

SAFETY TIPS FOR OUR CHENNAI RESIDENTS

Chennai's residents should be cautious about the following deadly diseases after this major calamity. **Please take precaution and utmost care - connect with your friends & families that are impacted to increase awareness.**

Malaria

Mosquito-borne diseases are difficult to prevent, especially during calamities, but precautionary steps can be taken to keep them at bay. The symptoms of malaria include fever, chills and fatigue.

If left untreated, malaria can quickly become life threatening as it disrupts blood supply to vital organs. If a person develops any of the above symptoms must immediately seek medical attention.

In many parts of the world, including in our Chennai, India, the malaria parasites have developed resistance to a number of medicines. Therefore, a combination of drugs, is often used by the physician as the first line of treatment.

FEW PREVENTIVE MEDICATIONS:

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| Atovaquone/
Proguanil
(Malarone) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Good as a last-minute preventive approach• Very well tolerated medicine – side effects uncommon• Pediatric tablets are available and may be more convenient• Cannot to be used in pregnant or breastfeeding patients or with severe renal impairment.• Medication has to be taken daily |
| Doxycycline | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Need to be taken daily. Good treatment for last-minute precaution when a person has had sudden exposure where malaria transmission can occurs• Tends to be the least expensive anti-malarial.• Doxycycline also can prevent some additional infections (e.g., Rickettsiae and leptospirosis) and so it would be the preferred preventive approach. |
| Mefloquine
(Lariam) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cannot be used by pregnant women and children <8 years old• Must avoid considerable sun exposure it may cause the increased risk of sun sensitivity• Stomach upset can occur from doxycycline• Some people would rather take medicine weekly• Good choice for certain persons because it is taken only weekly• Can be used during pregnancy• It is contraindicated in patients with seizure disorder, psychiatric |

problems or cardiac conduction problems

Leptospirosis

Leptospirosis poses a high risk during calamities such as floods. It's a bacterial infection carried by water contaminated with urine of infected rats, dogs or pigs.

Symptoms can range from mild headache, severe muscle ache, abdominal pain, red eye, skin rash and fever to severe bleeding in the lungs. In some cases, however, there could be no symptoms at all.

The bacterium enters the body when the skin, especially if bruised or cut, or eyes come in contact with the contaminated water. If not treated immediately, leptospirosis can cause kidney damage, meningitis (inflammation of the membrane around the brain and spinal cord), respiratory diseases, liver failure, and even death. Doxycycline is used as a prophylactic medication.

Diarrhea

The disease is caused by the oral intake of contaminated water. It could be viral or bacterial. Food is easily contaminated during floods and clean drinking water is difficult to find. So, in such situations, it's recommended to take ORS regularly even if there are no symptoms. In severe cases, hospital admission may be required as the disease can cause kidney failure.

Dengue

Dengue is also a mosquito-borne disease. With the drainage system in a mess due to the floods, the city could become a breeding ground for mosquitoes.

Dengue symptoms range from mild to high fever, severe headache, pain behind the eyes, muscle and joint pain, rashes.

While no vaccine or specific medicine is available to treat dengue, preventive measures include drinking plenty of fluids and controlling the fever with paracetamol.

Cholera

Severe floods usually kill a lot of animals, leaving hundreds of floating carcasses of animals that are difficult to dispose of. These carcasses become breeding grounds for cholera.

Cholera is an acute intestinal infection caused by ingestion of food or water contaminated with the bacteria.

Ensuring safe drinking water and proper sanitation are critical in preventing it.

Typhoid

Typhoid, a disease that spreads rapidly, is usually caused by eating contaminated food or water. The illness is usually characterized by headache, nausea, prolonged fever, loss of appetite, even diarrhea.

Besides these, other diseases Chennai's residents should watch out for include hypothermia, respiratory tract infections like Pneumonia/bronchitis, and Hepatitis A.

HEALTHY TIPS

1. **AVOID MOSQUITO BITES:** Ways to prevent the disease include sleeping under mosquito nets and residual spraying of insecticide. Wear appropriate clothing- Minimize areas of exposed skin by wearing long-sleeved shirts, long pants, boots, and hats. Tucking in shirts, tucking pants into socks, and wearing closed shoes instead of sandals may reduce risk. Repellents or insecticides, such as permethrin, can be applied to clothing and gear for added protection.
2. Boil water before you drink it or use it for cooking
3. Wash your hands frequently especially before cooking or eating.
4. Ensure that elderly persons or persons with chronic medical condition like cardiac or pulmonary problems having fever or breathing difficulty needs to seek immediate medical attention.

Disclaimer: This document is drafted for Greater Milwaukee Tamil Sangam (GMTS) Members in an effort to increase awareness of common waterborne problems/diseases. This is not a medical advise or prescription. Please feel free to contact me, Dr. Geetha Ganesan, MD or your medical doctor for any specific questions or if you need any further clarification.