

Indian firm unveils latest typhoid shots

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An Indian pharmaceutical firm said Thursday it would soon launch the world's first vaccine against typhoid which can be given to infants, protecting the most vulnerable victims of the illness.

Bharat Biotech, based in the southern city of Hyderabad, said it would also offer long-term protection of more than 10 years, unlike other vaccines which must be boosted with regular injections.

"This is the world's first clinically-proven vaccine for children of six months and above," spokeswoman Sheela Panicker told AFP.

The World Health Organisation says the food- and water-borne disease kills 600,000 people a year and infects an estimated 17 million, mainly children. Ninety percent of such cases are reported in Asia.

"Available typhoid vaccines do not offer long-term protection and booster doses are required every three years, and also they do not offer protection to children aged below two years," Panicker added.

Indian [health authorities](#) have given their go-ahead to the "fourth-generation" vaccine, which can also be taken by adults, and it is expected to be launched in the next two weeks.

Panicker said the firm would decide its cost depending on the volume after its launch. Production capacity was currently 10 million doses per year, she said.

In May Biotech unveiled a low-cost vaccine against a deadly diarrhoea-causing virus that kills some 100,000 children in India every year.

Rotavirus, which causes severe diarrhoea, is globally responsible for some 453,000 deaths annually and is particularly dangerous in the developing world where swift health care is often out of reach.

India has also been a powerhouse in developing [generic medicines](#) to treat diseases such as cancer, tuberculosis and AIDS for those who cannot afford expensive branded versions across the developing world.

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