

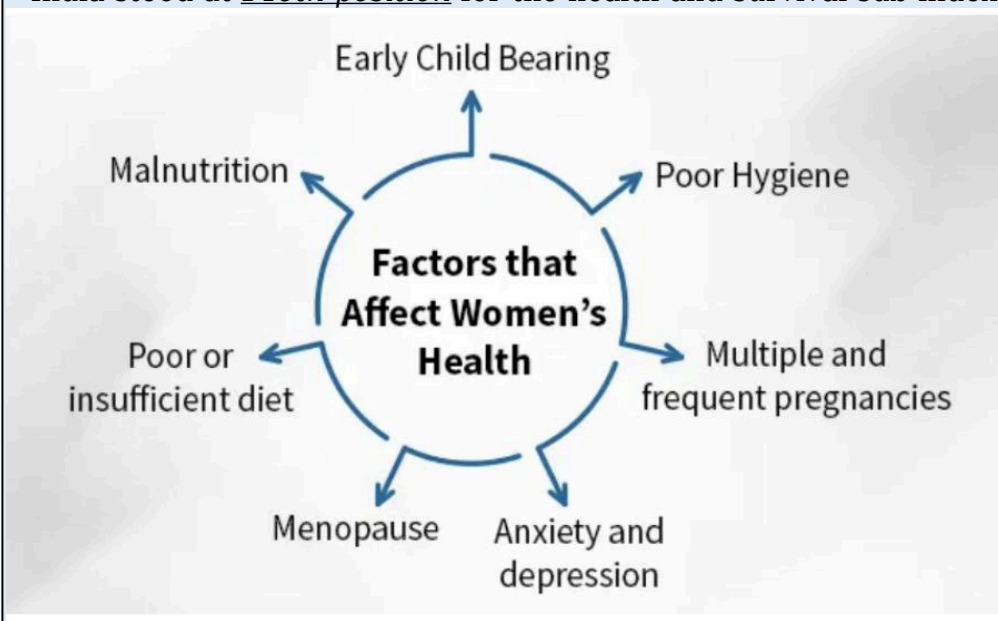
## Women Health

### 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-**

<b>Women</b>	More likely to suffer from lower back pain, depression, and headaches.
<b>Men</b>	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.

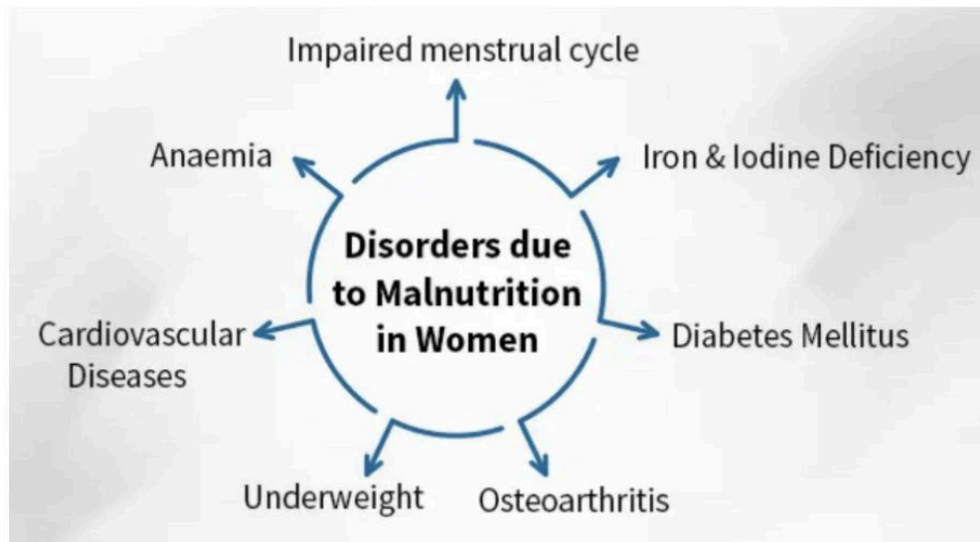
### Causes of difference in disease burden

- **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](#)

