Introduction

Upper respiratory tract infections (URTIs) have been regarded as the most frequent illnesses affecting people worldwide. A latest study published in the international Health Journal Lancet pointed out that 65% of all patients visiting primary healthcare centres were found to have respiratory symptoms across all age groups and regions of India.

Upper respiratory tract infection (URTI) is a term used to describe acute infections involving the nose, paranasal sinuses, pharynx, larynx, trachea, and bronchi. It is frequent during the cold winter months. Several factors contributing to the widespread occurrence of URTIs may be attributed to breathing of contaminated air, direct contact with infected people, over-crowded places, cigarette smoking and exposure to pathogens.

URTIs have been known to be caused either by virus, bacteria or combination of both.

TYPES

Common Cold: It is a viral infection of nose and throat (upper respiratory tract), sinuses and is usually harmless. Many types of viruses can cause a common cold. Children < 6 years are at greatest risk of colds, but healthy adults can also expect to have cold 2-3 times in a year. Absence of proper care and treatment may lead to different kinds of complications such as pneumonia, sinusitis and bronchitis.

Causes: The most implicative form of Common cold is through viruses. The most common virus that causes cold is Rhinovirus (30-80%).

Diagnosis: It can often be self-diagnosed but if the symptoms persist well beyond a week, medical help should be sought.

Pharyngitis: Is the inflammation of pharynx or a viral infection of the throat and is the main cause of sore throat. Sore throat occurs in the oral part of the pharynx. Pharynx is the part of the throat that lies below the mouth and the nasal cavity. It has been known to occur at an age of 4-8 years.

Causes: Bacterial and viral infections are the main causes of sore throat. Throat dryness, Tumour, Allergies and sinus infections can also contribute to the sore infections.

Diagnosis:

- Physical exam: Check for any white or grey patches, swollen lymph nodes and redness in the throat, ears and nose.
Food that keeps us warm in winter

Food plays a very important role in keeping us healthy during the winter months. So here's a list of what to eat during winters.

**Nuts & oilseeds:** Almonds, walnuts, peanuts, black & white sesame seeds, fenugreek seeds, flax seeds, etc. are nutrition-packed for cold days. They are rich in heart-healthy fats, fiber, magnesium & vitamin E.

**Fish:** Fish is rich in zinc & omega-3 fatty acids, both of which will give a health a boost in winters.

**Spices:** Cinnamon, nutmeg, Chilli, black pepper, cloves, etc. have heat generating properties in them.

**Fluids:** Hot soup, masala tea, green tea, kahwa and hot water with condiments help keep the body hydrated and maintain body temperature.

**Whole grains:** Millets (jowar, bajra) & other whole grains give immediate warmth and provide needed complex carbohydrates to the body. They are a good source of B vitamins and magnesium, which help in regulating the body's temperature during a time when they slowdown from the colder weather.

**Garlic:** As winter is said to affect the proper functioning of the heart (the reason behind maximum heart attacks in this season), Garlic becomes an essential item to be included in food as it not only controls blood pressure and ensures proper flow of blood, but also keeps the body warm and energetic.

**Eggs:** Eggs are in huge demand in winters because they are not just powerhouses of energy but are also filled with proteins and vitamins that help body fight infection in winters.

**Ginger:** It keeps the body warm also helps boost the immune and digestive systems. It can be used in salad dressings, soups such as ginger carrot soup and other food items.

**Amla:** Chutney of fresh amla, powdered amla or amla cooked in sugar syrup taken everyday during winters improves immunity. It is a stress buster and due to its warm effect its consumption is recommended in winters.

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**Daadi Maa Kee Potli**
(from the Grandmother's closet)

### Causes:
- **Colds and allergies, Hay fever**
- **A deviated nasal septum, nasal bone spur or nasal polyps**
- **Cystic fibrosis**
- **Diseases that prevent the cilia from working properly**
- **Changes in altitude (flying or scuba diving)**
- **Large adenoids**
- **Smoking**
- **Weakened immune system from HIV/Chemotherapy**

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1 refers to a group of symptoms usually caused by the Epstein-Barr virus (EBV)
2 common bacteria that cause throat infections

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Eat Healthy, Stay Warm! 😊

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### Causes:
- **Group A streptococcus**
- **Various respiratory viruses, especially cold and flu viruses**
- **Infectious mononucleosis**

### Diagnosis:
- **Physical exam:** Check the throat for red and inflamed tonsils.
- **Throat culture:** A throat swab is required to diagnose the cause of tonsillitis.
- **Blood Tests:** To diagnose infectious mononucleosis

### Epiglottis:
It is a potentially life-threatening condition that occurs when the epiglottis — a small cartilage "lid" that covers the windpipe - swells, blocking the flow of air into the lungs. It can occur at any age.

### Causes:
- Burns from hot liquids, direct injury to throat and various infections. The most common cause in children is infection with Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib).

### Sinusitis:
It is an infection of the sinuses that occurs as the result of an infection from a virus, bacteria, or fungus. The soft lining of the sinuses gets swollen and the tiny windows to the nose get blocked, leading to fluid being produced and collecting in the sinuses. Long standing infection and allergy lead to formation of polyps and complete blockage of sinuses leading to headaches and frequent cold. When the tissue lining these sinuses gets infected, the condition is known as sinusitis.

It affects people of all ages and gender and is more common during seasonal changes.

### Causes:
- Burns from hot liquids, direct injury to throat and various infections. The most common cause in children is infection with Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib).

### Diagnosis:
- **Throat Exam:** Using a fiber optic tube
- **X-ray:** X-rays of throat and chest to view the severity of the inflammation and infection
- **Blood Test:** Throat and blood cultures to determine the cause of infection, such as bacteria or a virus

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Contd...#3
Upper Respiratory... contd...# 2

**Diagnosis:**
- Physical exam: Check the nose for signs of inflammation/polyps.
- Nasal endoscopy / Rhinoscopy
- Nasal Cytology and Nasal Culture (if it is repetitive)
- CT Scan / MRI (if required)
- Allergy testing
- Blood Test

**Bronchitis:** It is a respiratory disease, an inflammation of the airways between the windpipe and the lungs (bronchial tubes). The lining of these tubes produces large amounts of mucus, triggering a lingering cough. Although a single episode of bronchitis usually isn’t cause for concern, it can lead to pneumonia in some people. Repeated bouts of bronchitis may indicate development of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

**Causes:**
- Viral / Bacterial infection
- Exposure to tobacco smoke/pollutants/solvents
- Cigarette smoking
- Weak immune system
- Occupational exposure to chemical fumes from ammonia, chlorine, etc.

**Diagnosis:** Bronchitis is diagnosed by a doctor after a physical examination and discussion of symptoms. If the doctor suspects other problems or feels a need to assess the functioning of lungs then the following tests may be recommended
- Chest X-ray: Helps determine pneumonia or another condition that may explain the cough.
- Bronchoscopy: In this procedure, the patient is given a local anesthesia and a tube is passed into the airways to collect a sputum sample.
- Sputum tests: Sputum is the mucus coughed up from lungs. It can be tested to check whooping cough (pertussis) or other illnesses. It can also be tested for signs of allergies.
- Spirometry test: A device called a spirometer is to be blown, which measures the volume of air entering and leaving the lungs. This test checks for signs of asthma.

**Rhinitis:** It means inflammation of nose which results in rhinorrea (colloquially known as ‘runny nose’), congestion, nasal itch, sneezing, postnasal drainage, and in some patients, ocular symptoms such as watering eyes. It represents one of the most frequently encountered chronic conditions for which medical care is sought. It affects both the nostrils at the same time.

**Causes:**
- Environmental/Occupational irritants
- Weather changes
- Infections
- Foods and beverages
- Hormonal changes
- Common cause of allergic rhinitis is pollen. Other causes include grass, dust, animal dander, cold saliva and skin.

**Diagnosis:**
- Non-allergic rhinitis is diagnosed based on symptoms and ruling out other causes, especially allergies

- In case of allergic rhinitis Skin / Blood Tests are suggested to check for allergies

**Laryngitis:** It is an inflammation of the voice cords in the voice box (larynx) due to overuse, irritation or infection. In adults, cigarette smoking and gastroesophageal reflux are major causes of chronic laryngitis, whilst in infants and children gastroesophageal reflux and viral and bacterial infections play the major role.

**Causes:**
- common cold
- overuse of the vocal cords
- Allergy
- Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) causing reflux laryngitis
- Smoking
- Exposure to polluted air

**Diagnosis:**
- Laryngoscopy: Visual examination of vocal cords by using a light and a tiny mirror or using fiber-optic laryngoscopy. This involves inserting a thin, flexible tube (endoscope) with a tiny camera and light through nose or mouth and into the back of throat.
- Biopsy: If any suspicious area is observed, this may be suggested
- CT Scan / MRI Scan (if required)
- Skin Allergy test
- X-ray of chest and neck to check for unusual narrowing or swelling of larynx

**Tracheitis:** It is a bacterial infection of windpipe. It affects mostly young children. This may be due to their tracheas being smaller and more easily blocked by swelling.

**Causes:** It is often caused by the bacteria Staphylococcus aureus.

**Diagnosis:**
- Blood Tests: to check oxygen level
- Nasopharyngeal culture to look for bacteria
- Tracheal culture to look for bacteria
- X-ray of the trachea

**Treatment:**
- Most upper respiratory tract infections (URIs) are self-diagnosed and self-treated at home. The treatment strategies involve intake of fluids, gargling with saline water, use of lozenges and steam inhalation.
- Medicines if taken should be used with caution in children < 2 years because serious adverse reactions and fatalities have occurred with over-the-counter preparations.
- Antibacterial therapy is appropriate for patients with Group A streptococcal pharyngitis, Bacterial sinusitis and Epiglottitis.
- In certain cases, to overcome the sensation of pain, analgesics are prescribed.

**Prevention**
- Avoid smoking & stay away from smokers
- Maintain proper hygiene
- Maintain healthy life style
- Exercise regularly
- Avoid contacts with people suffering from URTI
- Wash hands often to limit exposure to germs and bacteria
- Use a mask/scarf to filter the air you are breathing in
- Annual Vaccination – Pneumonia, Flu, Hib, etc

**Conclusion**

Upper Respiratory Tract Infection is a leading cause of seeking medical care which is caused by viruses. The best way to prevent this illness is to eat healthy, exercise and vaccinate the vulnerable population, including pregnant women, elderly and diabetics.
What is Migraine? What are the triggers that cause migraine?

Migraine is a form of Vascular Headache. It is one of the most common primary Headaches seen in clinical practice. It is characterized by one sided Headache which is throbbing in nature, some people will have intolerability to light, sound during headache. These Headaches last for more than 4 hours disturbing the work. Some people may experience symptoms like flashes of light, darkness, increased emotional outbursts, etc. before the onset of Headache. These symptoms are called aura. Some people may have Headache without aura. In some people Headache may be present with vomiting and vertigo.

Many people with migraine experience Headache after certain events called triggers. These triggers of Migraine may vary from food materials, beverages & stress etc. The most common trigger like stress, sleeplessness, sun exposure, heavy sounds, chocolates, cigarette smoking are seen in many people. But every person is different & there is no hard & fast rule that these activities cause headache in every Migraineur.

What age groups are typically affected most by migraine headaches?

It mostly affects young people in the age group of 20 – 40yrs. But now a days migraine headache is seen even in school going children.

In your opinion has the incidence of migraine increased in recent years, or has there just been more attention given to migraine headaches?

The incidence of migraine has definitely increased these days due to changed lifestyles, lack of physical activity & change in food habits etc.

Do you feel that medical treatments are more successful than alternative methods of treating migraine (for example, acupuncture and herbal remedies)?

Migraine requires multi-disciplinary approach. Medical treatment helps to relieve and alleviate acute attack of migraine as well as decrease or abort attacks (Prophylactic treatment). But all said, there are recurrences of Headache once medication is stopped in some people. Alternative methods like Yoga, Meditation & Life style modifications help these people along with Medication.

The types of headaches migraine sufferers experience differ (chronic, classic, common), but they are all classified as migraines. What is it that makes these headaches related?

Migraineurs may experience different types of Headaches; But Migraine Headache can be classically described as on sided, throbbing Headache lasting for more than 4 Hours disturbing work with associated symptoms and aura.

What is the most reliable method of diagnosing migraine?

Migraine is diagnosed clinically. Though imaging is done in some people with Migraine, this is done to rule out other dangerous causes of Headache like intracranial bleeds, tumors etc.

How important do you feel diet is in the management of migraine headaches?

In some people Dietary factors trigger Headache. Chocolates, red meat, coffee, tea, alcohol etc. are known to act as triggers. These triggers are specific to different individuals and avoidance of these factors decreases or even alleviates Migraine Headache.

What are some of the latest developments in treating migraine?

As of now treatment focuses on treatment of migraine attack, prevention to stop or decrease the number of attacks (prophylaxis) & various lifestyle modifications & other measures like yoga, meditation etc.

“Views expressed herein are purely personal and do not reflect the views of the Hospital”

News bits

Increasing pollution underlines need for health insurance

Source: The Economic Times

A study by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has identified 41 Indian cities where the air quality is poor. Coupled with water pollution, the resultant health hazards are many. The cost of treating respiratory, cardio-vascular and waterborne ailments can be high and the need of the hour is health insurance. “We have seen a 15-18% rise in water pollution-related claims and 12-15% rise in air pollution-related claims on a CAGR basis for the last three years,” says Abhijeet Ghosh, Head, Health Insurance, Bajaj Allianz General Insurance. The average claim size varies between Rs 25,000-28,000 annually.

Insurance claims study stresses importance of hand hygiene

Source: The Business Standard

Maximum number of claims received by SBI General Insurance from hand hygiene-related diseases were made by those in 21-30 years age group last fiscal. People in this age-group accounted for 29% of the total claims received for diseases like typhoid, paratyphoid, and gastroenteritis. The company had conducted a study on claims data relating to these diseases on the occasion of Global Hand washing Day i.e. on October 15. More claims were made by males (57%) for these diseases than females (43%). Around 73% of total claims were received by non-metro cities.

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