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Ah, summer — what power you have to make
us suffer and like it

TINEA CRURIS

Seen the advertisement where the man rushes home to close the door and scratch his itching groin area? Itching and burning sensation caused in different parts of the body, caused by fungal infections, usually shoots up during summer. City doctors say that problems like tinea cruris, athlete's foot and ringworms are some of the most common fungal infections people should watch out for. "Tinea Cruris, also known as the *dhobi* itch, is a



burning sensations in different folds of the body like groin, thigh folds and under breast region." Affected areas may look red or brown and are generally accompanied by flaking, peeling, scaling and cracking of the skin. "Many times, patients may end up getting pimples and pustules around the affected region," says Dr Keshavmurthy. Consulting the right doctor is very important if these symptoms appear, she adds.

dermatophyte fungal infection of the groin region in either sex. It is caused due to excess sweat and a damp environment. It generally occurs in the folds of the body," says Dr Archana Keshavmurthy, cosmetologist and dermatologist at Shades Speciality Centre. Believed to be more common among men, this skin problem is generally caused by a fungus called *Trichophyton rubrum*, while fungi *Candida albicans*, *Trichophyton mentagrophytes* and *Epidermophyton floccosum* are rare contributors. Dr Keshavmurthy says: "This problem causes itching and

Treat it

"Proper care and timely treatment can prevent this problem from becoming worse. Tinea cruris is normally treated with anti-fungal ointments that are applied topically. Consult the doctor before applying any ointments," says Dr Keshavmurthy.

Prevent it

- Avoid wearing tight-fitting synthetic clothes, so that do not sweat too much in the summer sun.
- Wear comfortable cotton clothes so the skin has space to breathe.
- Choose pastel shades and light colours versus dark coloured clothes which tend to absorb heat and lead to excessive sweating.
- Stay clean and dry. Wet skin, like damp environment, works like a fertiliser for fungi to grow.

Don't let the sun GET YOU DOWN

Your search for the ultimate summer health guide ends here. Nidhi Bhushan reports on the most common problems of the season along with prevention care and treatment.



BACTERIAL CONJUNCTIVITIS

Bacterial conjunctivitis is one of the most common eye problems during summer. "Also called 'Madras Eye' or 'Red Eye', bacterial conjunctivitis is common in summer. Reason: Summer coincides with the mango season and flies carrying the infection are attracted to mangoes. These flies spread bacterial conjunctivitis," says Dr AR Anand, ophthalmologist at Sudharshana Nethralaya. Conjunctivitis refers to an infection in the white of the eye. "A superficial layer is formed in the eye because of the discharge of a liquid from the eye. It is the human body's natural way of fighting an infection," says Dr Anand. Stickiness in the eye lids is one of the main symptoms of conjunctivitis. Dr Anand says: "A person infected with conjunctivitis might find it difficult to open his or her eyes in the morning while waking up because of stickiness caused by the discharge in the eye." The infected person's eye turns red. "Conjunctivitis causes sand particle-like sensations in the eye resulting in a lot of discomfort and roughness," says Dr Anand.



Treat it

Tear substitutes, available at pharmacists, should be used by the infected person to relieve some of the roughness caused by infection.

Prevent it

- Wash hands immediately after contact with the infected eye.
- Avoid Genitican eye drops. They are no longer effective and cause allergies among most people.
- Always consult a doctor before any kind of treatment. Avoid purchasing over-the-counter drugs.

ATHLETE'S FOOT

This is a fungal infection which is very common among athletes, therefore the name. "Collection of sweat in-between the toes of a foot can sometimes result in athlete's foot. Damp environment acts as a catalyst for fungi to grow. Itching, peeling, scaling and cracking of the sole between the toes are some of the most common symptoms of athlete's foot," says Dr Sachith Abraham, consultant derma-



tologist at Manipal Hospital. In many cases, people don't exhibit any symptoms at all, leading to a delay in treatment, he says. In severe cases, cracked skin under the feet can lead to exposed raw tissue, pain, swelling and inflammation. "In some cases, if the problem is left unattended, it may affect the nails too leading to fungal nails in the

feet," says Dr Abraham.

Treat it

Depending on the seriousness of the problem, doctors carry out different treatments. "In mild cases of athlete's foot, anti-fungal creams or ointments like clotrimazole, terbinafine and oxiconazole work very well. However, in cases of severe or resistant problems, patients require anti-fungal tablets as well," says Dr Abraham. Treatment, even in mild cases, should be given only following proper consultation with a doctor.

Prevent it

- Keep feet clean and dry at all times to avoid moisture that forms a fertile area for fungus to grow.
- Avoid wearing shoes for long hours and allow the feet to breathe.
- After swimming or taking a shower in public places, wash yourself later thoroughly because athlete's foot is contagious.
- Soaping the feet, especially between the toes, is important to stay hygienic and clean at all times.
- Avoid wearing used socks.
- Consulting a doctor is important as over-the-counter medicines can worsen the problem because they act like fertilisers for the athlete's foot. Even though one might find temporary relief, the situation might get out of hand later.

HEPATITIS A AND E

Exposure to viruses associated with viral hepatitis A and E that are transmitted by the faeco oral route results in hepatitis A or B. "One of the first symptoms of this disease is decreased appetite and anorexia. Even vomiting accompanied by fever are common symptoms of hepatitis A and E," says Dr Kini. An obvious symptom is the discoloration of eyes. "The incubation period (Time gap between consumption of the infected food or water and the first symptom) in hepatitis A and E lasts for 2-6 weeks," he says. The patient usually recovers within six months. "There are very few cases of death among those suffering from hepatitis A and E — as low as 0.05%. Only acute liver failure may lead to death," says Dr Kini. Unaware of why it happens, Dr Kini highlights that hepatitis A and E is mostly fatal among pregnant women. He says: "At least 20% pregnant women suffering from hepatitis A and E die."

Prevent it

- Avoid drinking fruit juices from the roadside. Stick to a healthy and hygienic meal at home.
- Boil and cool water to room temperature before drinking. City doctors feel that, at times, water purification systems and mineral water bottles fail. They say that boiled water is the safest to drink.
- Get vaccinated for hepatitis A. There is no vaccination for hepatitis E yet.



Treat it

One is advised to take lots of rest as the first step to treat hepatitis A and E. Consultant medical specialist Dr Sanjiv Rao from Manipal Hospital says: "There is no defined treatment for hepatitis A and E. If diagnosed with either, the patient is advised to take a lot of rest."

PRICKLY HEAT

More commonly known as prickly heat, the medical term for this skin problem is Miliaria. This usually occurs due to humid and hot climatic conditions. "Sudden change of weather from cold to hot causes prickly heat among many as the body is unable to adapt to the sudden change," says Dr Abraham. Prickly heat is common among children and infants because underdeveloped sweat glands aggravate the problem and are common among children. "When a person suffers from prickly heat, their sweat glands are obstructed due to plugged dead skin cells or bacteria," says Dr Abraham. This occurs mostly in tropical climatic conditions. Rashes, also called papules, are one of the main symptoms of prickly heat. It is characterised by a pricking needles-type sensation in the affected area. These rashes might occur on different parts of the body, of which the neck, face or under the breasts are the most common targets.



"A person suffering from prickly heat should use a cooling lotion and stay indoors for a couple of days till the problem goes away entirely," says Dr Abraham. Tablets are also prescribed to treat prickly heat in severe cases.

Prevent it

- Avoid anything that causes excessive sweating.
- Avoid exposure to the sun during the peak hours of heat — between 11 am to 3 pm.
- Avoid tight-fitting or dark coloured clothes also as they absorb heat.

POLYMORPHIC LIGHT ERUPTIONS

Prolonged exposure to the sun may result in skin problems like PLE. "Polymorphic Light Eruptions can be of many kinds — sunburn, rashes, white-heads, red-heads and so on," says Dr Keshavmurthy. Resulting in severe itching which can be very painful in some cases, PLE affects parts of the body that are most exposed to the sun. "The side of the face, neck and hands are the most vulnerable areas to PLE in summer," says Dr Keshavmurthy. Dr Abraham adds: "They are basically skin infections of different shapes and sizes. They are caused by excessive exposure to sunlight. Using a sunscreen daily lowers the risk of PLE to a large extent."



There is no specific treatment for PLE, say doctors. Research on its causes and symptoms is ongoing.

Treat it

- Avoid prolonged exposure to sunlight.
- Use sunscreen everyday before going out in the sun.
- Wash your hands and face regularly to avoid a severe case of PLE.

FOOD POISONING

Paani puri on the streets of Bangalore with some masala puri on a Sunday afternoon sure sounds tempting, but, with the onset of summer, one needs to be very careful in order to stay fit. One of the most common gastro problems that people face in the summer season is food poisoning, according to doctors in the city. The ingestion of toxin present in food or water causes food poisoning among people. "It can take around 6-8 hours for the infection to take effect in a person's body after ingestion of infected water or food," says Dr Dinesh Kini, consultant gastroenterologist, Manipal Hospital. The symptoms of food poisoning generally begin with vomiting followed by loose stools.

Treat it

The treatment of food poisoning is more or less symptomatic. "Viral diarrhoea can be treated by symptomatic treatment and correction of hydration and electrolyte in the patient's body," says Dr Kini, adding that the treatment also depends on the identification of the offending agent in the body. He says, "For instance, antibiotics are given in case of E-Coli or Salmonella."

Prevent it

- Uncooked food like chaats should be avoided and extra care should be taken with drinking water.

ACUTE GASTROENTERITIS

Also called stomach flu in the UK, acute gastroenteritis is the inflammation of the gastrointestinal tract, involving the stomach and the small intestine, resulting in acute diarrhoea. "Acute gastroenteritis is caused by virus or bacteria present in contaminated food or water. It is usually passed on to people by the ones who prepare street food like paani puri, pappi chaat, etc.," says Dr Kini. Diarrhoea and nausea are the main symptoms. This disease is, at times, also accompanied by severe abdominal cramps. Dr Kini says: "One rarely suffers from high fever or blood in stools while suffering from this problem."

Treat it

Treatment depends on the seriousness of the condition, says Dr Kini. "We prescribe medicines to patients according to what the he or she has eaten and then work around it," he says.

Prevent it

- Boil water and make it infection-free before drinking.
- Avoid street food as much as possible.
- Avoid raw and uncooked food from the street.
- Drink lots of fresh juices made at home rather than the ones from the streets.



ALTERNATIVES

Homeopathy provides many options to beat the summer heat. Homeopathy has preventive as well as curative medicines. Dr Sanjay N. Phutane, homeopathic doctor, says: "From allergies to digestive problems, people face a number of health problems during the summer. Since the content of pollen is quite the patient's symptoms, homeopathic doctors prescribe medicines to build resistance in a person against his/her allergic agents. These are the homeopathic medicines that scribe medicines to build resistance to the irritant," says Dr Phutane.

- Diarrhoea — Sulphur 30, Ars.alb 200 mg
- Dehydration — Glonine 200