Daily Mains Practice Question 30-06-2026

GS II - Health

India is facing a double burden of malnutrition, with persistent undernutrition coexisting alongside rising obesity among adolescents. Discuss the causes, consequences, and the role of schools in addressing adolescent malnutrition. **(15 Marks, 250 Words)**

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Answer

Introduction:

Adolescent Malnutrition is an imbalance between nutrient requirements and intake, encompassing both undernutrition (stunting, wasting, or deficiencies) and over-nutrition (overweight or obesity). India faces a double burden of malnutrition, which affects health, productivity, and demographic dividend.

Main Body

India is facing a double burden of malnutrition, with nearly one-third suffering from undernutrition, while overweight and obesity are rising, especially in urban areas and wealthier groups, this coexistence poses serious long-term health risks.

Causes for Adolescent Malnutrition

- **Biological Demands** – Adolescents grow rapidly and need more nutrients, especially girls are vulnerable due to iron loss during menstruation, leading to high anaemia rates.
- **Socioeconomic Disparities** – Poverty limits access to balanced and nutritious diets, caste and income disparities results in higher stunting and thinness compared to wealthier groups.
- **Gender Bias & Social Norms** – Unequal intra-household food distribution often disadvantages girls and social pressures around body image also trigger eating disorders among adolescents.
- **Early Marriage & Pregnancy** – Teenage pregnancies worsen malnutrition among

young mothers face risks of stillbirths, complications, and pass deficiencies to their children.
- **Dietary & Lifestyle Shift** – Junk food consumption and sedentary lifestyles are increasing overweight and related health problems among adolescents.

Consequences of Adolescent Malnutrition

- **Health Consequences** – It leads to stunting, thinness, micronutrient deficiencies and anaemia.
- Rising obesity increases the risk of diabetes, cardiovascular diseases and stroke.
- **Educational Consequences** – Poor nutrition intake leads to poor cognitive development and concentration among the children's which leads to reduced academic performance and higher absenteeism.
- **Economic & Social Consequences** – Affects the productivity level and human capital, increased healthcare burden and continuation of the intergenerational cycle of malnutrition, affecting future generations.

Role of Schools in addressing adolescent malnutrition

- **Ensure Food Security** – It strengthens PM POSHAN through protein-rich and diversified meals and promotes seasonal fruits, healthy canteens and school nutrition gardens.
- **Nutrition Education** – It conducts food demonstrations and nutrition awareness campaigns helps teach balanced diets, food label reading and portion control to students.
- **Restrict Unhealthy Foods** – Schools should ban sugary beverages, show sugar content boards, run regular awareness drives, and create UPF-free zones nationwide.
- **Promote Physical activity** – Encourage sports and exercise compulsory, with daily activity periods, fitness checks, clubs, and promote walking/cycling to school (Eg. International Yoga Day).
- **Institutional Framework** – Integrate nutrition, physical activity, and awareness into the school system for sustainable nationwide impact.

Key government initiatives to eradicate malnutrition

- **POSHAN Abhiyaan** – It tracks nutrition outcomes and reduce stunting, undernutrition, and anaemia.
- **Anganwadi Services** – Provides supplementary nutrition, health check-ups, and pre-school education for children, pregnant women, and lactating mothers.
- **PM Matru Vandana Yojana** – Gives cash incentives to pregnant and lactating mothers.
- **Anaemia Mukt Bharat** – Focuses on reducing anaemia through iron and folic acid supplementation.

Conclusion:

Addressing adolescent malnutrition requires a life-cycle and multi-sectoral approach by integrating health, nutrition, education and social protection. Schools act as the effective

platform for shaping lifelong dietary and lifestyle habits, thereby realizing India's demographic dividend through a healthier adolescent population.

