

## **Vitamin A - Targeted Supplementation**

### **What is the issue?**

\n\n

Some scientists have vouched for a targeted supplementation program for vitamin A.

\n\n

### **Why is Vitamin A supplementation required?**

\n\n

\n

- In the mid-1960s, prevalence of night blindness and a high mortality among infants were observed to be due to Vitamin A deficiency.

\n

- To address this issue, 'National Prophylaxis Programme against Nutritional Blindness due to Vitamin A Deficiency' (NPPNB due to VAD) was launched in 1970.

\n

- Under this program, children aged 6-60 months are administered vitamin A every six months in doses of 60 mg, as per World Health Organization (WHO) recommendations.

\n

- The supplementation programme is often credited for reducing childhood mortality by as much as 23% and bringing down incidence of vitamin A-associated blindness greatly.

\n

- Though not as severe as before, many children could be on the borderline and hence the continuance of the program is warranted even after 4 decades.

\n

\n\n

### **Why is targeted intervention being discussed?**

\n\n

\n

- WHO recommended supplementation when Vitamin A deficiency is 20% or higher.  
\n
- But, due to the high prevalence of vitamin A deficiency in the 1970s, Indian took to universal coverage for the program, irrespective of nutritional status.  
\n
- With the scenario completely changed now, some scientists now argue for a targeted approach as a means to reduce costs and make the program more effective.  
\n
- There have also been studies on vitamin A toxicity and related deaths due to the universal supplement program.  
\n
- These issues and the improving nutritional standards among infants in India do call for a targeted program rather than the current model.  
\n

\n\n

\n\n

**Source: The Hindu**

\n

