



MINISTRY OF HEALTH

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***** Media advisory *****

Kenya to launch phased introduction of malaria vaccine, joining Malawi and Ghana

Promising new tool expected to protect young children from malaria when used in combination with other malaria prevention measures

On September 13, Kenya will become the third country in Africa to launch the phased introduction of the RTS,S malaria vaccine, the world's first vaccine to protect young children against the most deadly form of malaria. The vaccine will be given to children under 2 years of age as part of routine childhood immunizations. Malawi and Ghana started rolling out the vaccine in April. The programme aims to reach about 360,000 children per year across the three countries.

Africa bears the greatest burden of malaria worldwide. Global efforts in the last 15 years have led to a 62% reduction in malaria deaths between 2000 and 2015, yet malaria still claims the life of one child every two minutes, the majority of them in Africa.

In recent years, Kenya has made tremendous progress in the fight against malaria by rolling out proven control measures including insect treated mosquito nets, indoor residual spraying, prompt diagnosis and prevention with antimalarial medicine. In spite of these efforts, in 2016, malaria caused an estimated 3.5 million infections and just over 10,000 deaths in Kenya, overwhelming the health facility capacity in the lake endemic region. Overall, the disease is one of the top ten causes of illness and death in the country and a leading killer of children under the age of five. New interventions are needed to complement those currently in use to further drive down the disease burden in the country.

The malaria vaccine, which will be delivered through the routine national immunization programmes, is given at 6 months, 7 months, 9 months and 24 months of age. To get the most protection, a child who receives the vaccine must get all four doses and continue other practices to prevent malaria, including sleeping under a mosquito net every night and throughout the year. The areas named to be part of the phased introduction include Homabay, Kisumu, Migori, Siaya, Busia, Bungoma, Vihiga, and Kakamega counties. Within the eight targeted counties, some sub-counties have the opportunity to introduce the vaccine into their immunization schedules, while others are expected to introduce the vaccine later.

The launch of the phased introduction will take place on September 13, in Ndhiwa, Homa Bay County.

Speakers include:

1. Hon. Sicily Kariuki, CS Health
2. Dr. John Wekesa Masasabi, acting director general at the Ministry of Health
3. H.E. Cyprian Awiti, Governor, Homa Bay County
4. Dr. Collins Tabu, Head of Immunization Program, Ministry of Health
5. Dr. Rudi Eggers, World Health Organization, Kenya Office
6. Dr. Scott Gordon, PATH

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Notes to editors:

Additional information on the Malaria Vaccine Implementation Programme in Kenya is available [here](#).

- **Country selection:** Following a request by WHO for expressions of interest, Kenya, alongside Malawi and Ghana, was selected from among 10 African countries. Key criteria for selection included well-functioning malaria and immunization programmes, and areas with moderate to high malaria transmission.
- **Proven results:** In Phase 3 trials conducted in Africa, between 2009 and 2014, children receiving 4 doses of RTS,S experienced significant reductions in malaria and malaria-related complications, in comparison to those who did not receive RTS,S. The vaccine prevented 4 in 10 cases of clinical malaria; 3 in 10 cases of severe malaria; and 6 in 10 cases of severe malaria anaemia, the most common reason children die from malaria. Significant reductions were also seen in overall hospital admissions and the need for blood transfusions, which are required to treat severe malaria anaemia. These and other benefits were in addition to those already seen through the use of insecticide-treated nets (bed nets); prompt diagnosis; and effective antimalarial treatment.
- **Child vaccination schedule:** In selected areas in the three countries, the vaccine will be given in 4 doses: 3 doses at 6 months, 7 months and 9 months of age and the fourth dose provided at 24 months.

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