

## RSTV In-Depth: National Immunisation Day



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### What's in News?

On March 16, 2020, India observed the National Immunization day/ Vaccination day.

### Background:

- On **March 16th every year, India observes National Vaccination day**, also known as Immunization day. It was on this day in **1995 that the first dose of Oral Polio vaccine was given in India.**
- The initiative to eradicate polio from the country came in the form of the Pulse Polio Campaign launched by the government.
  - Under this extensive drive, **2 drops of Oral Polio Vaccine** was given to all children **younger than 5 years of age.**
  - The **last reported case of polio** in India was in West Bengal in January,
- **In 2014, India was declared polio-free.**

### Details:

- Over the years, immunisation has proved to be the most vital tool in controlling and

eliminating life-threatening infectious diseases.

- India committed to the resolution passed by the World Health Assembly for **Global Polio Eradication in 1988**.
- It was due to an aggressive vaccination campaign against Polio that India was declared free of the disease in March 2014.
- Another major milestone is the **elimination of Maternal and Neonatal Tetanus in 2015**.

#### **Importance of vaccination:**

- Vaccination is the most effective method of preventing highly infectious diseases.
- Extensive immunity due to vaccination is mostly responsible for the **world-wide eradication of small pox and the restraint of diseases like Polio, Measles and Tetanus** from a large part of the world.
- According to the World Health Organisation, **immunisation is a proven tool for controlling and eliminating life-threatening infectious diseases**.
- It is estimated to **avert between 2-3 million deaths every year**.
- The benefits of immunisation are not limited to improvements in health and life expectancy but also have the social and economic impacts at both the community as well as national level.

#### **History of Immunisation in India:**

- Modern immunisation developed in India in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century parallel to the Western World.
- India launched its **first vaccine Bacille Calmette-Guérin (BCG)** over 50 years ago.
- BCG used against TB, was launched in 1962 as a part of National Tuberculosis Programme.
- Expanded programme on Immunisation was launched in 1978.
  - Initially it included BCG, DPT, Typhoid vaccine.
  - OPV was added in 1979.
- In **1985**, the programme was modified to become the **Universal Immunisation Programme**. It was implemented in a phased manner.
- By 1989-1990 it was one of the largest health programmes in the world.
- UIP became a part of the **Child Survival and Safe Motherhood Programme in 1992**.

- Since 1997, immunisation is an important component of the **National Reproductive and Child Health Programme**, and the current [National Health Mission](#).

### Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP):

- India has **one of the biggest Universal Immunisation Programmes (UIP) in the world**, in terms of the number of beneficiaries covered, quantities of vaccinations used, geographical spread to the resources used.
- India's immunisation programme is the largest public health programme targeting close to **67 crore newborns, 2.9 crore pregnant women annually**.
- Free vaccination is carried out throughout the country including Tribal and remote areas.
- It is one of the cost-effective public health interventions responsible for the reduction of vaccine preventable under-5 mortality rate, with **free of cost vaccination against 12 diseases**.
- **Nationally against nine diseases:** Diphtheria, Pertussis, Tetanus, Polio, Measles, Rubella, Severe form of childhood [Tuberculosis](#), Hepatitis B and Meningitis & Pneumonia caused by Hemophilus Influenza type B.
- **Sub-nationally against three diseases:** Rotavirus diarrhoea, Pneumococcal Pneumonia, Japanese Encephalitis.
- Special immunisation drives like the **Mission Indradhanush**, [Intensified Mission Indradhanush](#), **Gram Swaraj Abhiyan**, **Extended Gram Swaraj Abhiyan** have been conducted to reach left out and hard to reach children living in remote and inaccessible areas.
- Besides, several other steps are also undertaken to strengthen routine immunisation and ensure a robust supply-chain management system.
- Some of the vaccines introduced by India over the years include the Inactivated Polio Vaccine, Rota virus vaccine, Measles-rubella vaccine, Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine, Tetanus and Adult diphtheria vaccine.
- Official data on India's immunisation coverage still stands at 62% as per the National Family Health Survey-4 of 2015-16. However, the Union Health Ministry's data says it stands at 83% with just 2% unimmunised children (November 2018).

### Poliomyelitis (Polio):

- The [World Health Organization](#) (WHO) defines polio or poliomyelitis as **"a highly infectious viral disease, which mainly affects young children."**

- The virus is **transmitted by person-to-person**, spread mainly through the faecal-oral route or, less frequently, by a common vehicle (e.g. contaminated water or food) and multiplies in the intestine, from where it can invade the nervous system and can cause paralysis.
- Initial symptoms of polio include fever, fatigue, headache, vomiting, stiffness in the neck, and pain in the limbs.
- In a small proportion of cases, the **disease causes paralysis, which is often permanent.**
- There is **no cure for polio, it can only be prevented by immunization.**

### How did India – a Polio endemic country become free of the disease?

- India, once a Polio endemic country has become free of the disease.
- Acclaimed globally, the **Pulse Polio immunisation programme was launched in the year 1994** to provide vaccination to all children below the age of 5.
- In 1995, there were an estimated 1.5 lakh registered Polio cases in India.
  - A team of 23 Lakh polio assistants were prepared.
  - 33 thousand surveillance centres were built.
  - Door to door campaign was held to give polio drops to children.
- Since 2011, no case of Polio has been registered in India.
- The WHO in 2012, removed India from the list of countries with active endemic wild polio virus transmission.
- Two years later, the **South-East Asia Region of the WHO**, of which India is a part, **was certified as polio-free.**
- India is still at risk, because of the prevalence of the disease in the neighbouring countries. Therefore there is regular surveillance and monitoring being carried out in the country.
- To prevent the virus from coming to India, the government has since March 2014 made the **Oral Polio Vaccination (OPV) mandatory for those travelling between India and polio-affected countries**, such as Afghanistan, Nigeria, Pakistan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Syria and Cameroon.
- The Polio eradication campaign was one of the longest and largest campaigns against a single disease.

### **Mission Indradhanush:**

- **Mission Indradhanush** was launched under UIP in **December 2014** for better health of mothers and children who are deprived of vaccination.
- The main aim is to vaccinate children who are not vaccinated or partially vaccinated by 2020.
- Vaccination is being provided against eight vaccine-preventable diseases.

### **Intensified Mission Indradhanush 2.0:**

- IMI was launched with the intention of further intensifying the immunisation programme in 2019.
- Immunisation activity will be in four rounds over 7 working days.
- There is an enhanced immunisation session with flexible timings, mobile sessions, and mobilisation by other departments.
- The focus is on urban underserved population and tribal areas.
- It aims to immunise children under 2 years of age and pregnant women.
- The programme aims at achieve the Sustainable Development Goal of ending preventable child deaths by 2030.