

Overwhelming heat exacerbates health challenges across Dhaka, as children bear the brunt of the impact

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Online Desk: A prolonged heatwave has significantly increased patient admissions in hospitals throughout Dhaka, with the city's medical facilities struggling to cope with the additional burden.

Most admissions involve heatstroke, fever, cold, diarrhoea, and pneumonia, ailments that disproportionately affect children.

Patients and their families face severe heat within hospital premises as well, worsening conditions for those already suffering. Many hospitals, including Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), have reported a surge in cases since Eid, with no space left even on the floors, forcing many to resort to makeshift solutions like hand fans or small table fans.

Abul Malek, from Dhaka's Nodda area, was admitted at DMCH. His son Nadim told UNB, "The heat is unbearable, and the lack of available beds has left my father to receive treatment on the floor. The situation would have been somewhat manageable with lower temperatures."

In response to the dire situation, Brigadier General Md. Asaduzzaman, Director of Dhaka Medical College Hospital, emphasized their efforts to improve conditions. "We're swapping out all malfunctioning fans and adding new ones wherever possible. Additionally, technicians have been instructed to ensure separate lines for fans and lights to prevent electrical issues."

Patient admissions have reportedly doubled at Kurmitola General Hospital, Mugda Medical College and Hospital and Dhaka Shishu Hospital as well since Eid. The majority of these patients are suffering from diarrhoea and pneumonia. The emergency and outpatient medicine departments are under the most pressure, facing the highest patient load.

Professor Dr. Farid Ahmed, Head of General Pediatrics at Dhaka Shishu Hospital, highlighted the impact of the heatwave on young patients: "With the heat continuing, children are particularly vulnerable to heatstroke and other diseases, which have led to an alarming rate of hospital admissions. We are struggling to provide enough beds."

Public health expert and former director of Disease Control at Directorate General of Health Services, Professor Dr. Be-Nazir Ahmed, stressed the severity of the situation, noting, "The current heatwave is unbearable. It not only raises the risk of cholera but also heightens the likelihood of other diseases. Extreme temperatures disrupt normal bodily functions, posing life-threatening risks and increasing susceptibility to various infections."

The authorities have urged the public to stay indoors unless absolutely necessary and avoid direct exposure to extreme temperatures. With schools reopening, there is an increased concern for children's safety, necessitating heightened awareness and preventive measures against foodborne diseases and dehydration.

This crisis underscores the pressing need for improved infrastructure and preparedness to handle climate-induced health emergencies, particularly for the most vulnerable populations such as children.