine flu is back : 3 dead in capital Delhi

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New Delhi: H1N1 influenza is back to haunt Delhi after three years.

The disease, which gained epidemic proportions in 2009, has claimed three lives so far this year.

At least 57 people have taken ill this time around, according to government data.

Path labs and hospitals say there is a sudden increase in the number of patients seeking blood tests and treatment for the disease, characterized by a sore throat, body ache and upper respiratory infection among other symptoms.

"We have issued directions to all designated hospitals to follow the H1N1 protocol, including readying isolation wards with dedicated staff.

**The availability of Tamiflu medicines at all centres is being ensured," state health minister A K Walia said.**

57 TAKE ILL

'Little chance of epidemic'

New Delhi: H1N1 influenza has claimed three lives in the city, and at least 57 people have contracted it, says government data.

Doctors at AIIMS, Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, Apollo and Max Hospital, Saket confirmed that they have been getting regular cases of swine flu this year. "We have got more than 13 confirmed cases in the last one month.

Five of these patients are still hospitalized," said Dr Aroop Basu, senior consultant chest medicine at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital.

He said two patients are in serious condition and they have been put on ventilator support.

"We are not testing everyone for the influenza virus.

Only those with severe symptoms are being asked to undergo the test," Basu added.

According to Dr Rajesh Chawla, a specialist in respiratory medicine and critical care at the Apollo Hospitals, there is little chance of swine flu turning into epidemic as was witnessed in 2009. "Only those with severe symptoms like breathing difficulty need admission.

We have come across several patients with symptoms of the disease, but they recovered within a week without any specific medication," he said.

Chawla added that precautionary measures like vaccinating those at high risk - the elderly, those with kidney problems, cancer patients, pregnant women and children - for the viral influenza is advised.

Dr Monica Mahajan, senior consultant internal medicine at Max, Saket echoed similar views. "There is no chance of an epidemic being caused by the virus as a large population has been exposed to it already," she said.

Hony (Brig) Dr Arvind Lal, chairman and Managing director of Dr Lal Pathlabs, said that till January third week, the lab were getting about 10 samples a day but it has doubled over the last few days. "We are getting 20 samples daily for three weeks and 30% of them are positive," he said.

Lal added that the trend needs to be followed for at least a month to confirm if it is turning into another outbreak.

Dr Navin Dang, consultant microbiologist and director of Dr Dang's Pvt Ltd, said swine flu cases had almost stopped over the last two years. "In the last one month, there has been a noticeable increase.

We are getting three to four confirmed cases daily," he said.

Swine flu was at its most virulent form when it initially spread in 2009.

Till May 2010, 1,035 people had died of the disease in India and more than 10,000 were infected.

"One should wash hands frequently to avoid infection.

Also stay away from infected persons," said D S Chadha, senior consultant, internal medicine at Fortis, Vasant Kunj.

He added that high-risk patients, including those with heart diseases need to be extra careful.

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