

Recommendations

Eligibility of Children for Vitamin A Supplementation Program

There have been recent newspaper reports of children of Class V falling sick with vomiting, immediately after ingestion of vitamin A syrup, administered as a part of an ongoing health check up campaign in Ladhuwala village in Rajasthan(1). Concerned with the routine administration of mega-dose of vitamin A in children over three years of age, the central IAP Office requested the Indian Academy of Pediatrics Subspecialty Chapter on Nutrition to examine the issue and make relevant recommendations. An expert group meeting on this subject was held on August 26, 2005 at the Department of Pediatrics, Maulana Azad Medical College, New Delhi 110 002 (members listed in Annexure).

The group examined the evidence and the recent recommendations on vitamin A supplementation by the Indian Council of Medical Research (2) and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare Expert Committee constituted for vitamin A and Iron/Folic Acid Supplementation in Reproductive and Child Health Program-II. It was agreed that:

- (i) There is no compelling epidemiological data to indicate an increase in clinical vitamin A deficiency specifically in children above three years of age. Thus, scientific evidence does not support the need for mega-dose supplementation in this age group.
- (ii) The recent recommendations from the

above groups/committees for selecting the eligible children for vitamin A supplementation were unanimously endorsed. These recommendations state: (a) Under the vitamin A supplementation program, children between 9 months to 36 months of age are to be provided Vitamin A solution every six months starting with 100,000 IU at 9 months age with measles vaccination, and subsequently 200,000 IU every six months till 36 months of age; (b) Children with a clinical diagnosis of severe protein energy malnutrition (visible severe wasting or edema both feet) should be given an additional dose of 100,000 IU vitamin A solution at the time of diagnosis, if the child has not received a mega dose of vitamin A in the preceding four weeks; (c) In severely malnourished children (weight for age below -3 SD) above 3 years of age, a single dose of vitamin A (200,000 IU) is to be given at the time of diagnosis by a physician, if the child has not received a mega dose of vitamin A in the preceding four weeks; (d) Children with measles should be given an additional dose of vitamin A at the time of contact as per their age and nutritional status, if the child has not received a mega dose of vitamin A in the preceding four weeks as outlined above (100,000 IU below 12 months age or in severely malnourished children below 36 months of age, and 200,000 IU for others).

- (iii) The State Branches of the Indian Academy of Pediatrics should be requested to reinforce to their respective nodal State Ministries to restrict the vitamin A supplementation program to

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only the eligible children as defined above.

REFERENCES

1. HT Correspondent. 17 kids fall ill after consuming vitamin A syrup. Hindustan Times, Jaipur Edition, July 28, 2005, page 3.
2. Recommendations. National Workshop on Micronutrients, 24-25 November 2003, New Delhi. Organized by Indian Council of Medical Research on Behalf of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

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Annexure

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