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India probes transfusions after 23 kids get HIV

AHMEDABAD, India:

At least 23 children who received blood transfusions have tested positive for HIV, Indian officials said on Monday as authorities launched an investigation into a government hospital.

The infected children, aged between five to 10 years, suffer from thalassaemia, a rare genetic disorder that requires regular transfusions.

Parents said their children received fresh blood at a public hospital in Junagadh district in the western state of Gujarat, 315 kilometres (195 miles) from the city of Ahmedabad.

"We have initiated an inquiry into the case. This is a very serious matter," the state's principal health secretary Rajesh Kishore told AFP without giving further details.

All the 23 children had received free blood transfusions between January and August, reports said.

Earlier, Gujarat's health minister Jay Narayan Vyas told reporters that the children may have been infected after receiving blood "at some other places" but parents have blamed tainted blood at the government hospital.

He also said some pre-transfusion tests at another state-run hospital had found that the children already had been infected with HIV.

Indian government estimates that about 2.5 million Indians are living with HIV. — AFP