

### General Studies-1; Topic: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources

#### Lifestyle Diseases Biggest Health Risk for Indians

##### 1) Introduction

- The report "India: Health of the Nation's States" revealed that lifestyle diseases like heart and chronic respiratory diseases now kill more people than communicable diseases.

##### 2) Key Findings

- Malnutrition is still the single largest risk factor responsible for 15% of the total disease burden in India in 2016
- Child and maternal malnutrition in India was 12 times higher per person than in China in 2016.
- The leading individual cause of death in India in 2016 was ischaemic heart disease.
- In 2016, non-communicable diseases (NCDs) accounted for nearly 62% of all deaths, up from 37.9% in 1990
- A key culprit for NCDs is tobacco use, which accounted for 6% of India's total disease burden in 2016
- Relatively wealthier states such as Kerala, Goa, and Tamil Nadu recorded the largest proportions of deaths caused by NCDs compared to the poorer states.
- Less developed states are still battling the old problems like infections, anaemia and neonatal disorders.
- Diarrhoea, TB, road injuries and suicides are among top 10 causes of death.

##### 3) Severity of the Problem

- Tobacco-related deaths are expected to double by 2030
- Research suggests the "average age of a person having their first heart attack is 50 years, at least ten years earlier than in developed countries."
- Smoking or chewing tobacco, excessive consumption of alcohol, and a preference for highly processed foods have direct, harmful impact on health.
- United Nations estimated that NCDs like diabetes and cancer could cost the Indian economy a staggering \$6.2 trillion between 2012 and 2030.
- Half of all premature deaths caused by air pollution in the world occur in India.
- Easy availability of calorie-dense foods is the biggest cause for the increase in lifestyle diseases
- According to research by the WHO an Indian today has over twice the odds of dying of NCDs than communicable disease.
- Health experts are most worried about young people developing Type 2 diabetes.

##### 4) Concerns / Challenges

- NCDs linked to lifestyles have surpassed communicable diseases as the leading cause of lost productivity and premature deaths.
- Cities are expanding at the cost of walking, exercising and cycling
- City governments are more sensitive to petrol and diesel prices, and road building than to pedestrian facilities and public transport
- Big differences in the status of social development between states.
- Greater urbanisation will also pose a major challenge to Indian health systems in coming years

- Increasing life expectancy will lead to more disability and a larger disease burden.
- Behavioural factors which include diets low in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, but high in salt and fat
- Unhealthy diets, high blood pressure, blood sugar and overweight, has doubled in India over the past two decades.
- Health loss from road injuries highlighting the lack of a comprehensive national policy for injury prevention
- The health crisis can potentially impair India's demographic dividend.
- Rapid economic growth has changed Indians' lifestyles. People eat out more often, and prefer Western-style junk food.

### 5) Way Forward

- India needs to be awakened and the communities should be sensitised about the need for change.
- Overweight and obesity can be prevented through a well balanced lifestyle through healthy eating and exercise.
- Soda and snack-makers such as PepsiCo and Nestle must make their products more nutritious
- India needs an effective, coordinated response that immediately reduces the level of air pollution at its sources
- In addition to treating disease, one also has to prevent the occurrence of new disease.
- The state specific data in the report must be used by policymakers to determine how to spend health budgets and which diseases to focus on.
- A countrywide tax on calorie-dense foods, such as the 'fat tax' recently implemented by Kerala could be one possible approach.
- Families must encourage outdoor activities, rather than allowing kids to stay indoors playing video games.