

ICMR detects two cases of Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV) in Karnataka

06 January 2025 | News

ICMR will continue to track trends in HMPV circulation throughout the year



The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has detected two cases of Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV) in Karnataka. Both cases were identified through routine surveillance for multiple respiratory viral pathogens, as part of ICMR's ongoing efforts to monitor respiratory illnesses across the country.

HMPV is a type of common respiratory virus. It belongs to a family of viruses called pneumoviridae – the same group the respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) belongs to.

It is emphasised that HMPV is already in circulation globally, including in India, and cases of respiratory illnesses associated with HMPV have been reported in various countries.

Furthermore, based on current data from ICMR and the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP) network, there has been no unusual surge in Influenza-Like Illness (ILI) or Severe Acute Respiratory Illness (SARI) cases in the country.

The details of the detected HMPV cases are as under:

1. A 3-month-old female infant, who was diagnosed with HMPV after being admitted to Baptist Hospital, Bengaluru with a history of bronchopneumonia. She has been since discharged.
2. An 8-month-old male infant, who tested positive for HMPV on January 3, 2025, after being admitted to Baptist Hospital, Bengaluru, with a history of bronchopneumonia. The infant is now recovering.

It is important to note that neither of the affected patients have any history of international travel.

Union Health Ministry is monitoring the situation through all available surveillance channels. ICMR will continue to track trends in HMPV circulation throughout the year. The World Health Organization (WHO) is already providing timely updates regarding the situation in China to further inform ongoing measures.

The recent preparedness drill conducted across the country has shown that India is well-equipped to handle any potential increase in respiratory illnesses and public health interventions can be deployed promptly if needed.

Dr Sachin Kumar, Senior Consultant - Pulmonology & Critical Care Medicine, Sakra World Hospital, Bengaluru said, "Human metapneumovirus (HMPV) is commonly observed in clinical practice in both India and China. First discovered in 2001, it became widely recognised by 2016 as a significant cause of respiratory issues in children, second only to Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV). HMPV primarily affects the upper respiratory tract in children.

HMPV include fever, cough, and cold, and in some cases, it can lead to pneumonia. The virus spreads quickly, with certain groups being particularly vulnerable, including children under 5 years, elderly individuals over 65 years, and patients with conditions such as COPD, bronchitis, asthma, or weakened immunity (e.g., due to chemotherapy or diabetes).

HMPV is typically self-limiting, with symptoms lasting 3-6 days, often followed by a lingering cough, cold, and a runny nose. While the majority of cases (85-90%) recover at home, 5-10% may require hospitalization, and severe cases resulting in fatality occur in less than 5% of patients. Comorbidities can increase the risk of severe outcomes, with 10-15% of lower respiratory tract infections leading to complications like severe pneumonia.

There is currently no specific treatment or vaccine available for HMPV. Prevention measures similar to those for COVID-19 are recommended, such as proper masking, consulting a physician when symptoms appear, and self-isolating if symptomatic."