

# 128 kids died after vaccine in 2010, govt can't say why

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CHENNAI: More children in India are dying every year soon after being vaccinated, and the government has no clue why. Union health ministry statistics obtained under the Right to Information Act show that 128 children died in 2010 due to adverse effects after immunization (AEFI). That count has risen in the past three years, with 111 such deaths in 2008 and 116 in 2009.

AEFI is a general term that covers various reasons, including bad vaccine quality due to breaks in the cold chain, contamination and complications due to pre-existing conditions of the child. Coincidentally, AEFI deaths in 2008, when the government closed down all three public sector vaccine units and began buying from private suppliers, were three times the figure for 2007. TOI first reported in March this year that up to 2009, the toll was moving upwards. The 2010 figures confirm the trend.

"We are very concerned," Union health secretary K Chandramouli said, "but we can't attribute all such deaths to one reason." Asked specifically if the vaccines were responsible for the deaths, he replied: "I can't say that offhand."