

## Dietary Diversity for Children

### Why in News?

A recent study finds that, India's central region showing the highest prevalence of minimum dietary failure.

### What is diet diversity?

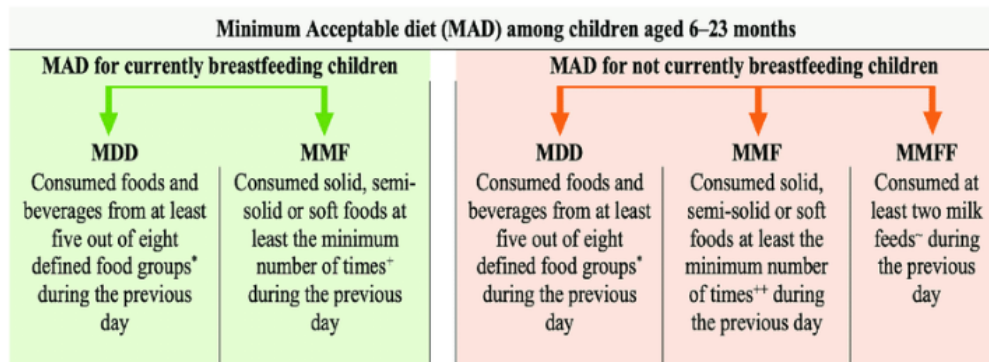
- **Diversity in diets** - It is associated with consuming diverse food groups that provide enough nutrients through a healthy diet.
- It includes adequate quantities of carbohydrates, proteins, vitamins, and minerals through diverse diets.
- It includes cereals, mainly pulses, nuts, oil, meat, fish, eggs, fruits, and vegetables.
- **Dependent factors** - Diet diversity was found to be dependent upon four major factors
  - Availability
  - Affordability
  - Awareness
  - Utilisation
- **Benefits** - Food group diversity is associated with improved linear growth in young children.
- **Lack of diet diversity** - It can increase the risk of micronutrient deficiencies, which can harm children's physical and cognitive development.

### Impact factors of Malnutrition

- Poverty
- Food insecurity
- Inadequate access to health care
- Lack of education
- Lack of access to safe water and sanitation

### What is minimum dietary diversity for children?

- **Minimum dietary diversity (MDD) score** - It is a population-level indicator to assess diet diversity as part of infant and young child feeding (IYCF) practices.
- It is calculated for children of 6-23 months old.
- **Development** - It is developed by WHO and UNICEF to provide simple, valid, and reliable metrics for assessing IYCF practices at the population level (WHO/UNICEF, 2021).
- **Umbrella program** - It is a component of the Minimum Acceptable Diet (MAD) indicator, which is a composite indicator described in the same 2021 guidelines.



- **Data collection** - Data are gathered from a questionnaire administered to the child's caregiver.
- Respondents are asked to indicate whether or not their child consumed any food over the **previous 24 hours from each of the eight food groups**.

### MDD-IYCF Food Groups

1	Breast milk
2	Grains, white/pale starchy roots, tubers and plantains
3	Beans, peas, lentils, nuts and seeds
4	Dairy products (milk, infant formula, yogurt, cheese)
5	Flesh foods ((meat, fish, poultry, organ meats)
6	Eggs
7	Vitamin-A rich fruits and vegetables
8	Other fruits and vegetables

- **Calculation**

$$\frac{\text{Number of children 6 – 23 months of age who received foods from 5 or more food groups yesterday during the day or night}}{\text{Children 6 – 23 months of age for whom data on breastfeeding and diet were collected}} \times 100$$

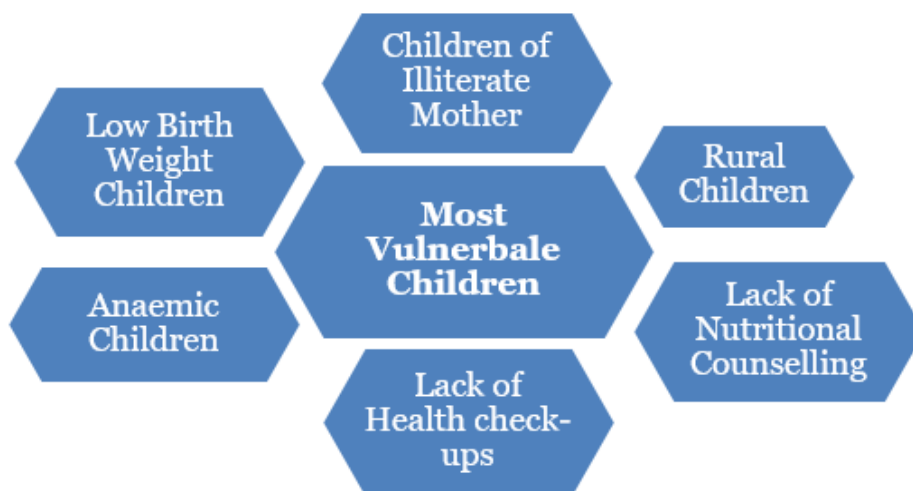
- **Significance** - It can be used to monitor and assess the dietary quality of infants and young children and the appropriateness of complementary feeding practices at the population level.

### What are key findings of study?

- **Regional disparities** - There is huge variations across different states and rural-

urban areas.

- **Impact on children** - About 77% of children in India aged 6-23 months lack diversity in diet as suggested by the WHO.
- **Poor performers** - The states of Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh reported the highest levels of inadequate diversity in children's diets, all above 80%.
- **Better performers** - Sikkim and Meghalaya were the only two to report an under-50% prevalence.
- States such as Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir and Odisha have provided adequate diets for non-breastfed children compared to other states / UTs.
- **Improved food groups** - *Egg consumption raised* from around 5% in NFHS-3 to over 17% in NFHS-5.
- *Legumes and nuts consumption increased* from nearly 14% during 2005-06 to over 17% during 2019-21.
- The consumption of *vitamin A-rich fruits and vegetables increased* by 7.3%, whereas the consumption of fruits and vegetables increased by 13% over the same time.
- For *flesh foods*, the consumption increased by 4%.
- **Insufficient diets** - The *consumption of breastmilk dropped* from 87% in NFHS-3 to 85% in NFHS-5.
- *Dairy products consumption decreased* from 54% in NFHS-3 to 52% in NFHS-5.



## What lies ahead?

- Promote dietary diversity through the consumption of a variety of foods from different food groups.
- Implement a food-based minimum dietary diversification approach.
- Call for improvements in public distribution systems.
- Intensify programmes like ICDS.
- Enhance more nutrition counselling efforts.
- Increase awareness and knowledge about the importance of MDD.

*The POSHAN Maah thematic celebration on POSHAN Vatikas captures the*

*importance of diversity in diets. Promoting MDD helps in preventing malnutrition and improving the health and development of children.*

## **References**

1. [The Hindu| Indian Children lacks Diet Diversity](#)
2. [Down To Earth| Findings of Diet Diversity among Indian Children](#)

