

National strategy needed for rabies elimination: WHO

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Over 1.5 billion people in the Region are at risk of rabies [infection](#).

Every year an estimated 4 million people take rabies preventive vaccines, mostly after dog bites.

About 40% people exposed to dog bites are children in the age group of 5 to 15 years.

As of today, rabies has no cure.

"Eliminating rabies is an important public health goal. National strategies are needed for rabies elimination with the focus on increasing [public](#) awareness and making cost-effective post-exposure vaccination available to all. Ensuring post-exposure rabies vaccination is available to all in an equitable manner, should be a key element of rabies elimination efforts," pointed Dr Poonam Khetrpal Singh, regional director, WHO South-East Asia Region.

Communities have an important role to play in rabies elimination.

Dr Singh added, Simple but important measures such as vaccinating pet dogs and cats against rabies, thoroughly washing

dog bite wounds with soap and water, and taking rabies vaccination when exposed to bite of a rabid or suspected animal, will strengthen rabies elimination efforts."

WHO is now working together with Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations (UN), World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH) and animal welfare organizations to implement a comprehensive rabies elimination programme in rabies endemic countries.

Bangladesh, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Thailand are already witnessing a decline in human rabies death after implementing mass dog vaccination campaigns in combination with dog population management and improving accessibility to post-exposure vaccination.

The World Rabies Day this year focuses on making the elimination goal, set for 2020 in the WHO South-East Asia Region, a reality.