

Health Ministry conducts 8th round of NDD campaign

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The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) conducted its eighth round of National Deworming Day (NDD).

This key program initiative is implemented with an objective to reduce the prevalence of Soil Transmitted Helminths (STH) or parasitic intestinal worms so that they are no longer a public health problem.

As per WHO, 64% of the Indian population less than 14 years are at risk of STH infections. Launched in 2015 through a single fixed day approach, the NDD program in this round, targets to reach 24.44 crore children and adolescents in 30 states/UTs, in the age group of 1-19 years.

The program is implemented with the Ministries of Women and Child Development and Human Resource Development, where the anganwadi workers and teachers administer the deworming medicine to children and adolescents at the anganwadis and schools. ASHA workers support the efforts through community mobilization and sensitization of communities about the ill effects of worm infestations. The success of the NDD program has incrementally increased with each round as the coverage has increased from 8.9 crores in Feb 2015 to 22.69 crores in the last round in August 2018.

In this round of NDD, there will be an enhanced participation from private schools and institutions where all children 1- 19 years old are engaged, such as technical institutes, junior colleges and others.

The NDD program is a cost-effective program at scale that continues to reach crores of children and adolescents with deworming benefits through a safe medicine Albendazole. Deworming has shown to reduce absenteeism in schools; improve health, nutritional, and learning outcomes for children; and increase the likelihood of higher-wage jobs later in life as per global evidence.

Using Albendazole tablet for deworming is an evidence-based, globally-accepted, and effective solution used to control worm infections in all children, regardless of socio-economic background. NDD is observed bi-annually on 10th February and 10th August in all states and UTs followed by mop-up activities. This year the NDD is being conducted on 8th February and mop up day on the 14th February.

NDD falls under the purview of the Extended Gram Swaraj Abhiyan, and is also committed to improving the nutritional uptake in all children and adolescents and has immensely contributed to the cause of Anemia Mukht Bharat and Poshan Abhiyaan, under the National Nutrition Strategy, formulated by Niti Aayog in December 2017, with a vision towards anemia and malnutrition reduction by 2022.

The convergence of NDD with the Swachh Bharat Mission is another step towards ensuring cleanliness and hygiene in our surroundings and towards prevention and control of worm infestation. Awareness generation activities have also been undertaken under this program to sensitize the public about the harmful effects of worm infestation due to open defecation and to promote healthy habits to keep worm infections under control.

In view of the preparations for the event, the teachers and anganwadi workers have been trained to administer the tablet to children, while ASHAs and other government functionaries such as Panchayati Raj Institution members and youth volunteers are disseminating about the NDD in communities towards a worm free India. Deworming may have very few side effects and some children, especially those with high worm infections, might experience nausea, mild abdominal pain, vomiting, diarrhea, and fatigue. In line with the guidance from the MoHFW, comprehensive adverse event protocols have been put in place.

The MoHFW envisions an open-defecation-free India which holds the capacity to reduce the overall worm burden in a community.