



Vitamin A Deficiency

Vitamin A deficiency is the leading cause of preventable blindness in children below the age of five. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), an estimated 250 million preschool-age children globally are Vitamin A deficient. Between 250,000 and 500,000 of these children go blind each year, and half of those children die within 12 months of losing their sight.

As Vitamin A is essential to the support of the immune system, a deficiency increases the risk of disease and death. Even before blindness occurs, Vitamin A deficient children are susceptible to premature birth, measles, congenital rubella syndrome, malaria and meningitis. For those children who do survive, blindness affects their development, education and productivity.

The primary cause of Vitamin A deficiency is chronic malnutrition. This is usually due to a lack of red, green, yellow and orange leafy fruits and vegetables in diets. The children affected are also often at risk to poverty and illiteracy, which prevents them from receiving proper education about this disease.

Almost half of all blindness in children is avoidable. Most cases can be prevented or treated by inexpensive interventions such as malnutrition screening programs, Vitamin A boosters and cataract surgery.