

10.03.2026

Cervical Cancer Vaccine

- **National Launch:** On February 28, Prime Minister Modi launched a national program to provide the cervical cancer vaccine free of cost to 1.15 crore girls aged 14.
- **State Initiative:** Prior to this, in the third week of January, the Tamil Nadu government also launched a similar program.
- **Implementation:** In the first phase, this has been implemented in four districts in Tamil Nadu.
- **Expansion:** The government has announced that it will be gradually implemented in other districts as well.
- **Public Reception:** This is a proactive measure that should be highly welcomed by the public.
- 90% of adolescent girls should be vaccinated with the HPV vaccine.
- 70% of women should undergo the 'Pap smear' screening test to detect cervical cancer early by age 35.
- 90% of women should receive early treatment for this cancer.
- **National and State Initiatives: Gardasil-4:** As a first step, the Gardasil-4 vaccine is currently being provided at the national level.
- Although HPV vaccines typically require two doses, the Central Government has announced that a single dose of Gardasil-4 is sufficient.
- Clinical trials have confirmed that this vaccine is 93-100% effective against the Human Papillomavirus, and the Drug Controller General of India (DCGI), along with the WHO, has approved this single-dose regimen.
- **Cervavac:** Meanwhile, the Tamil Nadu government is using the 'Cervavac' vaccine in its HPV vaccination program.

Alarming Statistics

- **Global Ranking:** According to data from the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) for 2022, cervical cancer is the second most common cancer among women aged 35 to 44 in India.
- **National Impact:** It has been observed that every year in India, 120,000 women are newly diagnosed with this disease, and 80,000 women lose their lives to it.
- **Tamil Nadu Data:** The Central Government reported that in 2023 alone, 8,534 women in Tamil Nadu were affected by this cancer.
- **Primary Cause:** Infection with the 'Human Papillomavirus' (HPV) in the cervical region is the primary cause of cervical cancer in women.
- This is an indigenous (Indian-made) vaccine, which must be administered in two doses: the second dose is given 6 months after the first (0, 6 schedule).

Eligibility and Expansion

- Currently, this is provided only to 14-year-old girls, but the government has announced plans to gradually extend it to all girls aged 9–14.
- The Cervavac vaccine is not strictly limited to those aged 14; it can also be administered to women over 15.
- In private hospitals, it is provided to women between the ages of 15 and 26.
- **For this age group, the dosing schedule changes:** three doses are required, administered at 0, 2, and 6 months (the second dose two months after the first, and the third dose six months after the first).

Government Initiatives

- In 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) implemented the "Cervical Cancer Elimination Initiative" to eliminate cervical cancer by 2030. According to this, a 90/70/90 target was set for every country:

TUTICORIN
99445 11344TIRUNELVELI
98942 41422RAMANATHAPURAM
75503 52916MADURAI
98431 10566CHENNAI
97555 52003COVAI
90433 10773TENKASI
98840 51717

Why do the dosages differ?

- **You might wonder:** Why do the number of doses for the HPV vaccine differ depending on the vaccine type?
- The number of doses required is determined based on various factors, including how the vaccine is manufactured, the type of viral strain used, how it interacts with the human body, and its level of efficacy.
- Unlike some other pathogens, there are several subtypes of the Human Papillomavirus (HPV), such as HPV-6, HPV-11, HPV-16, and HPV-18.
- Manufacturers decide which specific subtypes the vaccine should prioritize, which in turn influences the vaccination schedule.
- Would you like me to find out if there are any common side effects associated with these HPV vaccines that you should be aware of?

Vaccine Agreements

- For the HPV vaccination program to be successful, the vaccine must be available without interruption in every town and village.
- A robust cold chain must be established across the country for the distribution and storage of the vaccine, which requires significant funding.
- To support this, the Government of India has entered into a three-year agreement with Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance.
- Gavi provided Rs.2,500 crore in 2023 for this purpose.

- In Tamil Nadu, the state government is implementing this vaccination program as part of the Tamil Nadu Women Employment and Safety (TN-WES) project.
- This is a five-year plan for which the World Bank has provided Rs.1,185 crore.
- Would you like me to clarify how the “cold chain” system works, or would you prefer a summary of all the information we have discussed so far?

Global Arms Imports: India Ranks 2nd

- The tense situation along the borders with China and Pakistan is cited as the primary reason for India’s significant stockpiling of weapons.
- **Trend:** India’s arms imports decreased by 4% in the 2021–25 period compared to the 2016–20 period.
- **Global Standing:** Despite this, India remains in second place, accounting for 8.2% of global arms imports. Ukraine holds the top spot with 9.7%.
- **Self-Reliance:** The reduction in imports is largely due to the increase in domestic weapons manufacturing under the ‘Atmanirbhar Bharat’ (Self-Reliant India) initiative.
- **Supplier Dynamics:** While Russia continues to be India’s primary arms supplier (40%), the volume of imports from Russia has halved over the last 15 years.
- Currently, India sources a significant amount of its weaponry from France (29%) and Israel (15%).

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