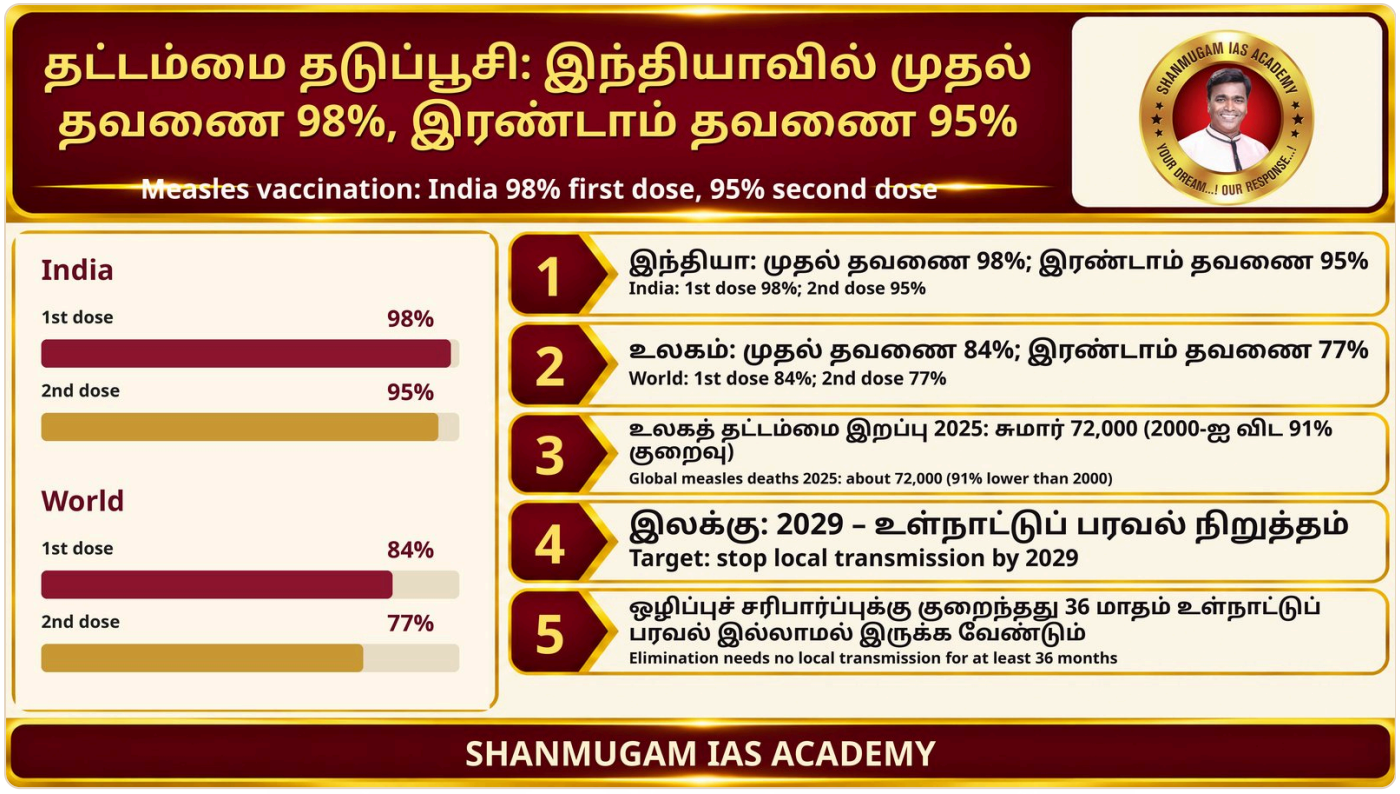
Measles vaccination: India reaches 98% first dose, 95% second dose

Topics: Health · UPSC Prelims · TNPSC · SSC · Current Affairs



News

On 27 November 2026 the World Health Organization (WHO) released a report on worldwide progress towards measles elimination during 2000–2025. It says about 72,000 people died of measles worldwide in 2025 – 91% fewer than in 2000; the vaccine has saved more than 60 million lives since 2000. Global coverage has stalled at 84% for the first dose and 77% for the second. India's coverage – 98% for the first dose and 95% for the second (WHO–UNICEF WUENIC estimates for 2025) – is far above the world average; reports say India's measles cases fell from 65,150 in 2023 to 17,995 in 2025. For the first time since estimates began in 2001, India is no longer among the 10 countries with the most unvaccinated children. However, WHO officer Dr Santosh Gurung reportedly said India will not meet the regional target of eliminating measles and rubella by 2026, because small pockets of unvaccinated children keep local transmission going. The present aim is reported to be stopping local transmission by 2029 and moving towards verification by 2032.

Key facts for the exam

Point	Details
Global deaths 2025	About 72,000 (91% lower than 2000)
Global coverage	1st dose 84%; 2nd dose 77%

Point	Details
India's coverage	1st dose 98%; 2nd dose 95%
India's cases	2023 – 65,150; 2025 – 17,995 (reported)
India's targets	2029 – stop local transmission; 2032 – towards verification
Verification of elimination	No local transmission for at least 36 months
MR campaign	From February 2017; phase 1 – Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Puducherry, Goa, Lakshadweep
Digital record	U-WIN – records every vaccination (Oct 2024)

Background

- Science: measles is a highly contagious viral disease. Spread by breathing, coughing and sneezing, the virus stays active in the air and on surfaces for up to two hours; it is one of the world's most contagious diseases. Symptoms are fever, runny nose, cough, red eyes, white spots inside the cheeks, and then a rash spreading down from the face. Complications such as pneumonia, brain swelling and blindness are most common in children under five and adults over 30.
- Rubella: rubella, called 'German measles', is also a viral disease. If a pregnant woman is infected, the unborn baby may develop Congenital Rubella Syndrome (CRS), with heart, eye and ear defects. India therefore uses the combined measles–rubella (MR) vaccine; two doses are given free under the Universal Immunization Programme (UIP).
- Indian history: on 5 February 2017 one of the world's largest MR vaccination campaigns began, targeting about 41 crore children aged nine months to 15 years. India missed its measles-elimination goal three times – 2015, 2020 and 2023 – and then fixed 2026. In October 2024 the Prime Minister launched 'U-WIN', which records every vaccination of pregnant women and children up to 16 and issues QR-based certificates.
- Global picture: by the end of 2025, 95 countries had achieved or maintained verified measles elimination. But 59 countries had large outbreaks, and 11 outbreaks hit countries earlier declared measles-free. On 17 November 2026 the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) announced that the United States and Mexico had lost their measles-elimination status; Canada lost it in November 2025. More than 29 million children worldwide are unvaccinated or under-vaccinated. The Measles & Rubella Partnership (M&RP) – including WHO, UNICEF, Gavi and the US CDC – supports these efforts.

Tamil Nadu link: Tamil Nadu, along with Karnataka, Puducherry, Goa and Lakshadweep, was in the first phase of the nationwide MR vaccination campaign launched in February 2017. Children from nine months to 15 years were vaccinated through schools and anganwadis.

Frequently asked questions

What is this news about?

On 27 November 2026 the World Health Organization (WHO) released a report on worldwide progress towards measles elimination during 2000–2025. It says about 72,000 people died of measles worldwide in 2025 – 91% fewer than in 2000; the vaccine has saved more than 60 million lives since 2000.

What are the key facts to remember for the exam?

Global deaths 2025: About 72,000 (91% lower than 2000); Global coverage: 1st dose 84%; 2nd dose 77%; India's coverage: 1st dose 98%; 2nd dose 95%; India's cases: 2023 – 65,150; 2025 – 17,995 (reported).

What is the background to this news?

Science: measles is a highly contagious viral disease. Spread by breathing, coughing and sneezing, the virus stays active in the air and on surfaces for up to two hours; it is one of the world's most contagious diseases.

Practice questions (with answers)

1. Which disease prevented by the MR vaccine can cause birth defects in the baby if a pregnant woman is infected?

A) Mumps

B) Rubella

C) Chickenpox

D) Tetanus

Answer: B – Explanation: Rubella – it causes Congenital Rubella Syndrome (CRS). MR = measles + rubella; both are viral diseases.

2. Which State was in the first phase of India's MR vaccination campaign launched in February 2017?

A) Keralam

B) Bihar

C) Tamil Nadu

D) Gujarat

Answer: C – Explanation: Tamil Nadu – with Karnataka, Puducherry, Goa and Lakshadweep; for children aged 9 months to 15 years.

3. For WHO to verify that a country has eliminated measles, local (endemic) transmission must be absent for at least how long?

A) 12 months

B) 24 months

C) 36 months

D) 60 months

Answer: C – Explanation: 36 months. Elimination means no endemic transmission for at least 12 months; WHO verification needs at least 36 months. India reportedly aims to stop local transmission by 2029 and move towards verification by 2032.

4. How does the measles virus mainly spread?

A) Contaminated water

B) Mosquito bites

C) Contact with soil

D) Coughs and sneezes

Answer: D – Explanation: Through the air – the virus stays active in air and on surfaces for up to 2 hours.

5. When most of a community is vaccinated, the indirect protection of unvaccinated people is called what?

A) Herd immunity

B) Passive immunity

C) Innate immunity

D) Autoimmunity

Answer: A – Explanation: Herd immunity. Measles spreads so easily that very high two-dose coverage is needed; small unvaccinated pockets keep it circulating.