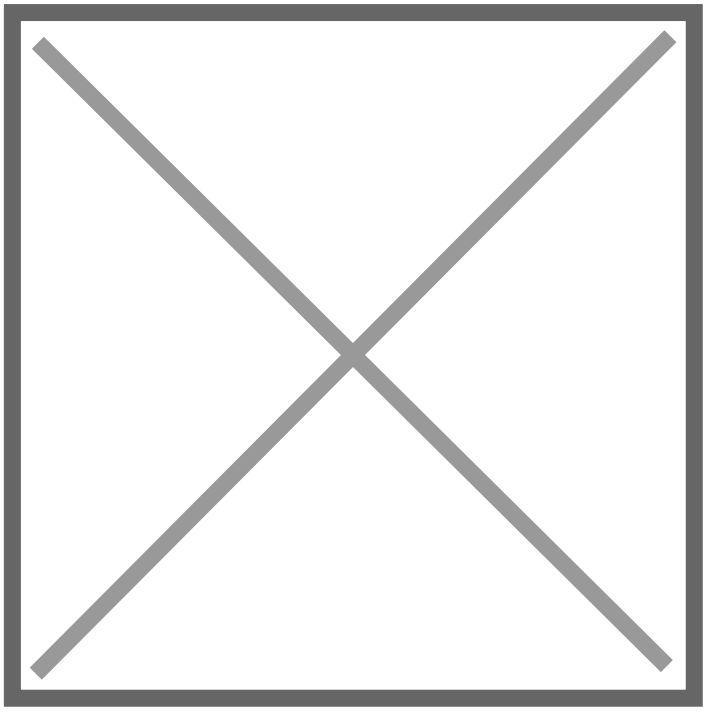
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# India gets its vaccine boost, Four new vaccines included in UIP

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**India gets its vaccine boost, Four new vaccines included in UIP**



The Prime Minister of India, Mr Narendra Modi on July 03,, 2014 announced the decision of the government of India to introduce four new vaccines as part of India's Universal Immunization Programme (UIP).

Vaccines against rotavirus, rubella and polio (injectable) will collectively expedite India's progress on meeting the Millennium Development Goal 4 targets to reduce child mortality by two-thirds by the year 2015 and meet global polio eradication targets. In addition, an adult vaccine against Japanese encephalitis will be introduced in districts with high levels of the disease.

Along with the recent introduction of a pentavalent vaccine, this decision represents one of the most significant policy leaps in 30 years in public health, preventing at least 1 lakh infant deaths, death of adults in working age group and up to 10 lakh hospitalizations each year. With these new vaccines, India's UIP will now provide free vaccines against 13 life threatening diseases to 27 million children annually, the largest birth cohort in the world.

The Prime Minister said "The introduction of four new lifesaving vaccines will play a key role in reducing childhood and infant mortality, and morbidity in the country. Many of these vaccines are already available through private practitioners to those who can afford them. The government will now ensure that the benefits of vaccination reaches all sections of the society, regardless of social and economic status."

Diarrhea caused by rotavirus kills nearly 80 thousand children each year, results in up to 10 lakh hospitalizations, pushing many Indian families below the poverty line. It also imposes an economic burden of over Rs 300 crore each year on the country. India has developed and licensed its first indigenous rotavirus vaccine, developed under a public-private partnership by the Ministry of Science and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. India will introduce this vaccine in a phased manner.
Tackling another major public health concern, the Government of India's Universal Immunization Program is set to introduce a vaccine against rubella which causes severe congenital defects in newborns like blindness, deafness and heart defects. It is estimated that nearly 2 lakh babies are born with congenital defects each year in the country.

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The Universal Immunization Program is also introducing an adult vaccine against Japanese Encephalitis (JE) in 179 endemic districts in 9 states. Reaffirming its commitment to the global goal of a polio free world, India is set to introduce an Injectable Polio Vaccine (IPV), together with 125 countries in a globally synchronized manner. India has been certified polio free in March 2014, and the introduction of IPV in addition to the oral polio vaccine (OPV) will provide long lasting protection to the population against the virus.

Shri Narendra Modi, who has consistently placed an emphasis on health as part of the nation's development, said "India is committed to tackle child mortality and provide health for all through multiple initiatives taken up by the government. Strengthening routine immunization is an essential investment in India's children and will ensure a healthy future of the country."

The recommendations to introduce new vaccines have been made after numerous scientific studies and comprehensive deliberations by the National Technical Advisory Group of India (NTAGI), the country's apex scientific advisory body on immunization.