

Global Rise in Vaccine-Preventable Diseases: Urgent Call for Immunisation Investment

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Vaccine-Preventable Diseases Latest News

- Diseases preventable by vaccines, like measles, meningitis, and yellow fever, are resurging as millions of children miss vaccinations due to funding cuts and disrupted immunisation efforts.

- WHO, UNICEF, and Gavi warn that misinformation, population growth, and humanitarian crises are further threatening progress.
- They urge global leaders to prioritise and strengthen vaccination programmes with urgent and sustained political commitment.

Alarming Global Vaccination Crisis

- A WHO rapid review across 108 low- and lower-middle-income countries revealed that nearly half face moderate to severe disruptions in vaccination campaigns and access to supplies due to reduced donor funding.

Rising Number of Unvaccinated Children

- Routine immunisation coverage is declining.
- In 2023, 14.5 million children missed all routine vaccines — an increase from 13.9 million in 2022 and 12.9 million in 2019.
- Over half of these children live in fragile or conflict-affected regions.

Impact on Disease Surveillance

- More than half of the surveyed countries reported disruptions in disease surveillance, increasing the risk of unchecked outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases.

Resurgence of Vaccine-Preventable Diseases

- Even countries with strong healthcare systems are affected.
- The U.S. has reported 935 measles cases as of May 1, 2025 — more than triple the 2024 count — despite the disease being declared eliminated there in 2000.

Alarm from Global Health Leaders

- WHO Director-General Tedros Ghebreyesus and UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell warned that funding cuts are threatening global health gains.
- They emphasized the cost-effectiveness and life-saving impact of vaccines.

Call for Urgent Investment

- Leaders stressed the importance of sustained political and financial commitment to initiatives like the **‘Big Catch-Up’**, which aims to vaccinate children who missed routine doses during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Importance of Vaccination

- **High Return on Investment and Life-Saving Impact**
 - WHO describes immunisation as a top health investment, yielding a return of \$54 for every \$1 spent.

- Over the past 50 years, vaccines have saved at least 154 million lives — approximately six lives every minute.
- Measles vaccine alone accounts for 60% of these lives saved.
- **Major Role in Reducing Infant Mortality**
 - Vaccination has contributed to 40% of the global improvement in infant survival.
 - More children today survive past their first birthday than ever before in human history.
- **Eradication and Control of Deadly Diseases**
 - Vaccines have eradicated smallpox and nearly eradicated polio.
 - Annually, they prevent nearly 4.2 million deaths from 14 major diseases.
- **Building Herd Immunity and Protecting Public Health**
 - Vaccines not only protect individuals but also reduce disease spread by building herd immunity, crucial in preventing outbreaks.

India's Progress through Immunisation

- India has achieved major health milestones due to widespread immunisation — including being declared polio-free in 2014 and eliminating maternal and neonatal tetanus in 2015.
- New vaccines like Measles-Rubella, Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine (PCV) and Rotavirus Vaccine (RVV) have been added to its immunisation programme.

Universal Immunization Programme (UIP)

- UIP is one of India's largest public health efforts, targeting 26 million newborns and 34 million pregnant women annually.
- Over 13 million immunisation sessions are conducted nationwide.

Gaps in Coverage Remain

- Despite significant progress, 23.9% of Indian children still miss out on full immunisation, as reported in the National Family Health Survey-5 (2019–21).

Way Forward: Strengthening Global Immunisation Efforts

- WHO, UNICEF, and Gavi urge parents, the public, and political leaders to reinforce their support for immunisation.
- They call for sustained investment in vaccines and adherence to the Immunisation Agenda 2030.
- A key milestone will be Gavi's pledging summit, to be held in June 2025, which aims to raise at least \$9 billion to protect 500 million children and save over eight million lives between 2026 and 2030.

Vaccine-preventable diseases FAQ's

Q1. Why are vaccine-preventable diseases resurging globally?

Ans. Due to funding cuts, missed vaccinations, misinformation, and weakened immunisation efforts, many children remain unprotected against deadly diseases.

Q2. How many children missed routine vaccines in 2023?

Ans. In 2023, 14.5 million children globally missed all routine vaccinations, up from 13.9 million in 2022.

Q3. What role does vaccination play in infant survival?

Ans. Vaccination has driven 40% of the global improvement in infant survival, saving millions of lives over decades.

Q4. How is India addressing immunisation gaps?

Ans. India expanded UIP, introduced new vaccines, but still 23.9% of children missed full immunisation (NFHS-5 data).

Q5. What is the goal of Gavi's June 2025 summit?

Ans. To raise \$9 billion, protect 500 million children, and save 8 million lives between 2026 and 2030.

Source: TH | WHO

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