

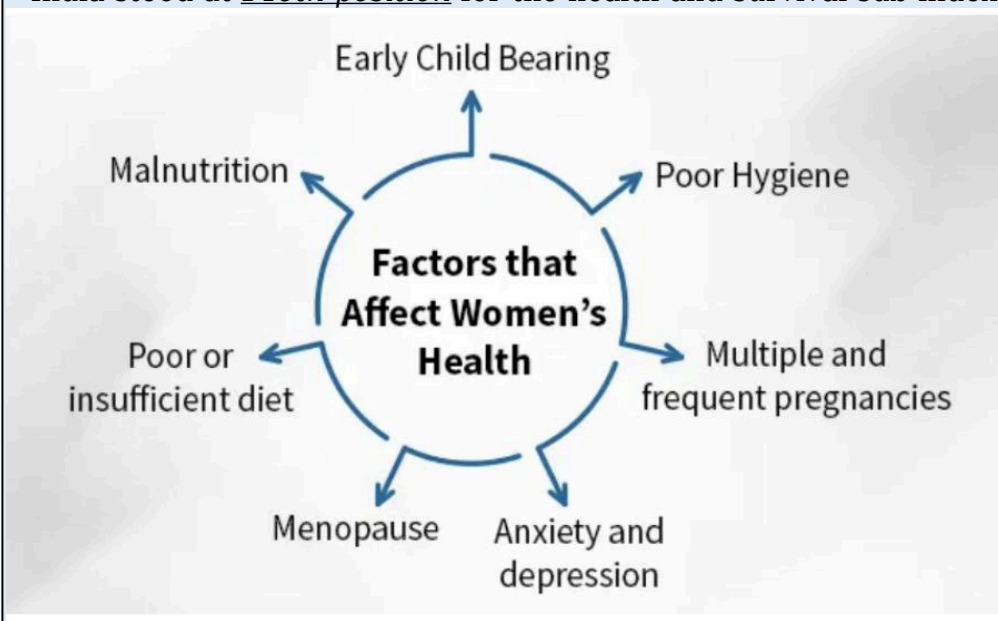
Women Health

Why in news?

Recent analysis published by The Lancet reveals significant differences in disease burden and health outcomes between men and women globally.

Status of women's health in India

- India is ranked *127th out of 146 nations* in the global gender gap report 2023.
- India stood at *146th position* for the health and survival sub-index.



- As per WHO data India has a *maternal mortality rate of 174 deaths per 100,000 live births*, which is significantly higher than many other countries in the region.
- Around 50 million women in India suffer from reproductive health problems.
- Anaemia affects around 50% of women of reproductive age in India, leading to complications during pregnancy and childbirth.

What are the key highlights of the report?

- **Difference in disease burden-**

Women	More likely to suffer from lower back pain, depression, and headaches.
Men	Higher rates of premature death due to road accidents, cardiovascular diseases, and COVID-19.

- **Impact of Gender Norms-** The differences between men and women become apparent during adolescence, influenced by both biological and gender norms.

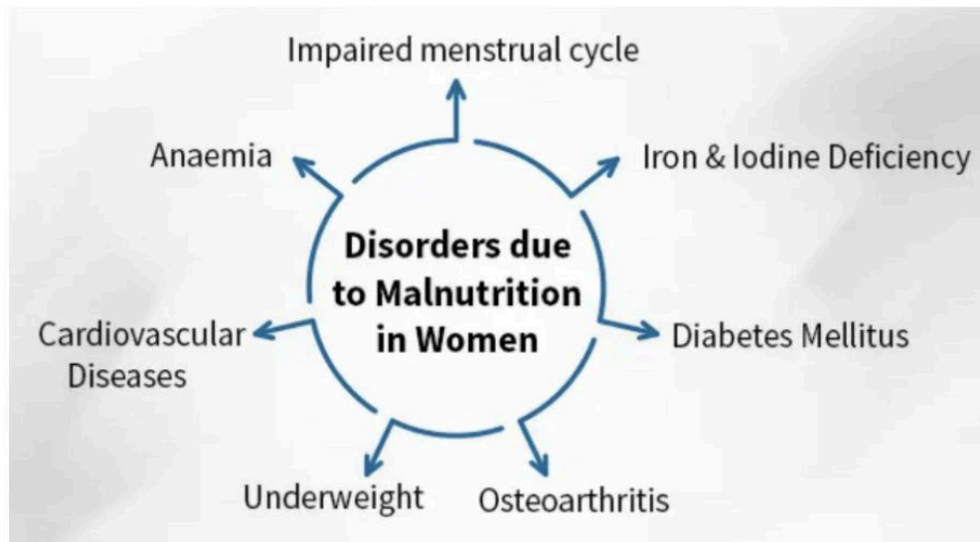
Causes of difference in disease burden

- **Biological factors-** Hormone levels, sexual anatomy, and physical stress related to pregnancy and childbirth contribute to women's higher rates of certain conditions.
- **Societal factors-** Men may avoid seeking help for mental health issues due to stigma around masculinity.

- **Healthcare bias-** Women are more frequently diagnosed with mental disorders, which might reflect biases in healthcare systems.
- **Pain management** - Women in pain, particularly with musculoskeletal disorders like lower back pain, are often dismissed or undertreated by healthcare providers.
- **Musculoskeletal disorders-** Biological factors (e.g., fluctuating hormones, differences in skeletal shapes) and the physical stress of pregnancy and childbirth contribute to women's higher rates of musculoskeletal pain.
- **Triple burden-** Women often juggle work, household maintenance, and caregiving duties, which may limit their access to appropriate health services.
- **Stability of gender disparities-** Despite decreasing rates of certain conditions since 1990, the gender gap remains stable, particularly for conditions like lower back pain and depressive disorders.

What are the major health issues faced by women?

- **Cancer-** Breast cancer and Cervical cancer remain the most common cancer among women in India.
- **Menstrual pain-** Menstrual cramps, which cause throbbing, agonizing pain in the lower abdomen, are the most common cause of the discomfort.
- **Reduction in bone density-** Almost 80% of Indian women suffer from bone thinning. The danger of osteoporosis, which can lead to joint pain and easily cracked bones, rises with bone density loss.
- **Mental health-** In accordance with the National Family Health Survey from 2019 to 2021, 30% of women in India experience gender-based violence, which puts a third of all Indian women at an increased risk of having anxiety and depressive disorders.
- **Dysfunctional pelvic floor-** A weaker or malfunctioning pelvic floor is a very frequent issue that several Indian women who have given birth and/or are over 40 years old deal with.
- **Tribal women-** The high incidence of breast lumps among Adivasi women of Adilabad in Telangana has created apprehension of more serious health impacts for this remote population.



- **Cardiovascular health-** Indians account for 60% of the world's heart disease burden, despite accounting for less than 20% of the world's population.
- **Suicide-** Indian women have higher rates of suicide than women in most developed countries. Women in India also have a higher rate of suicide compared to men.

What lies ahead?

- **Data Collection-** Consistently collecting health data categorized by sex and gender is crucial for understanding and addressing health disparities.
- **Targeted health interventions-** Health interventions should consider the specific needs of men and women.
 - For example, addressing mental health more robustly and reducing biases in diagnosing and treating pain.
- **Increased Funding for Women's health-** More funding is needed for conditions disproportionately affecting women, such as mental health issues and musculoskeletal disorders.
- **Holistic approach-** Moving beyond reproductive health to address broader health issues faced by women, acknowledging their unique health challenges throughout their lives.
- **Awareness generation-** Educating healthcare providers to recognize and address biases, ensuring both men and women receive appropriate and effective care.
- **National health plans-** Proper plan and strategies to address the health needs of men throughout their lives, including interventions targetting behavioural risks such as alcohol use and smoking that typically begin at a young age.
- **Technology intervention-** Early detection of cancers, including cervical cancer, can be improved through the use of technology.

References

1. [Indian Express- Women often outlive men](#)

2. [Indian Express- Men suffer more than women in health](#)

