

India to adopt injectable polio vaccination

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Come next week and India will join global efforts to introduce injectable polio vaccine (IPV) in the country's routine immunisation programme in a phased manner. In the first phase, six States — Assam, Bihar, UP, Punjab, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh — will be covered with three-month-old babies to be given a single shot of IPV.

These States have over 50 per cent of the total population of 2.8 crore kids in the country.

The IPV will be given along with the Oral Polio Vaccine (OPV) drops which are being presently administered in children in the age group of 0-5 years in the country's universal immunisation programme.

"IPV will be introduced in all the States within next six months as per the WHO's Polio Eradication and Endgame Strategic Plan 2013-2018," said a senior official from the Union Health Ministry which oversees the polio eradication programme in the country.

As per the WHO plan, at least one dose of IPV will be introduced into routine immunisation programmes globally by 2015, after which trivalent oral polio vaccines (OPV) will be replaced with bivalent OPV in all OPV-using countries — setting the stage for eventually ending bOPV use by 2020.

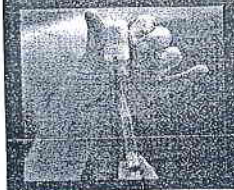
For record, currently 126 countries, including India, are administering OPV to their kids while 30 countries are giving both IPV and OPV. Nearly 45 countries have already switched to IPV.

The health official said that concerned officials and frontline health workers have been trained extensively on the need to introduce the new injectable polio vaccine and the way it has to be administered and communicate with caregivers and communities about polio and IPV.

Pharmaceutical companies — Sanofi Pastuer, Santa Biotech and Panasia among a few others — will supply the vaccine.

According to the WHO, the OPV has helped reduce global polio cases considerably, by more than 99 per cent since

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1988 when the eradication campaign was launched. Adding one dose of the IPV to multiple doses of OPV is aimed to give double protection to children and strengthen their immunity.

The polio virus exists in three strains — P1, P2 and P3 — then multiplies in the intestines and from there invades the nervous system and as a result can cause paralysis.

"And since, the OPV is a live vaccine therefore in some kids, out of three strains one can cause paralysis as a result of the vaccine. It is uncommon but this aspect cannot be ignored," said the official.

IPV which is made up of killed or inactivated polio virus will give a child immunity from all three strains. The IPV and OPV are important more so for India which faces threat from neighbouring polio-infected countries — Afghanistan and Pakistan. Last year, India achieved the goal of polio eradication as no polio case has been reported for more than three years after last case reported on January 13, 2011.

A highly-infectious disease, Poliomyelitis, commonly known as polio is transmitted by person-to-person, spread mainly through the faecal-oral route, mostly inflicting young children.

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