

Meningitis Cases Seasonal, Not Sign of Epidemic, Doctors Say

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At least 120 new cases of meningitis, mostly in children, were reported this week in eight cities, including Moscow, but doctors said that the incidence was seasonal and that journalists had mixed up four different related but distinct illnesses.

The cases came into the spotlight after an outbreak of meningitis in the southern city of Rostov-on-Don in early June that killed two children and infected at least 55, said Galina Kozhevnikova, a practicing doctor and a professor at the department of infectious diseases at Moscow State Medical and Dental University.

"Such close attention is because of the outbreak in Rostov-on-Don," she said by telephone Thursday.

Another reason for the large-scale media attention to these cases is that they happened "in a short period of time," Kozhevnikova said.

The outbreak, at least in Moscow, also happened "a little earlier than usual," although in general the

number of enteroviral diseases and resultant incidence of serous meningitis, which has infected at least three children in Moscow, peaks in the summer and early fall, Kozhevnikova said.

In a regular year, anywhere from several dozen to several hundred cases of serous meningitis are registered in Moscow, mostly in children, she said.

"This is not some unnatural or catastrophic situation," Kozhevnikova said.

According to media reports, both in Rostov-on-Don and other cities, journalists combined statistics for two different types of unrelated meningitis and also added numbers for two other types of infections that in some cases cause meningitis.

The outbreaks of respiratory and enteroviral infections reported in June were complicated in some cases by meningococcal and serous meningitis, respectively.

The deaths of two children in Rostov-on-Don resulted from fulminant meningococcal meningitis, a complication of an acute respiratory viral infection, media reports said.

But most of the infected children in Rostov-on-Don and other cities had serous meningitis, which is a complication of an enteroviral infection and has a favorable recovery prognosis.

"Everything was mixed together in Rostov-on-Don: both serous and purulent meningitis. These are different things," Nikolai Malyshev, Moscow's chief infectious disease specialist, told a news conference Wednesday, RIA Novosti [reported](#).

Malyshev also said the Moscow cases were unrelated to those in Rostov-on-Don.

Many more people in other cities have contracted various types of enteroviral infections, which can become complicated by meningitis.

In Moscow, 37 children were hospitalized with various types of meningitis as of Thursday morning, and at least three of them had serous meningitis, RIA Novosti reported. Other cases of serous meningitis included three in Surgut, 10 in Nizhny Novgorod, one in Sochi, at least four in Voronezh and 60 in the Lipetsk region. In the Adygeya region, one child died from meningococcal meningitis.

Symptoms of serous meningitis typically include a temperature of 38 to 40 degrees Celsius and a headache. Patients may also have vomiting, muscle pains, diarrhea, abdominal pains and anxiety and sometimes delirium and fits.

The illness can be contracted through water, food, dirty hands, and sometimes by air in a crowd. People often get infected in public bathing places.

Patients must be treated in a hospital, not at home, Kozhevnikova said. As a preventive measure, she recommended washing one's hands before meals.

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