Generational Gap in Women's Health

Mains: *Population and Associated Issues, Poverty and Developmental issues*

Why in news?

Recently, a study conducted by Plaksha University, Punjab revealed the prevalence of higher generational gaps in women health and hygiene.

- **Generational gap in health** - It generally refers to *disparities in health outcomes between different generations*, often stemming from social, economic, and environmental factors.
- **Nutritional gap** – There is a problem of lifetime nutritional gap between each generation, which causes reproductive health problems.

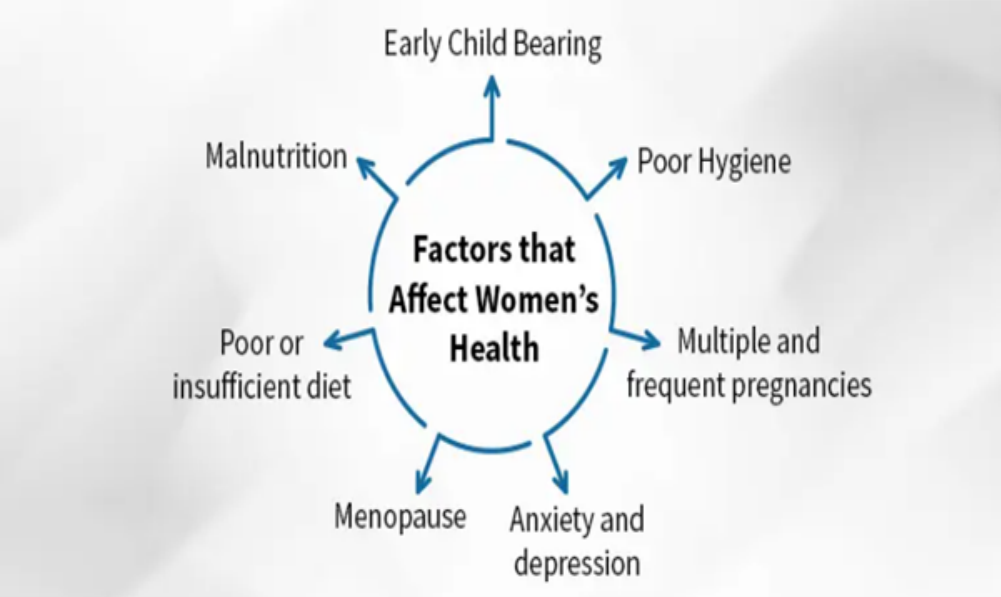
Healthier Girl Childhood
• According to National Family Health Survey-5 (NFHS-5), wealth is creating a healthier start for our girl children. • **Better nutrition** – The malnutrition rates in girls (stunting, wasting, or being underweight), all decline significantly. • **Access to sanitation** – There is a dramatic *increase in the access to better water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH*) and modern period products.
Health Issues in Adult Women
• Wealth is not translating into well-being for women over their entire life course. • **Women health issues** - Women face unique health challenges throughout their lives, from puberty to pregnancy, menopause, and beyond. • Women are twice as likely as men to die from heart attacks. • Twice as likely to die of lung cancer, and women suffer more than men from Alzheimer's and autoimmune. • The rates of complex health issues like those leading to hysterectomies (the surgical removal of the uterus) or difficult menopausal transitions show little to no improvement.

Why there is generation gap on women health?

- **Lesser clinical trials on women –** It leads to lack of understanding on how disease manifest and how to treat women.
- **Socioeconomic factors** – Unequal pay, limited decision-making powers and *limited access to healthcare facilities*, disproportionately affect women, particularly those from marginalized communities.
- **Ignoring the health crisis** – While we measure the economic progress of a family, we miss the silent health crises unfolding across an entire generation of mothers,
- **Stigma around women's health -** Topics such as menstruation, menopause, and

reproductive health are often considered taboo, making it difficult to address existing disparities.

- **Less focus on other disease** – There is more concentration on the reproductive health of women ignoring other health complexities.
- **Lack of capacity** – Our health system *lacks drastic surgical solution*, the capacity for nuanced, long-term care.



What measures can be taken?

- **Strengthening existing programmes** – Strengthening the programmes like WASH can yield better health outcomes.
- **Investing in human resource** – ASHA and Anganwadi workers can be empowered with better training, resources, and fair pay.
- They can be encouraged to counsel a new mother on infant nutrition.
- **Developing multi-dimensional health system** – The chronic health issues require a robust public health system, high-quality preventative care, and trusted medical counsel for adult women.
- **Food fortification** – There can be mandatory food fortification of staples to ensure the next generation is healthiest.
- **Change in policies** - We need to measure what matters for a full life rate of chronic disease in adult women, access to menopause support, and the prevention of unnecessary procedures.
- **Changing the Definition of progress** – We can demand a *smarter definition of progress* which will help to understand the true meaning of progress covering holistic parameters.

What lies ahead?

- A healthcare system that will support the women for their entire lives should be built where in future no generation of women is left behind.
- The generational gap in the health ecosystem should be bridged to ensure that women health is not neglected.

Reference

[The Hindu| Generational Health Gaps in Women]