

Health Ministry set for 2nd round of National Deworming initiative to tackle Worm Infections in children

More than 31 crore children to be covered

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Ministry of Health and Family Welfare is all geared up for its 2nd round of National Deworming Day (NDD) 2017 on 10th August in 33 States/UTs followed by mop-up activities on 17th August targeting 31 crore children. A total of 7.8 crore children are targeted in private schools and 3.5 crore out of school children will be covered in this program through Anganwadi workers and ASHAs.

This is one of the largest public health programs reaching large number of children during a short period. The first NDD round of 2017 implemented in February covered 26 crore children with a coverage of 89%.

The NDD program has been launched in 2015 as WHO estimates that 220 million children below 14 years of age are at risk of STH infections in India. National Deworming Day is organised twice in a year covering all the children from 1-19 years of age except the States of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh where deworming is carried out once in a year. The Soil Transmitted Helminths (STH) prevalence in these two States is less than 20%. All the children are provided deworming tablet in schools and anganwadis. The deworming has the potential to improve nutritional status of children. The deworming tablet called 'Albendazole' is a safe and efficacious drug for controlling worm infestation.

The first round of NDD was observed in February 2015 and 8.9 crore children were administered the deworming tablet across 11 states/UTs by achieving 85% coverage. Thereafter, 25 crore, 12 crore and 26 crore children were covered in NDD February 2016, August 2016 and February 2017 rounds respectively.

NDD round	States/UTs covered	Target (in crore)	Covered (in crore)	% Coverage
February 2015	11	10.31	8.98	85
February 2016	34	29.06	24.95	88
August 2016	23	15	11.96	77
February 2017	34	29.21	26.04	89

During NDD, besides the deworming tablet, various health promotion activities related to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) are also being organised in schools and anganwadis. This program is being implemented in close collaboration with Ministry of Human Resource & Development and Ministry of Women & Child Development. The program strategies for effective implementation are planned as per the NDD operational guidelines which include Steering Committee Meetings at states and districts, timely integrated distribution of drugs, IEC materials, community awareness and mobilization efforts to include out-of-school and unregistered children into the program.

National Deworming Day aims to reach every child, regardless of their socio-economic circumstance. Schools and anganwadis are ideal platforms for such a program, reaching children in their natural environment in a coordinated, cost-effective, and systematic way. In addition, through extensive awareness generation and

community mobilization efforts at state, district, and community levels, children who are out of school, live in hard-to-reach areas, and are from vulnerable populations are also mobilized to be dewormed at anganwadis on National Deworming Day.

A coordinated effort is rolled out across the country with tablets, communication material, and reporting forms delivered to the very last school and anganwadi well in time for the deworming program. Officials and functionaries at all levels are trained, including teachers and anganwadi workers, who are pillars of the program. This results in lakhs of anganwadi workers and teachers, who are trusted by the community, administering the deworming tablet to crores of children on a single day across the country.

Deworming may have very few side effects and some children, especially those with high worm infections, might experience nausea, mild abdominal pain, vomiting, diarrhoea, and fatigue. In line with the guidance from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, comprehensive adverse event protocols have been put in place.

Apart from being dewormed, maintaining healthy and hygienic practices will help children and communities remain safe from worm infections.

MV/SK

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