



Mains Practice Question

Q. Health and nutrition not only play a vital role in making human life dynamic, capable and prosperous, but it also has the potential to empower, develop and strengthen the nation. Discuss. (250 words)

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Approach:

- Mention the significance of Health and Nutrition.
- Describe briefly why health and nutrition is a challenge for developing countries like India.
- Enumerate some steps taken by the government in this regard.
- Conclude by stating how health and nutrition can contribute to the overall development of a country.

Introduction

Health is not just a state of being disease-free but it features multiple dimensions like nutrition, clean environment, sanitation, a healthy lifestyle etc. Further, achieving Zero Hunger and providing Health to all will be key in achieving the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 2 and 3)**.

Body

However, Public health has historically been a low priority in many developing countries like India. For example:

- India has the world's second-largest population, rising from 760 million in 1985 to an estimated 1.3 billion in 2015 and the existing healthcare infrastructure is not enough to meet the needs of the population.
- Further, total public expenditure on health is a meagre 1.3% of GDP.
- The public healthcare architecture in India faces challenges of 4A's: Accessibility, Affordability, Availability and Awareness. 70% expenditure on health care in India is out-of-pocket expenditure.
- According to the Global Burden of Disease Study 2017, malnutrition is among the leading causes of death and disability in India.
- The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates that 194.4 million people in India (about 14.5% of the total population) are undernourished.
- India ranks 102 out of 117 countries in the Global Hunger Index 2019.

Taking cognizance of inadequate expenditure in public health services, National Health Policy 2017 envisages increasing public expenditure on health to 2.5% of GDP. Also, the government recently has launched many initiatives in this regard:

- National Health Policy 2017- which highlights the need to shift from curative healthcare to preventive healthcare.
- POSHAN Abhiyan (National Nutrition Mission)- It is a multi-ministerial convergence mission with the vision to ensure attainment of malnutrition free India by 2022.
- Mission Indradhanush- To achieve full immunization coverage for all children and pregnant women

at a rapid pace.

- Ayushman Bharat- Under this government seeks to accelerate the establishment of a network of 150,000 health and wellness centres across the country in order to strengthen the primary healthcare.
- AYUSH- Government has given renewed focus to the traditional system of medicine like AYUSH care in order to promote preventive healthcare.

Conclusion

The economic returns to investing in health and nutrition are multidimensional as it breaks the cycle of poverty, increases the productivity of labour force, reduces disease burden and mortality and promotes inclusivity in society.

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