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Brass containers combat water-borne disease, kill bacteria



New Delhi, Apr 19 (PTI)

Considering the wide spread problem of water-borne diseases, especially in the developing world, an international study has suggested that use of brass water containers could help combat diseases such as diarrhoea, typhoid, jaundice and dysentery.

Brass water containers could help fight many water-borne diseases. The vessels would prove to be more useful in the developing countries where people view plastic containers as better and cheaper option to store drinking water, a report published in 'Nature' said.

Rob Reed, a microbiologist at Northumbria University, Newcastle, found that bacteria were less likely to thrive in brass water pots than in earthenware or plastic ones.

The scientist, along with fellow researchers Puja Tandon and Sanjay Chhabaria, filled brass and earthenware vessels with a diluted culture of Escherichia coli bacteria, which can cause diseases such as dysentery, it said.

The researchers then counted the surviving bacteria after 6, 24 and 48 hours. A similar test was carried out using naturally contaminated water, it said.

The amount of liv E. coli in the brass vessels dropped dramatically over time, and after 48 hours they fell to undetectable levels.

"It is one of the traditional ideas of water treatment in this part of the world and interestingly we were able to find a microbiological basis for it," he said.

Part of the study was done in India as a large number of people are affected with typhoid, jaundice, amoebiasis, diarrhoea and dysentery, the report said.

As efforts to provide safe drinking water have had difficulty reaching remote areas, water-borne diseases remain a serious threat in many poor regions of the world. About two million children, in the developing world, die each year from diarrhoea alone, the study said.

Reed, while in India came across local wisdom where people believed that traditional brass water containers offer some protection against sickness, it said.

"The idea intrigued me as, in Asia, I was investigating the anti-bacterial effects of sunlight on water," he said.

The amounts that circulate into the brass water vessels would not harm humans. Even a person drinking 10 litres of such water in a day would take in less than the daily recommended dose of copper or zinc, the scientist aded.