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Thiruvananthapuram | Posted on Dec 04, 2011 at 11:14am IST

Pentavalent to replace DPT vaccine from 14



Express News Service , The New Indian Express

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THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: The pentavalent vaccine, which had caused quite a few ripples with regard to its safety and efficiency, would finally be rolled out in all the districts of the state from December 14.

With the State Government-appointed probe committee giving the pentavalent vaccine a clean chit with regard to safety, the procurement of the vaccine has also been completed.

The pentavalent vaccine is a combination of vaccines for regular diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus (DPT), hepatitis B and also the vaccine against Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib).

“Haemophilus influenzae type b causes 90 percent of meningitis in kids and as much as 30 per cent of pneumonia cases. A vaccine to this would bring down the incidence of meningitis and pneumonia in the state,” said additional DHS Dr Pradeepkumar, who is also the State Immunisation Officer.

From now on, the DPT vaccination would be replaced by the pentavalent vaccination, which would be administered to children in the sixth, 10th and 14th week. The training for doctors and medical staff with regard to the new immunisation programme is getting completed.

“The vaccines are provided by the Serum Institute of India at a cost of `100. But the government would give it to the people free of cost,” said Pradeepkumar.

The major advantage of the pentavalent vaccine is that the total number of shots for toddlers and babies would be reduced, thus making it more time-saving and convenient. Besides it indirectly reduces the quantity of equipment needed for immunisation, such as the vials, storage, syringes and so on. This is also expected to bring down the non-degradable plastic waste.

On the downside, some doctors expressed their apprehensions about the safety of the vaccines citing pentavalent vaccine-associated deaths in some neighbouring countries such as Bhutan and Sri Lanka.

In the wake of several complaints and concerns raised regarding the pentavalent vaccine from various quarters, the State Government constituted a committee to look into the issues and problems connected with the vaccine.

The committee included former head of the Department of Paediatrics, Thiruvananthapuram Medical College, Dr Noel Narayanan, head of the Department of Medicine Dr Lalitha Kailas, **head of the Department of Community Medicine at the Am Institute of Medical Sciences** Dr Laila and Director of Health Services Dr P K Jameela

The committee had looked into various aspects of safety and efficiency before giving its final nod.

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