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Erratic weather puts city in sickbay with stomach bug

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Mumbai: Smita Gupta, a student of Class XII, had to battle an upset stomach during her chemistry paper last Thursday. After finishing her exam, she rushed back home and informed her mother about her stomach ailment. Smita was nervous as she had her mathematics exam scheduled the next day.

Smita's mother Saroj consulted their doctor. "I described her symptoms to our doctor and he prescribed some medicines. However, she had to visit the washroom seven to eight times before the medicines could start having an effect," said Saroj.

But Smita is not the only one to have been bitten by the stomach bug. Doctors across the city are reporting a sudden spurt in the number of patients suffering from classic symptoms of gastroenteritis.

Dr Shahid Barmare, who consults at Kohinoor Hospital in Kurla, attributed this to the erratic weather. "Food is

DOS & DON'TS

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➤ Avoid eating out
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➤ Eat freshly-cut fruits and freshly-cooked food
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➤ Boil water before drinking if you do not have a purifier
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➤ In case of loose motions, do not self medicate
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➤ Stay hydrated and drink lots of water

turning stale faster than usual because of the strange weather," he said. "A lot of Mumbai-kars eat out, many of them a regular at roadside stalls. With days getting hotter, food is turning stale faster. As a result, a lot of people are ending up with gastro problems," he added.

Dr Khusrav Bajan, intensivist at P D Hinduja Hospital, said that most of the gastroenteritis cases were viral. "During monsoon, more people suf-

fer from bacterial gastroenteritis. But currently, most of the cases are caused by to an viral infection."

Explaining further, Dr Bajan said the current post-winter conditions are conducive for the viruses to grow.

"Most patients are coming with loose motions. About 20% of the patients come to us at a later stage by which time they were suffering from dehydration, which causes kidney failure. Most dehydration patients have to be treated with intra-venous fluids, but a few acute cases also have to be admitted to the intensive care unit," he said.

Doctors said the number of diarrhoea cases will come under control once the weather settles down. "If the heat comes down and the humidity levels increase, it will be normal summer for Mumbai. In that case, the viruses will not be able to grow and the gastroenteritis cases will automatically come down," said a doctor from the medicine department of KEM Hospital.