

Exclusive story in Midday :- Dr Jisha Pillai, Dermatologist Wash areas exposed to sewage thoroughly

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'Wash areas exposed to sewage thoroughly'

Dermatologists list issues caused by regular exposure to filth, suggest remedial steps

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HEALTH experts, especially dermatologists, have expressed concern about citizens coming in contact with sewage water, which contains a dangerous mix of pathogens, bacteria, viruses and harmful chemicals, during the monsoon season. Regular exposure — whether through direct contact, inhalation of odours, or accidental ingestion — can lead to a wide range of health complications, many of which can be life-threatening if left untreated.

Dermatologists explain

From skin rashes to severe infections, doctors state that constant exposure to sewage water can lead to multiple health issues.

Dr Jisha Pillai, dermatologist at Lilavati Hospital, said, "Regular exposure to sewage water can be harmful to the skin. It can impact the skin in various ways. The water is filled with harmful bacteria, viruses, and chemicals that induce skin problems in people of all ages. The most common problems include contact dermatitis, where the skin becomes red, itchy, and inflamed due to irritants or allergens in the dirty water. Fungal infections like athlete's foot or ringworm are also common, especially when the feet stay wet for long periods. There will be concerning signs such as redness, irritation, stinging, and burning sensations."

According to Dr Sonali Kohli, senior consultant, dermatology, Sir HN Reliance Foundation Hospital, Mumbai, if someone has any open wounds or cuts, pathogens present in the sewage water can cause deep-rooted and severe skin infections, which can be fungal, bacterial or pathogenic. "The problem



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Dr Jisha Pillai, dermatologist

with fungal infections is that they generally appear seven to 14 days after the exposure, and they begin as small circular patches which are red and itchy. Peracetic infections are the most severe ones and will show systemic symptoms beginning with recurrent itching and development of hives, which can look like urticarial rashes [raised, itchy welts on the skin]. To prevent any such health issues, wash the exposed body parts thoroughly with anti-bacterial body washes and application of antibacterial lotions," she said.

Another common problem seen is the maceration of body parts. "Especially of the toes and in between the fingers of the feet. This causes repeated peeling of the sole's skin, which then exposes the feet to various infections and pus," said Dr Smriti Nasswa Singh, consultant, dermatology and cosmetology, Fortis Hospital, Mulund.



One ailment caused by exposure to sewage is contact dermatitis, where the skin becomes red, itchy, and inflamed due to irritants or allergens. REPRESENTATION PIC/ISTOCK