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## Cameroon: Health - New free vaccine for children

Elizabeth Mosima

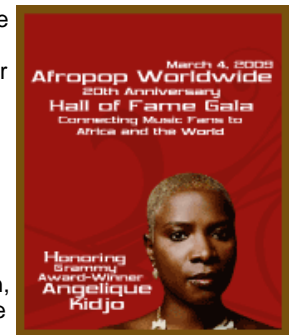
2 February 2009

The DTC Hep + Hib vaccine will be officially launched on February 4 in Okola in the Lekié Division of the Centre Region.





A new vaccine has been introduced in the Cameroon health system. The announcement was made by the Minister of Public Health, André Mama Fouda, during a press briefing last Friday in Yaounde. The press briefing brought together stakeholders in the health sector and other partners concerned with the fight against infections that can be avoided through vaccination in Cameroon. The vaccine DTC Hep + Hib against infections of Haemophilus influenzae type b for children is available in all health facilities that are authorised to deliver vaccination services in the country as from yesterday February 1. The new pentavalent vaccine replaces the former tetravalent vaccine, DPT-Hep B.

The vaccine which will be given to children between the ages of 0 to 11 months free of charge is made up of five vaccines which can prevent children from invasive childhood diseases caused by the haemophilus influenzae type b bacteria. The haemophilus influenzae type b bacteria is one of the major causes of mortality through meningitis in children under five years of age with a mortality rate of 60 percent in patient in hospitals. For those who manage to survive, they are left with irreversible side effects such as paralysis, mental retardation, loss of speech, among others. The DTC Hep + Hib vaccine thus prevents the children from diseases such as meningitis, pneumonia, tetanus, diphtheria and hepatitis B. The haemophilus influenzae type b vaccine is a combination of five vaccines and is injected at one shot and will be given at the same intervals, that is six, 10, and 14 weeks after birth.

Speaking at the press briefing, the permanent secretary at the Expanded Programme of Immunization, Dr Marie Kobela, said there will be no catch up sessions for mothers who do not give their children the vaccines. The Minister assured national and international opinion that the government has taken measures to ensure that the DTC Hep + Hib vaccine is available in all vaccination centres in the country. Minister André Mama Fouda called on all mothers to take their children between zero and eleven months to hospitals and vaccination centres to receive the vaccines for of charge. For children above eleven months, parents will be asked to pay for the vaccine. The vaccine will be officially launched on February 4 in Okola in the Lekié Division of the Centre Region.



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