

Overcoming a pandemic: putting adolescent anaemia management back on track in urban slums in the Mumbai Metropolitan region in Maharashtra, India

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Context

Prior to the onset of COVID-19, anaemia had been a point of major public health concern in India, with 26.6% of adolescents between 10-19 years being classified as anaemic (1). Disruption in health services such as WIFS due to the pandemic meant that prevalence of anaemia in India, and Maharashtra in particular, increased. The National Family Health Survey-5 reported that 56.4% of women and 19% of men in Urban Maharashtra were anaemic in the 2019-20 phase (2).

In the post-pandemic phase, as adolescents got back to school and health services were restored, SNEHA's implementation activities worked strongly with public health systems to achieve a reduction in the number of anaemic adolescents.

Method of Implementation

Screening by accredited laboratories and treatment based on protocol developed with public health system

Facilitation of treatment through building regular accessibility to public health systems

Individual diet audits, nutritional counselling with families of adolescents, treatment adherence and social protection facilitation

Nutrition awareness sessions, video messages and campaigns

Maintenance of monthly monitoring data

Results

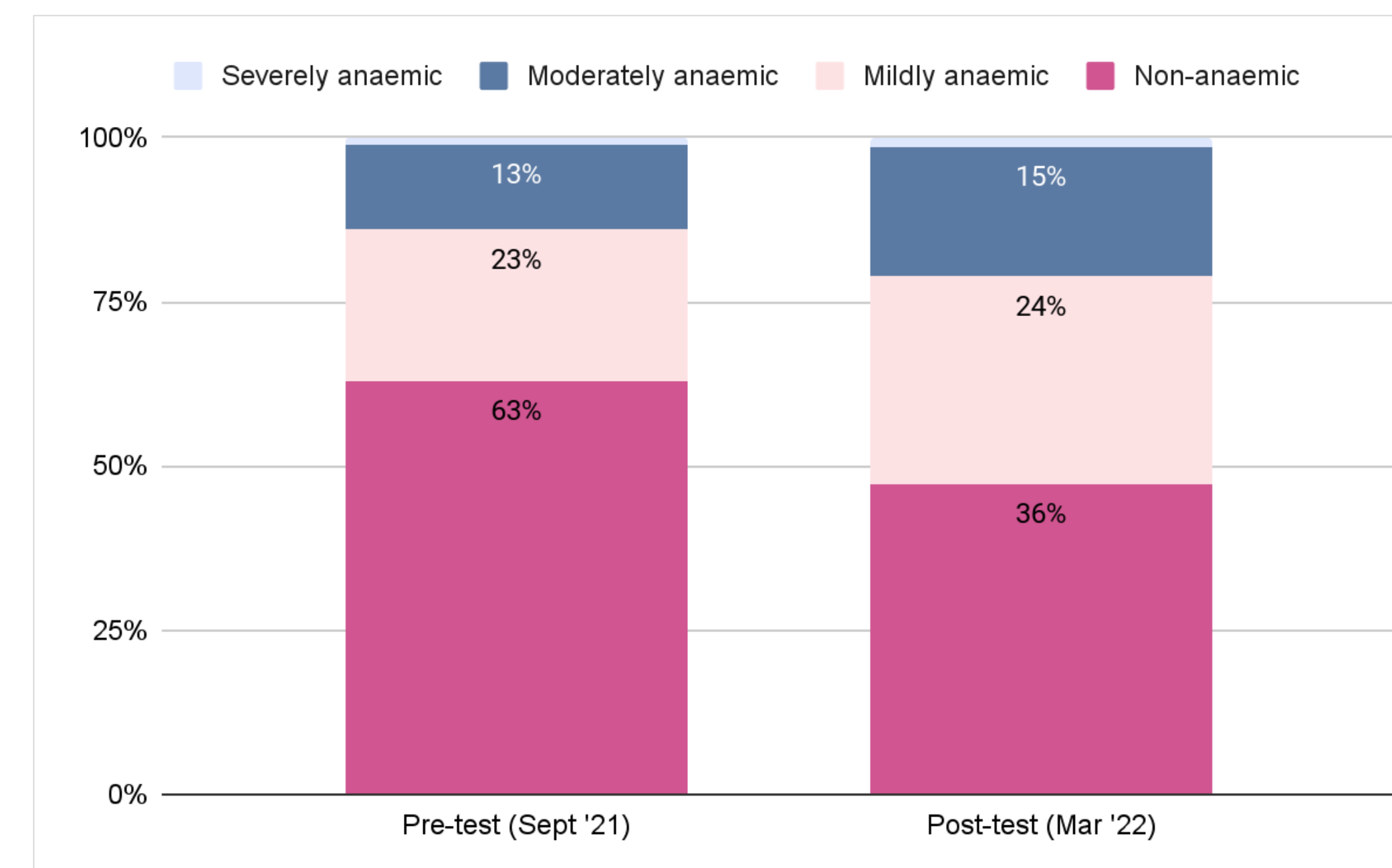
5% increase in anaemia prevalence in adolescents post COVID-19 pandemic

16% reduction in the proportion of anaemic adolescents post intervention between November 2022 and February 2023

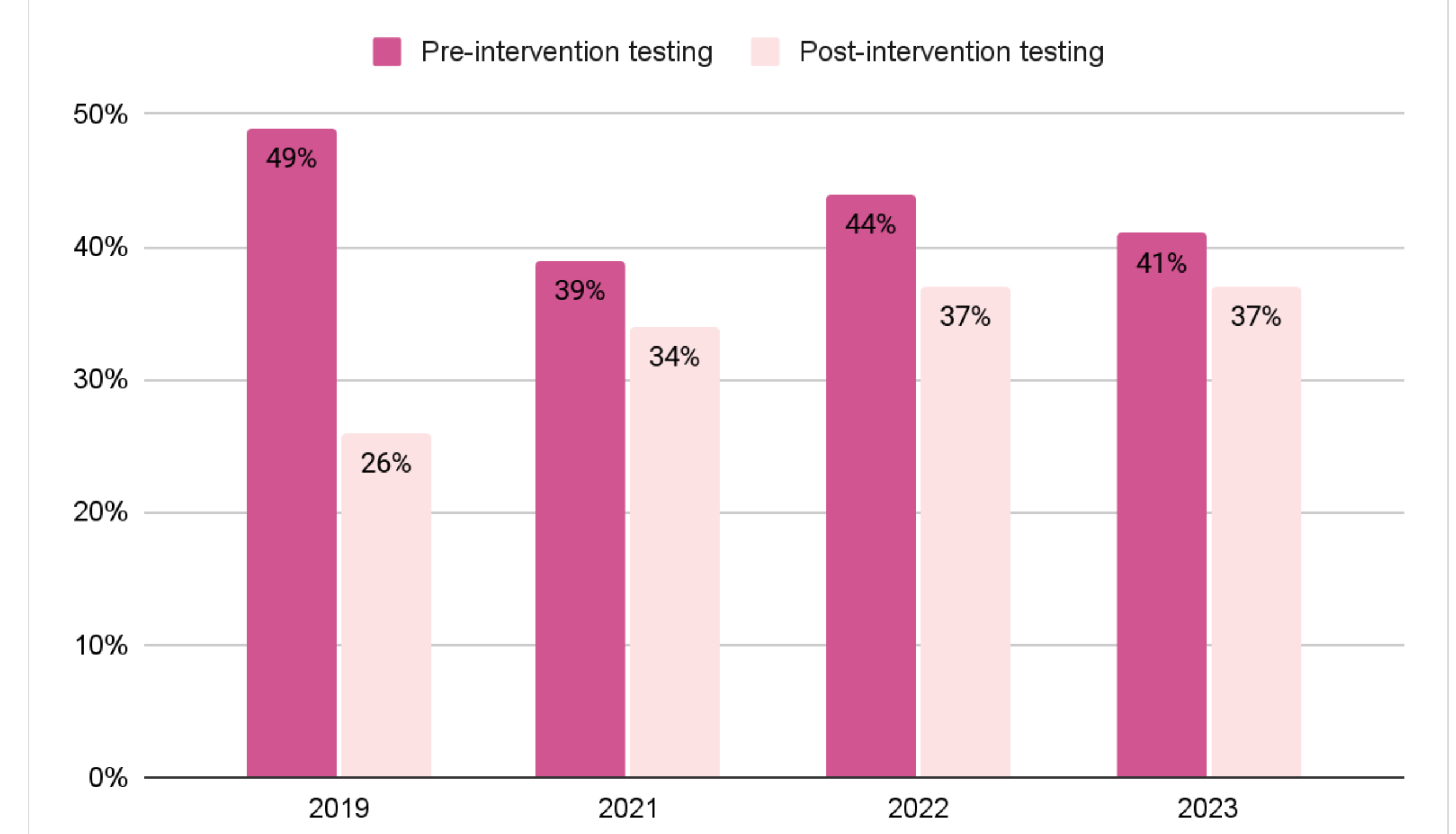
Reduction in prevalence from **43%** to **37%** in the same period

- Continuous **collaboration** led to public health centres **resuming iron supplementation**
- **Home visits** for **diet audits** influenced families to change eating behaviour
- **Video messages** by peer educators and **continued nutrition sessions** in communities and schools were useful
- Ready availability of **low cost junk food** and **irregular adolescent health services** remain key barriers

Reduction in proportion of adolescents just after COVID-19



Reduction in proportion of anaemic adolescents



Conclusions

The increase in the prevalence of anaemia post pandemic has pushed for innovative implementation processes and protocols that are sustainable. By collaborating with public health systems, and providing individualised diet audits and nutritional counselling has seen a 16% reduction in the proportion of anaemic adolescents

Our experiences highlight the need for a **holistic approach to address anaemia** among adolescents. SNEHA has already initiated Adolescent Friendly Health Clinics as mandated by India's National Adolescent Health programme. Additionally, Maharashtra now has neighbourhood clinics (Aapla Dawakhanas). The implication for the intervention will now be to strengthen these systems to implement anaemia treatment and management.

Anaemia management protocol

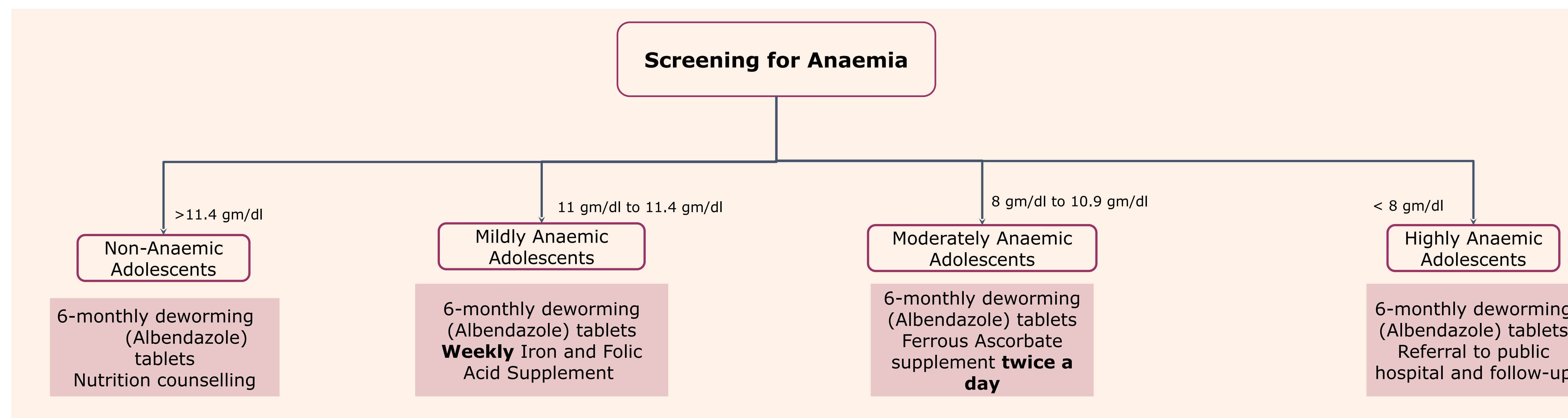


Figure 1: Access Visit to adolescent clinics



Figure 2: The Nutrition Playboard

Contact

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2. International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) and ICF. 2021. National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5), 2019-21: India: Volume II. Mumbai: IIPS.