

Waterborne diseases claim 4 so far

Umesh Isalkar, TNN Jul 15, 201

http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-07-15/pune/40589651_1_waterborne-safe-drinking-water-viral-hepatitis

PUNE: As many as 1,572 people have fallen ill and four have died of waterborne diseases like diarrhoea and viral hepatitis in the state so far this year, according to the a report of the state health department released on Friday.

Deaths due to waterborne illnesses is a serious public health issue, as they are completely preventable if adequate measures are taken to provide safe drinking water to all. The main reason these diseases spread is that a significant amount of water sources in rural areas are sullied.

The data on deaths due to waterborne diseases corroborates another recent report by the state public health laboratory, which indicated that much of the state's water was unfit for drinking due to a significant percentage of microbial and faecal contamination.

"Of the four deaths, three occurred due to diarrhoea and one due to viral hepatitis," a state health official said. Of these, the most recent casualty was in Dhabe village in Parola taluka, Jalgaon district, on July 11.

In the last six months, there have been 31 outbreaks of waterborne diseases, in which 1,576 people fell ill (including the four casualties), the report says. There were 15 outbreaks of diarrhoea, followed by viral hepatitis (8), gastroenteritis (6), and cholera (2).

"Waterborne diseases are caused by infectious agents that can be present in water, soil or air. These include bacteria, viruses and parasites. The most common way these diseases affect the body is by causing diarrhoea, in addition to other symptoms. Infants, children, the elderly and individuals with weak immune systems (such as those with HIV or AIDS) are especially vulnerable to these diseases," said Sharad Agarkhedkar, former president of the Indian Medical Association.

As per the report, gastroenteritis and diarrhoea have claimed the highest number of infections and deaths. A total of 185 people have died due to gastroenteritis infection in the state in the last three years. In 2007-08, as many as 1,919, 922 people developed various water-related infections. Of these, 116 succumbed to these diseases. In 2008-2009, as many as 2,048,495 people developed infections, of which 35 lost their lives, while in 2009-2010, over 2 lakh people were infected and 93 succumbed to the infections.

"What is more disturbing is the fact that these deaths are preventable. However, due to lack of access to safe drinking water, a huge number of the population, especially those

living in rural areas, have to face various illnesses and infections," said a senior health activist.