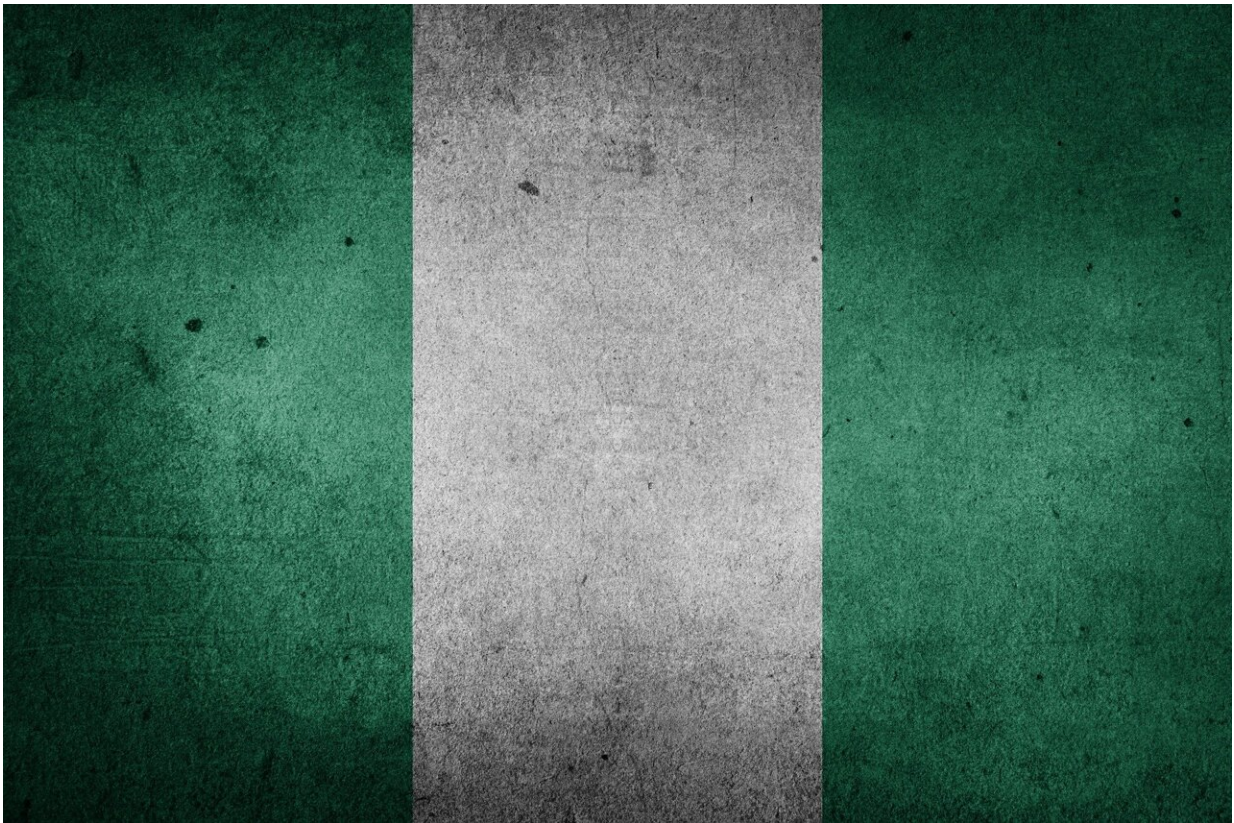


# Nigeria first to use 'revolutionary' meningitis jab: WHO

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Africa's most populous nation Nigeria has launched a "revolutionary" vaccine against meningitis, in what the World Health Organization (WHO) on Friday said was a world first.

"Meningitis is an old and deadly foe, but this new [vaccine](#) holds the potential to change the trajectory of the disease, preventing future outbreaks and saving many lives," said WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

"Nigeria's rollout brings us one step closer to our goal to eliminate meningitis by 2030," he said.

The Men5CV vaccine shields against the five major strains of the meningococcal bacteria (A, C, W, Y and X) in a single shot.

The WHO said it offers broader protection than the current vaccine used in much of Africa, which is only effective against the A strain.

Last year the number of meningitis cases jumped 50 percent in Africa.

Nigeria, with a population of 220 million, is one of the continent's 26 meningitis hyper-endemic countries, an area known as the African Meningitis Belt.

WHO noted that 153 people died during an outbreak of meningitis in Nigeria between October 1 and March 11.

Gavi, the global Vaccine Alliance, funded the new campaign from March 25-28 to initially vaccinate more than one million people aged from one to 29 years.

"Northern Nigeria, particularly the states of Jigawa, Bauchi and Yobe were badly hit by the deadly outbreak of meningitis," said Professor Muhammad Ali Pate of Nigeria's Health Ministry.

"This vaccine provides [health workers](#) with a new tool to both stop this [outbreak](#) but also put the country on a path to elimination," he said in the

WHO statement.

Meningitis infection leads to inflammation of the membranes or meninges that protect the brain and spinal cord.

It has multiple causes including viral, bacterial, fungal and parasitic pathogens.

Symptoms often include headache, fever and stiff neck. Bacterial meningitis is the most serious and may result in septicaemia or blood poisoning that can seriously disable or kill within 24 hours.

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