

HIB Vaccine Linked to Better Health in Children in India: Study

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In a latest research, researchers found that Hib vaccine is linked with better health, cognition, and schooling outcomes in Indian children.

The study was conducted by The Center for Disease Dynamics, Economics & Policy (CDDEP), the University of California, Riverside and Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

The researchers studied the relation between Hib vaccination status and anthropometric, cognitive, and schooling outcomes among the children of India. They examined Z-scores of height- for-age (HAZ) and BMI-for-age (BMIZ), percentage scores of English, mathematics, reading, and Peabody Picture Vocabulary tests, and highest schooling grade attainment. They did this study among 1,824 Hib-vaccinated and unvaccinated children.

To control the systematic differences between the two groups, the researchers used propensity score matching.

They studied a similar group of children enrolled in the Young Lives Survey (YLS), a longitudinal study assessing childhood poverty. They analyzed data on reported vaccination receipts, household socioeconomic characteristics, and child anthropometric, cognitive, and schooling outcomes in India.

The results of the study showed that the vaccination given before the age of six years improved long-term health, cognition, and schooling outcomes among children in India. This improvement will also lead to economic gain.

Speaking about the study, co-author and CDDEP director, Ramanan Laxminarayan, said:

Hib vaccination is a critical component of the pentavalent vaccine, which was introduced in 2011. Although we tend to focus on short term consequences of immunization, this study shows that the effect of Hib vaccination on schooling and cognitive development can be significant. Denying children vaccines is effectively denying them access to these benefits that persist through their lives.

History of Hib in India

India has the highest number of Haemophilus influenzae type B (Hib) cases in the world.

Hib causes pneumonia and bacterial meningitis which can lead to stunting, decreased productivity and schooling outcomes, and risk of other diseases in children under the age of five years.

Hib related deaths are also very common in India. It killed approximately 15,600 Indian children aged 1-59 months in 2015.

Hib vaccine protects about 88 per cent of the children under the age of two in India.