

PANEL APPROVES NUTRITION NORMS

Relevant for: Government Policies & Welfare Schemes | Topic: Welfare of Children - Schemes & their performance; Mechanisms, Laws, Institutions & Bodies

The norms were okayed by a scientific sub-committee under the NTBN.

India's top nutrition panel has recommended that severely malnourished children must be fed freshly cooked food prepared from locally available cereals, pulses and vegetables, and distributed by anganwadi centres, as part of the country's first-ever guidelines for nutritional management of children suffering from severe acute malnutrition (SAM).

"The National Technical Board on Nutrition (NTBN) has approved guidelines proposed by our Ministry for severe acute malnutrition," Secretary, Women and Child Development, R. K. Shrivastava told *The Hindu*.

The measures are part of the community-based health management of children suffering from SAM. The government had, till now, only put in place guidelines for the hospitalisation of severely wasted children who develop medical complications. Those norms were made public in 2011.

The norms were okayed by a scientific sub-committee under the NTBN, according to the minutes of the meeting issued last week.

Anganwadi workers

The guidelines outline the role of anganwadi workers and auxiliary nurse midwives (ANMs) in identifying severely wasted children, segregating those with oedema or medical complications and sending them to the nearest health facility or nutrition rehabilitation centres.

The remaining children are enrolled into "community based management", which includes provision of nutrition, continuous monitoring of growth, administration of antibiotics and micro-nutrients as well as counselling sessions and imparting of nutrition and health education.

According to the recommendations, anganwadi workers have to provide modified morning snacks, hot cooked meals and take home ration for SAM children.

The morning snacks and hot-cooked meals, which are served at anganwadis to children between the age of three to six years, should be "prepared freshly and served at the centralised kitchen/ anganwadi centres. Locally available cereals, pulses, green leafy vegetables and tubers, vitamin C rich fruits, as well as fresh milk and 3-4 eggs every week" have also been prescribed.

Importantly, the government has also revised the method to be used to measure wasting and advised calculating weight based on the height of children instead of the mid-upper arm circumference.

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