



HEALTH MATTERS

• NUGGETS •

African Vaccination Week



Have you heard?

African Vaccination Week (AVW), celebrated in the last week of April, aims to highlight the collective action needed to protect people from vaccine-preventable diseases and keeping immunization high at all partnership levels.

The goal of AVW is for more children and adults to be protected from these diseases, allowing them to live happier. People tend to be reluctant to get vaccinations when they do not understand or have knowledge on what the vaccines do. Additionally, culture can also influence the way people perceive vaccines resulting in people becoming either encouraged or discouraged getting vaccinated.

Information on vaccines and vaccinations is easily accessible at sickbays/clinics, hospitals and on the World Health Organisation website. The over-arching slogan of AVW is "Vaccinated communities, Healthy communities".

Myths & Facts



Myth: Vaccine-preventable diseases are just part of childhood. It is better to have the disease than become immune through vaccines.

Facts: Vaccine-preventable diseases have many serious complications that can be avoided through immunizations e.g.

- Human papillomavirus (HPV) is the most common viral infection of the reproductive tract, can cause cervical cancer, genital warts.
- Bacterial meningitis is an infection that is often deadly.
- Mumps is a contagious virus that causes painful swelling, fever, headache and muscle aches.
- Polio is a highly infectious viral disease that can cause irreversible paralysis.

- Rubella is a viral disease that affects children and may cause foetal death or congenital rubella syndrome.

Myth: Indigenous medicines/concoctions is more effective than vaccines.

Fact: There has not been any scientific proof that confirms that traditional medicines prevent vaccine-preventable diseases.

Myth: Vaccines kill people.

Fact: There may be side effects such as fever, redness, swelling and tenderness. People do not die primarily from a vaccine.

Food for thought

- Vaccines are developed to fight/control the outbreak of some dangerous diseases. They produce antibodies to fight against the diseases.
- It is important to get vaccinated as a vaccinated person is less likely to pass on the infection to others.
- Literature shows that men are more reluctant to seek health services than women as a result of socialisation. Consequently, men's life expectancy is shorter compared to women's.
- Diseases (such as, Tuberculosis, measles, polio) that killed people previously are now rare because of these vaccinations.
- It is mandatory to have an updated "yellow card" in order to deploy. Remember, "a healthy soldier is a ready soldier".

In numbers



- In 2022, 14.3 million infants did not receive an initial dose of Diphtheria, Pertussis & Tetanus (DTP) vaccine, pointing to a lack of access to immunization.
- An estimated 33 million children will need to be vaccinated in Africa between 2023 and 2025 to reduce morbidity and mortality from vaccine-preventable diseases.

References:

www.worldhealthorganisation.com
www.gov.za