

Parental Consent for Vaccination - Delhi High Court Order

What is the issue?

\n\n

\n

- Delhi High Court recently put on hold the Delhi government's plan for a measles rubella (MR) vaccination campaign in schools.

\n

- The court said the decision did not have the consent of parents, introducing the question of consent in vaccination.

\n

\n\n

What is the MR vaccine?

\n\n

\n

- Recently, the measles rubella (MR) vaccine was introduced in the universal immunisation programme.

\n

- It has to be administered to all children between ages 9 months and 15 years.

\n

- But those who did not get it earlier are also vaccinated and before they reach the reproductive age group.

\n

- The vaccine being given in the MR campaign is produced in India and is WHO prequalified.

\n

- MR vaccine is safe and effective, and in use for over 40 years across 150 countries.

\n

- It is being given in the routine immunisation programme of India and in neighbouring countries like Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Myanmar.

\n

- Private practitioners in India have been giving measles-rubella (MR) or measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine to children for many years.

\n

\n\n

Why is it crucial?

\n\n

- \n
- India had around 56,000 confirmed measles cases and 1,066 confirmed rubella cases in 2018.
- \n
- Measles is a serious and highly contagious disease that can cause debilitating or fatal complications.
- \n
- These include encephalitis, severe diarrhoea and dehydration, pneumonia, ear infections and permanent vision loss.
- \n
- The disease is preventable through two doses of vaccine.
- \n
- Congenital Rubella Syndrome (CRS) is an important cause of severe birth defects.
- \n
- A woman infected with the rubella virus early in pregnancy has a 90% chance of passing the virus to her foetus.
- \n
- This can cause the death of the foetus or CRS.
- \n

\n\n

Why is the court's order a welcome move?

\n\n

- \n
- Obtaining parental consent prior to vaccination is the standard practice around the world.
- \n
- The World Health Organization (WHO) recognises oral, written, and implied consent for vaccination.
- \n
- A WHO survey in 2012 in 34 countries on consent procedures for vaccination in 6-17-year-olds found approximately half the countries using written consent.
- \n
- WHO insists that countries are encouraged to adopt procedures that ensure that parents have been informed and agreed to the vaccination.
- \n

- Vaccination is always a voluntary process, and there is never compulsion involved.
\n
- Vaccines should be administered after people are sensitised about the disease and vaccine.
\n

\n\n

What is the contention here?

\n\n

- \n
- Schools were consciously chosen rather than health centres or hospitals as nowhere else can such large numbers of children in the relevant age group be targeted.
\n
- In most US states, it is compulsory to provide vaccination records before seeking admission into school, so that the child is not a danger to others.
\n
- Also, the consent of parents is not sought during routine immunisation programmes as it is implied, where the parents or members of the family bring the child.
\n
- For such a public good and for a vaccine that is tried and tested, there is ample evidence on safety and efficacy.
\n
- Also, for something which is already a part of the universal immunisation programme, written consent should not be essential.
\n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: The Indian Express

\n

