



World Immunisation Week 2025

Have you ever considered why it's so easy for our bodies to fight off what we would now consider 'everyday' illnesses? The common cold, fevers and influenza - to name a few - are all examples of infections and respiratory responses that occur inside our bodies somewhat frequently throughout the year. So, why is it you aren't rushed to hospital every time you let out a sneeze? The answer lies within the human immune system - a complex network of cells and organs that help to defend your body from germs and other nasty invaders. In some ways, the immune system is very similar to the brain: it learns and uses past experience to protect itself in the future. Germs that you've never encountered are mainly what make you ill, as your body doesn't yet know how to defend itself against the attackers. Though, as it becomes more aware of what it's up against, the immune system can determine ways to rid your body of the germs both then and ever again. However, it's a lot harder for our bodies to design defence systems on the day of the war; if only there was a way they could discover how to create ideal antibodies prior to you getting ill, ensuring that if you do make contact with said germs you don't fall devastatingly sick?

Last Thursday marked the commencement of World Immunisation Week 2025. With the participation of 180 countries worldwide, the week first came to be in 2012 by order of the World Health Organization (WHO), with the aim of ensuring as many communities as possible are protected against vaccine-preventable diseases; especially those in developing or derelict provinces. This year's theme is, "Immunization to all is Humanly possible", both a reminder and a call to countries asking them to uphold their responsibility of prioritising the nation's health. Vaccines work by imitating infections; protecting you from harmful diseases before you encounter them and building resistances that further strengthen the immune system. This is safer and a lot more practical than waiting for the subject to actually fall sick, hence why so many nations take it rather seriously.

Article 24 of the UNCRC states that every child has the right to optimal health, water, food and a safe environment. This article makes it clear that a child's physical and mental health should be in as good a state as possible. It highlights how children should be able to access the highest standard of treatment centres and rehabilitation facilities; particularly in the childbirth sector. Article 24 emphasises the need for a balanced diet when it comes to the maintenance of health, as a rich diet combats malnutrition while supplying your body with the necessary nutrients it needs to make antibodies and fight diseases. Contaminated water can be a host to numerous harmful germs and bacteria, and so the article underlines why and how clean water is essential to a child's health. It acknowledges the importance of a safe environment in regards to physical performance and encourages governments to

seek solutions to environmental concerns like climate change, air pollution and rising tides which could have negative effects on health in general. It also encourages wealthier nations to assist struggling nations in achieving these; guaranteeing that everyone's health is taken seriously, no matter where they come from.

The youngest of children, babies and newborns, are extremely likely to fall ill when they come across any germs. It's said that 1 in 5 children lack access to life-saving vaccines; with around 14.5 million children under the age of 1 said to have been left without immunisation in 2023. Over half of the world's 'zero-dose' children are supposedly found in the following countries: Angola, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, India, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Indonesia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sudan and Yemen. These are all examples of low to middle income nations that struggle to provide medicinal services and vaccinations for this aspect of the youth. This puts this younger generation at risk and unfortunately leads to a rise in infant mortality rates. However, through the spreading of awareness and global aid, things are getting better. Around 4 million deaths globally are prevented by childhood vaccinations each year and in the span of 12 months, the number of vulnerable, adolescent girls globally who received the HPV vaccine, (an essential vaccination providing protection against cervical cancers) increased from 20% to 27%.

Governments have an obligation to ensure children can grow to live as healthy a life as possible. But it's also important for us to do our part where we can to take care of our bodies so they too can take care of us. During the Coronavirus epidemic, it was the usage of the vaccine that prevented around 14.4 million deaths in a year's time and to this day vaccines continue to change lives in an equally substantial manner. Getting vaccinated not only protects you, but protects those around; especially those you spend a lot of time with. Immunisation is critical - and it's our solemn duty to aid in the provision of vaccines and medical rehabilitation, so that as many people as possible can live happily and heartfully. Let's work together to see this year's theme for World Immunisation week through, and let others know that, truly, "Immunization for all is Humanly Possible!"

By Nandi Dasar