

## Vaccine for Cervical Cancer

### Why in news?

The Union Government is going to roll out Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccines for prevention of cervical cancer to girls between the age of 9 and 14 years through schools.

### What is cervical cancer?

- Cervical cancer is preventable and curable if it is detected early and managed effectively.
- It is the second most common cancer in women in India, and the cause of a large number of deaths annually.
- It is caused by infection with the HPC, and there are vaccines to protect against cancerous HPV.
- To know more about Cervical Cancer, [click here](#).

### How prevalent is cervical cancer?

- A recent study in the Lancet shows that India accounts for the highest number of cervical cancer cases in Asia, followed by China.
- More than 58% of all cervical cancer cases and deaths globally were estimated in Asia. India accounts for 21% of cases and 23% of deaths.
- **Incidence rate** - Globally, in 2020, the incidence rate of cervical cancer cases is 13.3 new cases per 1,00,000 women a year.
- In India, the incidence rate is 18 per 1,00,000 women.

### What is the targeted incidence rate?

- The World Health Organization (WHO) has specified that countries must reach and maintain an incidence rate of fewer than 4 new cases per 1,00,000 women a year by 2030.
- To achieve that goal, 90% of girls will have to be vaccinated with the HPV vaccine by the age of 15.

### When will the HPV vaccine be rolled out?

- The indigenous HPV vaccine [CERVAVAC](#) will be rolled out by mid-2023.
- It has got the approval of the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI).
- The vaccine was cleared by the government advisory panel, National Technical Advisory Group for Immunisation (NTAGI) for use in the Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP).

*The Universal Immunisation Programme is one of the largest public health programmes which offers free vaccines for at least 12 diseases.*

- A one-time catch-up vaccine will be given to 9-14 year old adolescent girls, before it is introduced at nine years.
- States and Union Territories have been asked to issue directives to appropriate authorities for
  1. organising HPV vaccination centres in schools, and
  2. identifying a nodal person in each government and private school to facilitate the vaccination after collating the number of 9-14 year olds in the schools.
- The government has said that girls who don't attend schools will be given the vaccines by **community outreach** and **mobile health teams**.
- Apart from vaccination, screening programmes are to be conducted regularly to detect early signs of the disease that will allow time for treatment.

*A WHO paper in 2021 said fewer than 1 in 10 women had been screened for cervical cancer in the last five years.*

### **What lies ahead?**

- According to a recent study, the incidence of cervical cancer inclined with a clear gradient of increasing rates for countries with lower levels of human development.

*In 2022, India ranked 132 out of 191 countries on the Human Development Index.*

- Once the vaccine is launched through the UIP, steps should be taken to reach the maximum number of the targeted population.
- According to the Lancet study, the surveillance systems and infrastructure used for COVID-19 vaccinations may be customised to
  - improve HPV vaccination,
  - monitor national cervical screening programmes and
  - improve health system capacity to deliver more efficient preventive services.

### **Reference**

[The Hindu Explainer | How is India trying to beat cervical cancer?](#)