

MAY MALADIES

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Summer brings on fatigue, conjunctivitis in canines too

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With Rising Levels Of Heat And Humidity, The City's Health Chart Is Only Going To Get Worse

Mumbai: Kandivli resident Sunil Patil ignored his sore throat and rising fever for two days. He managed to get through a hard day's work with salt water gargles and paracetamol dosages. But, on the third day, the fever had shot to over 102 degrees centigrade and he could no longer hold down any food. "Acute tonsillitis," diagnosed his doctor.

Viral infections—be it in the form of flu, stomach bugs or eye irritation—have been bothering Mumbaiers through the April-May period. Summer is no time to chill, or so bears out Mumbai's health chart. "As a super specialist, we only see the worst cases. So we realise something is wrong when instead of the one severe tonsillitis case we get in a month there are two patients walking in every week," says Dr Gauri

Mankekar, an ENT specialist at Hinduja Hospital in Mahim.

The spells of rain in the city only push up the humidity some more, worsening the summer spike of illnesses, fear doctors. Dermatologist Dr Tushar Jagtap, who has a clinic in Bandra (E), says heat rash symptoms will worsen as the humidity increases. "We generally see a lot of heat boils between May and the first week of June because of the hot and humid conditions. We advise people to take a lot of rest."

According to Dr Mankekar, "Just before the monsoon, the increased humidity leads to a rise in fungal infections. Patients start coming in with ear infections."

Skin infections, in fact, are the most common summer afflictions, be they in form of reddish heat boils or sunburns. "Heat boils or carbuncles have been a major complaint and I have been getting nearly four to five patients every day," says Jagtap, explaining that such summer infections show up as the body's immunity goes down due to the heat.

Young children are particularly vulnerable to problems during summer. Nine-month-old Aryan's colicky cries and watery stools could just be viral or bacterial gastroenteritis, diagnosed a Goregaon-based paediatrician. "Viral fevers and gastroenteritis are very much around," says paediatrician Indu Khosla, who practises in Andheri's Lokhandwala Complex.

Children have also been susceptible to nose bleeds in summer. "This happens due to the dry weather in summer," says

a doctor.

For the older generation, the heat-and-humidity combination is an alarming one. "Older people tend to have electrolyte imbalances which show up as fatigue," said general practitioner Suhas Pingle from Vile Parle.

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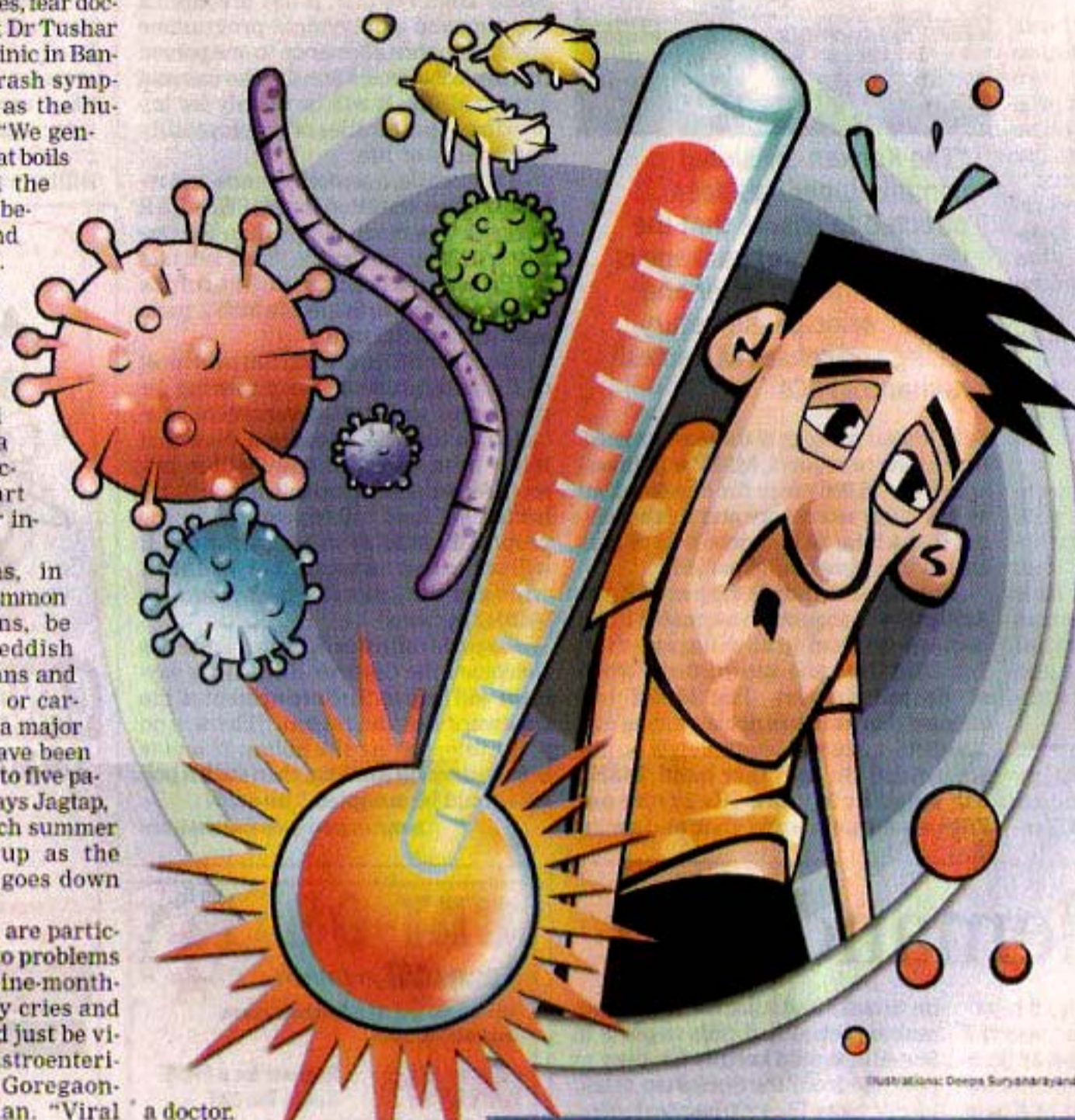


Illustration: Deepa Suryashankaran



Skin infections are the most common summer afflictions, whether in the form of reddish heat boils or sunburns. A dermatologist explains that such summer infections show up as the body's immunity goes down due to the heat

UV PROTECTION: MYTHS & TRUTHS

MYTH 1: While getting a pair of sunglasses, a darker or more expensive pair will give good protection

TRUTH: Darkness has nothing to do with UV protection. In fact, it is more harmful to wear dark sunglasses without UV protection than not to wear sunglasses at all.

This is because behind the dark glasses, the size of the pupil becomes larger and, without UV coating, this allows more harmful UV rays to



enter the eye (which would have otherwise been partially blocked due to a smaller pupil without any glasses).

MYTH 2: Sunglasses are meant only for the summer months

TRUTH: UV rays are invisible and have no relation to the sun's heat. So, the winter sun has equal amount of UV rays as the summer sun. UV rays are almost equally harmful all the year round.

EYE CARE

- There is evidence to suggest that long-term UV exposure leads to cataract formation, which means clouding of the eye lens. UV rays have also been held responsible for age related macular degeneration, which is a potentially blinding retinal condition due to old age. Some UV rays are also known to cause skin cancers



means they block up to 400 nm of light which includes the UV rays

- Since UV damage is long term, starting early is recommended. Children should wear sunglasses whilst outdoors in direct sunlight whenever possible. Very few brands make sunglasses for children and since it is usually difficult to get young children to keep glasses on, a rimmed hat or a cap can usually provide substantial protection

- Sunglasses should have a 99 to 100% protection from UV rays (both UV-A and UV-B). Some brands have UV 400 written on them which

(As told by Dr Ashwin Salnani and Dr Sunil Moreker from Hinduja Hospital, Mahim)

Mumbai: When his phone rang late on Monday afternoon, Dr T P Lahane from state government-run J J Hospital in Byculla was still in his consultation room. An unusual patient wanted to consult the ophthalmic surgeon who holds the record for conducting over 1 lakh cataract operations: an Alsatian dog with conjunctivitis.

"This dog is only the sixth canine to come to me this month," said the surgeon. Like human beings, summer is an uncomfortable time for dogs. The infections that target mankind also hit his best friend. This holds true for conjunctivitis, or pink eye as the eye inflammation due to viruses or bacteria is called, as well.

As Dr Lahane bent down to check the Alsatian's pink eye, its trainer said that the problem had persisted for a couple of weeks now. Drops prescribed by the vet had not had any effect, prompting the referral to Dr Lahane. "I would prescribe an antibiotic cream," said the doctor, handing out the tube to the dog's trainer.

"Unlike human beings, dogs have shallow eyes. Drops will not have the same effect on them as they do on human eyes. Only a cream will work," said Dr Lahane. As veteri-



DOG DAYS

nary medicine doesn't have an ophthalmology branch, animals with eye problems routinely make their way to Dr Lahane's consulting room.

The fatigue factor brought on by the summer is evident in the buzzing Bombay Veterinary College Hospital in Parel which has been receiving a steady inflow of canines this summer. "Dogs are brought in with complaints of hyperthermia or temperature rise," said medical superintendent of the hospital Dr R V Gaikwad, saying this could be common in summer as people lug animals in their cars, but don't ensure proper ventilation.

The heat was particularly harsh on two dogs who landed in the hospital's ward with sunstroke. "The latest was a cocker spaniel who came in with hyperthermia and short fast breaths," said Dr Gaikwad.