



VACCINATION CATCH-UP: PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM PREVENTABLE DISEASES



Ideally every child should have received their vaccinations on schedule. However, due to disruptions like illness, relocation, the COVID-19 pandemic or simple oversight, many children fall behind on their immunisation timelines. This is where vaccination catch-up becomes essential as it ensures that missed doses are completed so that full protection against preventable diseases is restored.

What is vaccination catch-up?

Catch-up vaccination does not mean starting over. Instead, healthcare providers follow structured schedules to continue from where the child stopped taking vaccines. This helps maintain safety and effectiveness. For school-going children, this is particularly important, as they are frequently exposed to infections in classrooms, playgrounds and group activities.

The primary area of worry with missed vaccinations is the increased vulnerability to diseases such as Influenza and Typhoid. These illnesses can spread quickly in school environments and may lead to significant health complications if not prevented.

It is noteworthy that in recent years, newer vaccines have gained importance in paediatric care. The influenza (flu) vaccine, recommended annually, is especially valuable for school-going children as flu viruses change frequently and spread easily in crowded settings. Regular flu vaccination helps reduce absenteeism, protects vulnerable family members and lowers the risk of severe illness.

Similarly, the Typhoid Conjugate Vaccine (TCV) has emerged as a more effective and longer-lasting option compared to older typhoid vaccines. Given that typhoid fever remains a concern in many parts of India, including urban areas, TCV offers extended protection and can be safely administered even in younger children.

Parents need to also be aware that catch-up schedules may include booster doses for vaccines like DPT (diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus), MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) and others depending on the child's age and previous immunisation history. Consulting a paediatrician is the best way to create a personalised catch-up plan.

Catch-up vaccination is not just about individual protection. Timely vaccination also contributes to community immunity, reducing the spread of infections within schools and society at large. Schools often require updated immunisation records, making catch-up vaccination not just a health priority but also a practical necessity.

To sum up, missed vaccinations can be effectively addressed with timely intervention. Catch-up immunisation, along with newer vaccines like flu and typhoid conjugates, ensures that children remain protected, healthy and happy in school.