

Docs call for anti-rotavirus vaccination

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New rotavirus strains have led to a rise in gastroenteritis in children. The virus, tracked to cows and pigs, has found its way to human beings, largely affecting kids. Recently-published studies have shown a 40 per cent rise in hospitalised cases of children below five years of age. This has strengthened the case for including vaccination against the rotavirus in our National Immunisation Programme.

Agreeing with the study

Infection, Genetics and Evolution by National Institute of Cholera and Enteric Diseases, Kolkata, Dr Ananda Kumar, consultant gastroenterologist at Sunshine Hospitals, said vaccination against rotavirus is a necessity "as sanitary condition in our cities and villages are pathetic. Hyderabad too rates poor in sanitation, allowing strains of the virus to multiply and easily infect children."

Dr Ramanna Madcherla, consultant gastroenterologist at Kamineni Hospitals, King Koti, said, "The cost of

the vaccine (appx. ₹2,500) deters people from getting their children immunised. Also, knowledge about the virus is limited," he said.

Dr Kumar thinks cost should not be a deterrent. "People don't understand that the cost of treatment is much higher than a single seasonal dose of vaccine. Other developing countries have made it mandatory, so why don't we?" he asked.

Till we achieve high levels of sanitation, immunisation will help us to curb formation of new viruses and control diarrhoea, he said.

The study found that virus strain earlier found only in animals is now increasingly being found in humans. Children from different geographical belts have shown the strain. Dr Sudhir, gastroenterologist at Challa Hospital in Ameerpet said including vaccination in the national programme will help children from lower strata of society, who are highly susceptible.

Paediatrician Dr Sivarajani Santosh said, "A vaccinated child would fight better if he is contracted by diarrhoea."

