

70% diseases in Hyderabad are water-borne: survey

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Healthy drinking water for individuals and families is the need of the hour. The World Health Organization has identified contamination of drinking water as a critical public health issue; affecting more than 98,000 children with diarrhoea and other water borne diseases every year.

India is facing a severe public health crisis with increasing water-borne diseases and a deteriorating quality of groundwater.

Recent studies by the United Nations reveal that over 1 lakh people die in India annually due to water borne diseases. It indicates that 70 million people in 20 states and 600 districts are at risk due to excess fluoride and around 10 million people are at risk due to excess arsenic in ground water.

Hyderabad is reeling under severe water contamination which is adversely affecting the health of its citizens. To understand the impact of water contamination and key issues with drinking water in India and in Hyderabad, Eureka Forbes and GFK conducted a nationwide survey titled "Kya Aapka Paani Beemar Hai". The water audit aimed at mapping the causes and reasons that were affecting families and individuals in Hyderabad and also across India due to increasing levels of water contamination and unavailability of safe, healthy drinking water. A comprehensive survey was conducted in Hyderabad interviewing 325 households.

The findings revealed some hard-hitting facts about water contamination being the biggest issue about 65 per cent of the households in Hyderabad. Ground water samples collected and examined by the Eureka Forbes Institute of Environment, a non-profit organisation revealed that few areas in Hyderabad were severely hit by water contamination. Levels of Total Dissolved Solids, Hardness, chlorides, nitrates, etc. responsible for water contamination have exceeded more than the permissible limits in certain parts of Hyderabad such as Madhapur, Asif Nagar, Secunderabad, Abids and Pragathi Nagar among other places. Toxic chemicals such as arsenic and lead and disease-causing bacteria are also contributing to the alarming increase in the water contamination.

Due to increasing levels of water contamination, five out of every 10 respondents surveyed had someone in their family and friends falling sick in the last one year. Incidences of deadly waterborne diseases like cholera, jaundice, typhoid, diarrhoea as well as common cold, cough and fever were high.

Around 48 per cent of respondents have attributed unhealthy drinking water as the main cause for the diseases in their families. The study echoed a serious concern among 50 per cent respondents who agreed that their drinking water is not healthy and hence is unfit for consumption. Surprisingly, even today about 27 per cent of Hyderabad households drink water directly from taps. This indicates that a significant number of people are vulnerable to deadly water-borne diseases, especially during monsoons as the water contamination levels tend to increase.

Water hardness, bad taste, colour and odour were some of the major issues highlighted by the respondents during the survey.

Sharing the findings of the water audit, Dr Thuppil Venkatesh, Professor Emeritus Department of Bio-Chemistry and Bio-Physics at St. Johns Medical College, Hyderabad who also is an Advisor to The Quality Council of India (QCI), said, "The much debated topic of water quality and contamination is touching alarming levels in India. There has been a growing concern about the increasing water contamination levels and its impact on lives of Indians which is much evident from the water audit. India is on the verge of becoming the "world capital of lead poisoning. He said, "When there is acute exposure to lead, and the concentration levels very high, there is damage to the central nervous system and the kidneys, the reduction of IQ especially in children is irreversible."

The purpose of this study was to gauge the extent of awareness of the problem of contamination in drinking water and how it is affecting the health of Indians.

KEY FINDINGS

Microbiological contamination level is noticed in very alarming level especially in monsoon.

Ground water chemical including the Total Dissolved Solid (TDS) level has reached alarming proportions in drinking water along with new-age contaminates.

70%

Water-borne diseases like cholera, jaundice, typhoid, common cough and cold accounted for 70 per cent of all diseases in Hyderabad.

48%

of the respondents agreed that drinking unhealthy water was the cause of all diseases.

67%

Water contamination is the biggest issue with drinking water as said by 67 per cent of the respondents.

27%

Yet 27% of the households in Hyderabad drink water directly from the tap.

