

Mild Covid variant adds to fever season

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Calcutta: Many Calcuttans are down with fever, and several, mostly children, are testing positive for Covid. However, doctors said the current strain is causing only mild illness, with most cases being self-limiting and not warranting panic.

Doctors said that while Covid infections are being detected, most of the fever cases are caused by various strains of influenza.

A microbiologist said a mutated strain of the Omicron variant is currently in circulation. Although it spreads rapidly, it is not leading to severe disease.

"This strain of Covid has a high transmission capability but is not causing serious illness. It is a mutated strain of the Omicron variant. As the virus mutates, periodic surges in cases occur. As long as the strain is not virulent, there is no reason for panic," said Suman Saha, consultant microbiologist at RN Tagore International Institute of Cardiac Sciences.

Saha said Omicron was the dominant variant of the Covid virus during the pandemic's third wave in late 2021. Among Influenza viruses, H1N1 and H3N2 are the common variants infecting people, he said.

"Some children have tested positive for Covid, but the majority of the children tested positive for Influenza and Adenoviruses," said Apurba Ghosh, paediatrician and director of the Institute of Child Health.

A nine-month-old boy from Bansdroni tested positive for Covid on July 8. "He had a fever of 103 degrees and was coughing continuously. He was unable to eat. The nearly uninterrupted coughing wor-

ried us the most. We feared he might need nebulisation, but that was ultimately not required. The fever subsided, and the coughing gradually eased," said the boy's father.

Doctors said high-grade fever, runny nose and cough were the most common symptoms among children reporting with fever. Some patients, particularly older children, are also complaining of body aches.

"Sudden onset of high-grade fever, body ache and coughing" are the common symptoms among adults reporting with fever, said Chandramouli Bhattacharya, infectious diseases specialist at Peerless Hospital.

Bhattacharya said he was advising tests for patients who were elderly, had comorbidities or whose condition appeared to be taking a serious turn.

"Among my patients, most have tested positive for influenza viruses. Many are infected with the H1N1 strain," he said.

He said that over the past three weeks, several patients who arrived at the emergency department with fever and cough had to be admitted.

Many families have seen more than one member fall ill with fever over the past couple of weeks. A New Town resident who had a day-long fever last week said her mother had suffered from a similar illness the previous week.

Microbiologist Saha said most of the samples tested positive for Influenza A viruses, such as H1N1 and H3N2.

"Patients need to be prescribed antiviral medication if they test positive for Influenza A viruses like H1N1 and H3N2. That is why influenza testing becomes necessary if the symptoms persist," he said.