

RSV vaccine to protect young and old

Industry-sponsored two studies published in the New England Journal of Medicine assessed the efficacy of a bivalent prefusion-stabilised F glycoprotein RSV vaccine, targeting vulnerable populations—pregnant women and older adults—susceptible to severe respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) infections.

In the MATISSE study, involving 7,358 pregnant women, the vaccine demonstrated promising results. Infants born to vaccinated mothers showed significant protection against severe RSV-associated lower respiratory tract illness (LRTI) between 90 and 180 days post-birth. However, the vaccine did not meet the criteria for preventing medically attended RSV-associated LRTI within the same timeframe.

While injection-site reactions were more frequent among vaccinated women, systemic reactions were comparable between groups. The vaccine group had a slightly higher incidence of premature delivery and more serious adverse events compared to the control group.

The RENOIR study, encompassing 34,284 older adults, revealed encouraging outcomes. The vaccine exhibited efficacy in preventing RSV-associated LRTI with both two- and three-specific symptoms. Participants receiving the vaccine showed a significantly lower incidence of RSV-associated LRTI compared to the placebo group. Local reactions were more prevalent in vaccine recipients, while systemic reactions were comparable. However, the vaccinated group reported a few serious adverse events related to the vaccine, including Guillain-Barré syndrome and allergic reactions.



These findings highlight the vaccine's potential to protect infants from severe RSV-associated illnesses transmitted from vaccinated pregnant women and to reduce RSV-associated LRTI in older adults. Despite demonstrating efficacy, the studies noted some local and systemic reactions and a few serious adverse events associated with the vaccine.

Further evaluation and monitoring of the vaccine's safety and effectiveness are necessary before widespread implementation.

WORLD AIDS DAY 2023



STAR HEALTH DESK

The world can end AIDS, with communities leading the way. Organisations of communities living with, at risk of, or affected by HIV are the frontline of progress in the HIV response. Communities connect people with person-centred public health services, build trust, innovate, monitor the implementation of policies and services, and hold providers accountable.

However, funding shortages, policy and regulatory hurdles, capacity constraints, and crackdowns on civil society and on the human rights of marginalised communities obstruct the progress of HIV prevention and treatment services. Funding shortages, policy and regulatory hurdles, capacity constraints, and crackdowns on civil society and on the human rights of marginalised communities are obstructing the progress of HIV prevention and treatment services. If these obstacles are removed, community-led organisations can add even greater impetus to the global HIV response, advancing progress towards the end of AIDS.

Every year, on December 1, the world commemorates World AIDS Day. This World AIDS Day is more than a celebration of the achievements of communities; it is a call to action to enable and

support communities in their leadership roles. World AIDS Day 2023 has highlighted the need to unleash the full potential of community leadership to enable the end of AIDS.

- Communities' leadership roles need to be made core in all HIV plans and programmes and in their formulation, budgeting, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. "Nothing about us without us."
- Communities' leadership roles need to be fully and reliably funded to enable the required scale-up and be properly supported and remunerated. "Not ending AIDS is more expensive than ending it."
- Barriers to communities' leadership roles need to be removed. An enabling regulatory environment is needed that facilitates communities' role in the provision of HIV services, ensures civil society space, and protects the human rights of all, including marginalised communities, to advance the global HIV response.

Communities are leading World AIDS Day, and people across the world are shaping the events and tailoring the detailed calls to their specific needs.

"The end of AIDS is possible; it is within our grasp," says UNAIDS Executive Director Winnie Byanyima. "To follow the path that ends AIDS, the world needs to let communities lead."

HAVE A NICE DAY Skipping the sparkle - Part 1

DR RUBAUL MURSHED

Two roads diverged in a mall and a forest—which one will you choose to explore? An oniomaniac will prefer discovering hidden gems in shops rather than nature's wonders.

'Oniomaniac' means an unmanageable craving to buy things. Individuals with an uncontrollable and compulsive desire to shop are considered oniomaniacs. This is a disorder that has begun to receive attention from researchers in recent years.

Researchers estimate that the disorder affects a significant portion of the adult population, with females being affected approximately 90% of the time. Oniomania often arises from emotions such as stress, anxiety, or loneliness.

Some researchers often link compulsive shopping to addictive disorders, such as alcohol and drug use disorders, as well as behavioural addictions like gambling addiction. Some also associate it with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), while others connect it to mood disorders.

That is why some refer to shopping addicts as spenders or spendthrifts.

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Global health achievements 2023: Reasons for hope

STAR HEALTH DESK

The 75th anniversary of the World Health Organisation (WHO) was observed in 2023. It was a year to reflect on 75 years of global health achievements while facing the multiple and complex challenges affecting our health today. This milestone anniversary served as a powerful reminder of how working together in global solidarity has enabled us to rise to complex challenges in the past and will continue to do so in the future.

Working together for health for all:

Despite multiple health-related crises, there were many reasons for hope in 2023. Although faced with record numbers of climate-related health challenges and crises from new and expanding conflicts, millions of health and care workers continued striving to protect more people from illness and suffering, to build resilience and preparedness in an increasingly turbulent world, and to achieve a common goal: to give everyone everywhere the best possible chance at a safe and healthy life.

Eliminating diseases:

The year 2023 was a record year for disease elimination, with several countries eliminating infectious diseases thanks to dedicated national efforts and collaborative action by countries and health partners worldwide.

In March, WHO certified Azerbaijan and Tajikistan malaria-free, followed by Belize in June. Malaria affects some of the world's most vulnerable people, and these extraordinary achievements demonstrate how a malaria-free future can become a reality.

Egypt became the first country in the world to achieve

"gold tier" status on the path to eliminating hepatitis C, an important milestone towards the goal of achieving full elimination of the disease before 2030. This is an astonishing turnaround for a country that had one of the world's highest rates of hepatitis C infection less than 10 years ago.

As of today, 50 countries have eliminated at least one neglected tropical disease (NTD), in line with the WHO's ambitious goal of having 100 countries achieve this milestone by 2030.

Ghana eliminated gambiense human African trypanosomiasis, a life-threatening sleeping sickness transmitted by tsetse flies, in January. This disease causes significant harm to rural populations living in poverty in sub-Saharan Africa.

In May, Benin and Mali eliminated trachoma, the leading infectious cause of blindness worldwide. They were the fifth and sixth countries in Africa to achieve this significant milestone, joined by Iraq from the Eastern Mediterranean region in July.

Bangladesh and the Lao People's Democratic Republic have successfully eliminated lymphatic filariasis as a public health concern. Mosquitoes transmit lymphatic filariasis, commonly known as elephantiasis, a debilitating parasitic disease.

Bangladesh made history as the first country to eliminate two NTDs in the same year. Bangladesh also made history as the first country in the world to officially eliminate kala-azar, a life-threatening disease transmitted by sandflies. If left untreated, kala-azar (visceral leishmaniasis), a life-threatening disease transmitted by sandflies, can prove fatal in over 95% of cases.

Source: World Health Organisation



The vaping trap

DR NUR-A SAFRINA RAHMAN

The prevalence of vaping among young people and adolescents has significantly increased. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that vaping can lead to severe addiction, particularly among individuals in younger age groups. Nicotine is the primary addictive component of e-cigarettes. These substances have the potential to induce significant alterations in the brain and lead to addiction.

Nicotine, a potent substance, exerts an influence on the brain and has the potential to induce health complications in adolescents and young individuals.

Evidence indicates that young individuals who engage in vaping are at a higher risk of initiating the use of conventional cigarettes, which are widely recognised to be associated with the development of cancer and other grave health conditions.

Nevertheless, the elevated nicotine content in e-cigarettes makes vaping more susceptible to dependency than smoking traditional cigarettes. E-cigarettes commonly include nicotine salts, which are better absorbed by the body compared to the nicotine found in traditional cigarettes.

Consequently, e-cigarettes can provide a greater amount of nicotine to the brain, resulting in a heightened and more habit-forming encounter.

In summary, vaping has the potential to create addiction, particularly among young individuals. Nicotine is the primary cause of it. It is imperative to be aware of the potential dangers and to get assistance if you or someone you are acquainted with is grappling with this addiction.

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