



Global Forum on Childhood Pneumonia

Why in News

World's first conference on Childhood Pneumonia was held in **Barcelona (Spain)** to make it part of the global health agenda.

- Despite being the biggest infectious killer of children, pneumonia remains a **neglected disease** both nationally and globally.
 - Every 39 seconds, a child under-5 dies from it.
- Global Forum on Childhood Pneumonia is an initiative of 9 leading health and children's organisations including **UNICEF**, **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation**, and **Gavi** among others.
- The **theme** of the conference is '**Fighting for Breath**'.

Pneumonia

- Pneumonia is an **acute respiratory infection** of the **lungs**.
- **Cause:** It doesn't have one single cause – it can develop from **either bacteria, viruses or fungi** in the air.
- **Vaccine:** Pneumonia caused by **bacteria** is easily preventable with vaccines. 3 doses of the primary vaccine (**Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine (PCV)**) to prevent it are recommended.
 - A new vaccine for one of the main viral causes of pneumonia is under development.
 - India is planning for the nationwide rollout of PCV under **Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP)**.
- **Vulnerability:**
 - Children whose **immune systems** are **immature** (i.e. newborns) or **weakened** – such as by undernourishment, or diseases like HIV – are **more vulnerable** to pneumonia.
- **Spread:**
 - Pneumonia is **contagious** and can be spread through coughing or sneezing. It can also be spread through fluids, like blood during childbirth, or from contaminated surfaces.

Note:

- **Child mortality:** The death of children under the age of 5.
- **Infant mortality:** The death of children under the age of 1.

Preventable:

- The poorest children are most at risk because of **high rates of malnutrition, low vaccine coverage** and **limited access to correct diagnosis** and **timely treatment**.
- **Almost all** of the deaths from childhood pneumonia are **preventable through vaccination, adequate nutrition, reducing risk factors like air pollution** (which

makes the lungs more vulnerable to infection), **using good hygiene practices** and **treatable** with **low-cost antibiotics** and **oxygen**,

- **Outdoor air pollution** contributes to nearly 18% or nearly 1 in 5 pneumonia deaths among children under 5.
- **Exclusive Breastfeeding:**
 - Exclusive breastfeeding during the **first 6 months** of a child's life can lead to a **23% reduction** in pneumonia incidence.
 - Infants who aren't breastfed are **15 times** more likely to **die** from pneumonia.
- **Incidence:**
 - **Global:** Together, the **Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, India, Nigeria and Pakistan** account for **more than half of all deaths** due to pneumonia among children under 5.
 - **India:** Annually, **14% of under-5 deaths** in India happen due to pneumonia.

Source: IE

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