

Children more vulnerable to dengue, 102 kids die so far

Child fatalities account for 12% of all dengue-related deaths in Bangladesh this year



A mother tries to comfort her dengue-infected child at the Mugda Medical College and Hospital in the capital, Dhaka. The photo was taken recently. Photo: Rajib Dhar

Child fatalities due to dengue have become distressingly commonplace this year in Bangladesh, with a total of 102 children aged 1-15 years losing their lives out of 879 reported deaths.

This figure has surpassed all previous records, as never before have so many children died of dengue in the country.

Experts believe this rise in child mortality can be attributed to factors such as second-time dengue infections, changes in dengue symptoms, and delayed hospitalisation.

If a child has a fever, they strongly recommend prompt dengue testing and taking precautionary measures.



Photo: Rajib Dhar

Dr Mahbub Mutanabbi, Professor, Department of Paediatrics, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University BSMMU), Dhaka, Bangladesh told The Business Standard, "Our observations suggest that second-time infection is the primary cause of child fatalities in dengue cases this year. These children may have previously encountered a different strain of dengue, and the subsequent infection with another variant has led to heightened severity."

Noting that the change in dengue symptoms is another cause of child deaths this year, Dr Mahbub shared, "In the past, patients typically experienced fever for 3-5 days before going into a shock once the fever subsided. This sequence, characterised by fever, its cessation, and a recurrence of fever, served as an indicator of impending shock. However, the current trend involves patients progressing to shock, experiencing brain-related complications, and convulsions after just one or two days of fever."

"This abrupt deterioration in a patient's condition has made it increasingly challenging to save lives, even when they are admitted to the intensive care unit (ICU)," he added.

Dengue has claimed the lives of children

According to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) Data, dengue has claimed the lives of 34 children aged 0-5 years, 44 aged 6-10 years, and 24 aged 11-15 years.

Child fatalities account for 12% of all dengue-related deaths in the country.

One of the recent victims, 7-year-old Alif Islam Shaon died on 14 September after being under treatment in the hospital for four days due to dengue.

He was a pre-primary student at a private school in Tongi. His older brother, Ayan Islam, also contracted dengue but managed to recover.

In the last 24 hours till Saturday morning (September 23, 2023), 14 more dengue patients have died and 2,865 were hospitalised across the country.

This year has seen a total of 1,84,717 dengue patients admitted to hospitals, with 34,435 of them being children.



Photo: Rajib Dhar

Experts point to the lack of awareness about dengue and dengue treatment as significant issues contributing to the problem.

Dr Mahbub Mutanabbi emphasised the importance of promptly testing for dengue when a child exhibits fever and consulting a doctor for any symptoms such as fever, cough, vomiting, or abdominal pain as long as the dengue outbreak does not subside.

He also warned that delaying hospital visits, especially when a child goes into shock, can have dire consequences.

Dr Fazle Rabbi Chowdhury, associate professor (Internal Medicine) at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU), said, "Children may not exhibit warning signs as clearly as adults. Managing severe dengue in children with issues like fluid leakage, bleeding, or shock is particularly challenging."

He urged parents to monitor their children for signs such as dehydration, cessation of urination, and overall condition, and seek immediate medical attention if any warning signs manifest. –

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