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Media alert from the Media Scanning & Verification Cell, IDSP-NCDC.

Alert ID	Publication Date	Reporting Date	Place Name	News Source/Publication Language
6667	23.04.2022	25.04.2022	Munger, Bhagalpur, Begusarai Bihar	www.telegraphindia.com/English https://www.telegraphindia.com/india/150-students-of-government-schools-fall-ill-after-consuming-deworming-drug-in-bihar/cid/1861818
Title:	150 students fell ill after consuming deworming drug in Munger, Bhagalpur and Begusarai districts, Bihar			
Action By CSU, IDSP -NCDC	Information communicated to District – Munger, Bhagalpur, Begusarai, SSU- Bihar			

At least 150 students of government schools in Bihar fell ill after consuming deworming drug Albendazole on Friday, with medical experts blaming the faulty government policy for the incident.

The affected schools are located in Munger, Bhagalpur and Begusarai districts.

The figure could be more as such incidents were being reported from different parts of the state that has over 75,000 primary and upper primary schools in which over two-crore children are enrolled.

The deworming drive was conducted in all schools and the students were given Albendazole tablets in the morning.

In Munger, students of Shah Zubair Middle School at Ghorghat under Bariyarpur block started feeling dizzy and nauseated soon after taking the medicine. Some of them fell unconscious too. It led to panic in the area and guardians rushed to the school to check on the kids.

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Disclaimer:- This is a media alert subject to verification.

Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP), National Centre for Disease Control,
Ministry Of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India

22-Sham Nath Marg, Delhi – 110 054

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Teachers of the school said around 100 students fell ill. Some of them were rushed to private doctors and hospitals by their parents while the rest were taken to the nearest primary health centre at Bariyarpur. The doctors there had to keep some of the kids on oxygen support.

“Total 64 children were brought to the hospital. They were given proper medical attention for around two hours and are now out of danger. Most of them were suffering from vomiting, stomach ache and giddiness,” Munger civil surgeon Anand Shankar told The Telegraph.

Shankar said kids were sensitive to deworming medicines and could suffer from side effects such as nausea, abdominal pain and headache.

“The side effects may aggravate if the medicine is taken on an empty stomach. There is a possibility that the children who had come to the school without breakfast suffered more. We have also written to the health department to test the batch number of Albandazole tablets that were supplied to the schools,” Shankar added.

Around 30 students of Ajmeripur Upper Primary School in Nathnagar block of Bhagalpur district fell ill after taking the deworming drug. Panic prevailed as villagers rushed to the school on getting the information while the teachers ran away to avoid being roughed up.

The children were taken to Nathnagar Referral Hospital. Their parents created a ruckus there. The situation was brought under control after Bhagalpur civil surgeon Umesh Sharma and local administrative officials reached the spot. All the kids are said to be out of danger.

Some students of the middle school in Balia block of Begusarai fell ill after taking the medicine. Their parents took them to various hospitals in and around the area.

“We received five school students and treated them. They were dehydrated and we administered saline and glucose water to them. It seems attention was not paid on ensuring that the kids took the deworming medicine after having food. Sporadic incidents like these have come to our knowledge from different blocks,” Balia primary health centre in-charge M.P. Chaudhary told The Telegraph.

A senior doctor working with the health department at the state headquarters told this newspaper on the condition of anonymity that all the incidents were “an outcome of bureaucrats having no knowledge of medicine making policies related to health”.

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“We prescribe Albendazole to be taken after dinner, before going to sleep. The children are asked to chew the tablets instead of swallowing it. These steps cut down the chances of side effects. But the bureaucrats formulating the policy had a brainwave and bulldozed everybody to administer the medicine in the morning,” the senior doctor said.

The doctor also pointed out that morning classes are being held in the schools in the state due to the prevailing heat wave conditions and this must have been a reason behind many students turning up empty stomach.

Phone calls and text messages to senior health department officials went unanswered.

Education minister Vijay Kumar Choudhary said: “I am out of the state and I have no official information about the children falling ill. I will ask for an enquiry on why Albedazole was administered in the morning. One of the reasons for prescribing the medicine to be taken at bedtime is to help the children tide over the side effects in sleep.”

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