

FACT SHEET

Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib) in Africa

Haemophilus influenzae type B (Hib) and Streptococcus pneumoniae are the two primary causes of life-threatening pneumonia in children under 5 years of age. Hib is also the leading cause of endemic bacterial meningitis in infants and young children in countries where the Hib vaccine is not routinely used and one-third to one-half of the cases children either die or suffer permanent disability such as deafness, paralysis or mental retardation. Although safe and effective Hib vaccines have been used in many countries for more than 17 years, they are under-utilized in developing countries.

Hib disease: A threat for children in Africa and around the world

- Every year, an estimated 400,000 children < 5 years of age die from Hib disease.
- Africa accounts for more childhood deaths due to Hib than any other continent.
- Hib is a leading cause of meningitis and severe pneumonia among children in Africa.
- Hib meningitis has a high fatality and disability rate: in Africa, more than 1 in 5 children with Hib meningitis die and 15-35% of survivors suffer permanent disability.
- Hib pneumonia is even more common than Hib meningitis: It is estimated that for every case of Hib meningitis, there are 4 to 10 cases of pneumonia.
- In Africa an estimated annual 900,000 pneumonia deaths occur in children under 5 years of age ¹, and Hib may cause up to 20% of severe pneumonia cases.²
- Hib is a silent killer—because diagnosis is difficult, few doctors perceive Hib infections to be important.

Hib pneumonia and meningitis are difficult to detect and burden is often significantly underestimated

- Surveillance often captures only a very small portion of the true burden of disease; reasons for this include:
 - Hib is a fastidious organism making it difficult to detect; lab infrastructure is not always sufficient; prior use of antibiotics may mask the existence of the bacteria; lumbar punctures (for meningitis) are not always done; or children with Hib never reach a healthcare facility.

The World Health Organization recommends Hib vaccine for all countries, without delay

- “In view of their demonstrated safety and efficacy, conjugate Hib vaccines should be included in all routine infant immunization programmes...Lack of local surveillance data should not delay the introduction of the vaccines...”³ (2006)

Hib vaccine has demonstrated impact on meningitis and pneumonia in Africa

- Hib vaccines are proven safe and highly effective in preventing Hib pneumonia and meningitis in African settings.^{4, 5, 6, 7}
- Vaccination is safe in children infected with HIV and substantially reduces the risk of Hib disease.
- Kenya⁸, Malawi⁹ and The Gambia⁴ surveillance studies all showed Hib vaccine drastically reduced Hib disease following routine use.
- A recent study in Kenya¹⁰ corroborated evidence in other developing countries showing that Hib vaccine is highly cost effective.
- A study in Lombok, Indonesia showed that Hib vaccine prevented a statistically significant portion of clinical pneumonia.¹¹
- A recent study of Hib vaccine effectiveness against Hib meningitis in Uganda showed a drop in Hib meningitis by 85% within 4 years of vaccine introduction and fell to zero in the fifth year. Inclusion of Hib vaccine in the Ugandan immunization programme annually prevents almost 30,000 cases of severe Hib disease and 5,000 deaths in children under 5 years of age.¹²

Hib vaccine is recommended for all children, but many still do not have access to the vaccine

- As of July 2008, half of the 36 poorest countries in the WHO AFR region have introduced Hib vaccination with support from the GAVI Alliance. Of the remaining countries all but one (Nigeria) has applied to GAVI for support for introduction of pentavalent vaccine.
- Increased awareness and focused efforts accelerating implementation and ensuring sustainability of Hib vaccine programs is still needed to ensure that no child dies from this vaccine preventable disease.

Hib vaccine can be given as part of the routine immunization schedule

- Hib vaccine can be given at 6, 10 and 14 weeks and given at the same time as the other routine infant immunizations.
- It can be given in combination with DTP and Hepatitis B therefore not requiring an additional shot.

The Hib Initiative is working to ensure a sustainable and affordable supply of Hib vaccine for African children

- Many African countries are eligible for GAVI support for Hib and other vaccines through 2015 with a country co-payment of 15 to 30 cents per dose.
- Two pentavalent (DTP-Hepatitis B/Hib) formulations are available through GAVI now.

- As demand for Hib vaccine increases and new suppliers enter the market over the next few years, prices are expected to decline, making it easier for countries to achieve financial independence.

GAVI Co-Financing

Minimum co-financing levels per dose (US\$) Single or combination

Vaccine	COUNTRY GROUPINGS			
	Poorest	Intermediate	Least Poor	Fragile States
1 st new vaccine	0.20	0.30	0.30 (+15% annual increment)	0.10
each additional vaccine	0.15	0.15	0.15 (+15% annual increment)	0.15

2008 GAVI applications deadlines: February 8, May 2 and September 25, 2008

The Hib Initiative

The Hib Initiative aims to guide countries in making informed decisions regarding introduction or continuation of Hib vaccine programs in the context of other health problems and offers technical assistance and support in the following areas:

- Research and surveillance, planning coordination in decision making and implementation, and advocacy and communication support for GAVI-eligible countries
- The Hib Initiative works with GAVI-eligible countries around the world to support decisions regarding Hib vaccine introduction and sustainable implementation into immunization programmes
- The Hib Initiative unites experts from Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, the World Health Organization, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- The Hib Initiative is supported by a 4-year grant from the GAVI Alliance (www.gavialliance.org)

Consider the evidence and take action to reduce childhood meningitis and pneumonia today!

Visit the Hib Initiative at www.HibAction.org or contact your local or regional WHO immunizations representative for more information

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