

RIISING CASES OF COUGH AND FEVER LINKED TO INFLUENZA SUBTYPE A H3N2: ICMR

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Surveillance data from December 15 reflects the rise in number of cases of Influenza A H3N2, the Indian Council of Medical Research said. [File](#) | [Photo Credit: The Hindu](#)

Rising cases of intense cough lasting for over a week coupled with fever, observed in most parts of the country, can be linked to Influenza A H3N2, a subtype of a virus that causes flu, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) said on Saturday.

“Surveillance data from December 15 reflects the rise in number of cases of Influenza A H3N2,” the health agency has stated.

The ICMR has 30 Viral Research and Diagnostic Laboratories (VRDL) for respiratory virus surveillance. These VRDLs are attached to the top medical colleges in different States and gather samples from patients suffering from severe acute respiratory infections (SARI).

In its observations, the ICMR noted that about half of all patients admitted with SARI and patients walking in to clinics were found to be afflicted with Influenza A H3N2.

At least 92% of the hospitalised SARI patients detected with the virus were showing up with fever and upto 86% have cough. Additionally, 27% progressed to breathlessness and 16% showed wheezing symptoms. Also, 16% had signs of pneumonia and 6% presented with seizures, the ICMR has stated.

The agency has also said that the virus appeared to lead to more hospitalisations than other Influenza subtypes.

About 10% of all SARI patients who have Influenza A H3N2 needed oxygen and 7% required ICU care, the health body has said.

Mumbai-based senior physician Altaf Patel sees at least ten patients every day with suspected flu. “The cases have certainly risen, and patients are presenting with breathlessness and severe episodes of spasmodic cough. Some patients are showing symptoms for as long as 10 to 12 days,” observed Dr. Patel.

Because it is a viral flu, antibiotics are of no use. The ICMR has advised patients against the

intake of antibiotics or any other medication without consulting a doctor. "Treatment with paracetamol for fever and bodyache is advised. Also take in plenty of fluids," the ICMR has stated.

Dr. Patel observed that there was very little difference in symptoms between COVID-19 and the illness brought on by Influenza A H3N2. Shaking hands or using other forms of contact greeting should be discouraged, the ICMR has said.

"Wearing masks while venturing out is a good idea. It is important for people to take their flu vaccination," Dr. Patel said.

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