

TIMES CITY | PUNE

Reactions after MR shot coincidental: Expert panel

27 Students Reported Symptoms After Immunization Drive

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Pune: A 16-member expert committee formed to assess the cases of reactions after measles-rubella (MR) vaccination in the city have termed them "either coincidental or anxiety-related".

As many as 27 students had reported some or the other symptoms of reactions following the immunization drive in the city, which started on November 27 last year.

The expert committee unanimously concluded that these reactions were not vaccine-related. Some of the known vaccine-related reactions following the measles-rubella shot include rash and itching. Only four students among the 27 vaccinated children have reported rash and itching so far.

Around 6.35 lakh students as well as children below five years across the city have already been vaccinated during the immunization campaign. "Majority of the children who suffered from adverse events were above four years of age. Most common side effects were anxiety-related seen mostly in school-going age group," paediatrician Sanjay Lalwani, who was one of experts in the committee, told TOI.

Only four of 27 students complained of rash and itching, which was eventually found to be vaccine-related. "Such reaction can occur with any vaccine. Paediatrician

PREVENTING THE KILLER DISEASES

File photo

NEED FOR THE CAMPAIGN

- Measles kills nearly **49,200 children in India** ever year
- Rubella infection during pregnancy can cause abortion, still birth and may lead to multiple birth defects in the newborn, including blindness/deafness and heart defects

NATIONWIDE VACCINATION DRIVE

- India has resolved to eliminate measles, control rubella and congenital rubella syndrome by 2020
- In that direction, the Centre has planned measles-rubella (MR) vaccination campaign for children
- Measles-rubella vaccine gives lifelong protection in most of the children



WHO SHOULD BE IMMUNIZED?

- All children who have completed nine months of age and are below 15 years of age should be immunized, regardless of previous vaccination status when it comes to measles/rubella
- Malnourished children should be vaccinated on a priority basis as they are more likely to have complications like diarrhoea and pneumonia

There is no harm in vaccinating girls who are having menstrual periods

(Source: Immunization department, Pune Municipal Corporation)

and vaccinating officers are very well aware of this fact and there is no need to panic as these reactions are minor and subside easily," Lalwani, who is also the president of the city chapter of Indian Academy of Paediatrics (IAP), said.

Experts came up with this conclusion based on the references and guidelines given by the World Health Organisation (WHO). "There can be side effects in few children post-vaccination. These can be local, meaning at the injection site, and may result in itching,

burning sensation, swelling, tenderness and hives. However, they subside after medication," paediatrician Amruta Walimbe said.

To increase the coverage of the drive in Pune city, government officials should have started propagating actual incidence of congenital rubella using mass media tools, activists said.

"People are unaware about rubella and the need for the vaccination. If exact facts and details of previously diagnosed cases had been high-

lighted in media two months before the drive, the coverage ratio would have increased," health activist Sanjay Dabhade said, adding that paediatricians should also have been involved in campaign at the early stage.

"There were minor and very few side effects after the measles-rubella vaccination. Mass media tools should be employed to dispel any fear about the vaccination drive. If done, this will allay anxiety and increase vaccine coverage," paediatrician Sonali Palkar said.