

Centre urges States to create awareness and take steps for prevention of cervical cancer among girl students

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Key Highlights:

- *National Technical Advisory Group for Immunization (NTAGI) has recommended introduction of HPV Vaccine in the Universal Immunization Programme (UIP) with a one-time catch-up for 9-14 year-old adolescent girls followed with routine introduction at 9 years*
- *The vaccination would be provided primarily through schools (Grade based approach: 5th-10th). In order to reach those girls who are unable to attend school on the campaign day, the vaccination would be provided at a health facility while for out-of-school girls the campaign would be conducted through Community Outreach and Mobile teams*

The Centre has written to all States and Union Territories to create awareness on prevention of cervical cancer and the importance of HPV vaccine among girl students across the country.

In a joint letter by the Union Education Secretary Shri Sanjay Kumar and Union Health Secretary Shri Rajesh Bhushan it has been highlighted that globally, cervical cancer is the 4th most common cancer in women. In India, cervical cancer is the second most common cancer in women and India contributes to the largest proportion of global cervical cancer burden. Cervical cancer is a preventable and curable disease, as long as it is detected early and managed effectively. Most cervical cancers are associated with the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) and the HPV vaccine can prevent most cases of cervical cancer if the vaccine is given before girls or women are exposed to the virus. Prevention through vaccination is one of the pillars of the Global Strategy adopted by WHO for the elimination of cervical cancer.

It is mentioned that the National Technical Advisory Group for Immunization (NTAGI) has recommended introduction of HPV Vaccine in the Universal Immunization Programme (UIP) with a one-time catch-up for 9-14 year-old adolescent girls followed with routine introduction at 9 years.

The vaccination would be provided primarily through schools (Grade based approach: 5th-10th) as school enrolment of girls is high. In order to reach those girls who are unable to attend school on the campaign day, the vaccination would be provided at a health facility while for out-of-school girls the campaign would be conducted through Community Outreach and Mobile teams based on age (9-14 years). For registration, recording and reporting of vaccination numbers, the U-WIN App would be used.

In the letter, the States/ UTs have been requested to issue necessary directions at appropriate levels for taking up the following activities in order to make the campaign a success:

- Organizing HPV vaccination centres in schools for vaccination.
- Directing District Education Officer to support District Immunization Officer and be part of efforts of District Task Force on Immunization (DTFI) under District Magistrate.
- Coordinating with Government School & Private School Management Board in the district.
- Identifying a nodal person in each school to coordinate vaccination activities and collate the number of 9-14 years of girls in the school and bulk upload the same in U-WIN.
- Generating awareness through school teachers to all parents during Special Parents-Teachers' Meeting (PTAs).

- Supporting in generating an up-to date list of all types of school (UDISE+) in each block for micro planning and access to GIS mapping of schools to districts immunization officers for developing micro-plans so that none of the school is missed during the vaccination drive.
- Supporting health team to plan vaccination campaign in state excluding months of examination and holiday.

NB/AK

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