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Flu forces kids to miss school

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Calcutta: Schools are worried for many children are missing classes and sometimes exams because they are down with fever.

Doctors said that at least 30 per cent of the children coming to their clinics are suffering from viral fever.

Children are turning up for classes despite running a temperature, sometimes as high as 102-103 degrees Fahrenheit, and are being sent back home.

"Every day in the last few weeks, almost eight to 10 students are being sent back home because they are running a temperature. This has been so for about a week now. The children are first sent to the infirmary, and if they do not feel any better, they are sent back home," said Seema Sapru, principal, The Heritage School.

Many of them are complaining of fever, sore throat and body aches.

"Almost 30 to 40 per cent of the patients coming to us are those with viral infections. Most of them are going back home, but a small percentage are also being admitted," said Apurbo Ghosh, director of the Institute of Child Health.

Ghosh said that most children are being afflicted with the flu virus, but there are some instances of Adenovirus infection as well.

"But we don't prescribe a virus test to everybody because it becomes expensive for many," he said.

Doctors said fever, sore throat, sometimes redness in the eyes and loss of appetite are some of the symptoms with which children are turning up at clinics.

Children are recovering from flu viruses within five to six days, and if it's Adenovirus, it stretches to almost 10 days, he said.

"The current weather conditions, which fluctuate between a bout of rain fol-



lowed by a sunny day, are ideal for viral infections," said Ghosh.

Many schools discourage parents from sending children to school if they are unwell.

But parents would still send them to school because they don't want their children to miss exams, even if it is a unit or a weekly test.

A section of parents would rush their children to the doctor, get medicines, and send them to school the next morning despite them requiring sleep and rest.

There are instances when

a child comes to school after popping a pill in the morning. It is only later in the day when they start feeling unwell and have to be sent to the infirmary, a teacher said.

"Many children are reporting with fever despite our sending them repeated messages to parents that they should not come to school with fever. We are telling them that these are internal exams and one should not worry about them," said Gargi Banerjee, principal, Sri Sri Academy.

"This time, we had to give exemptions to many children during the unit tests. The infirmary has been overflowing, and there have been students almost every day who had to be sent back home," said Satabdi Bhattacharjee, principal, The Newtown School.

The school does not have a provision for a retest, but students are marked on the weightage of how they perform in the second unit test.