

3. Indian Lungs Under Extreme Stress

Prelims: Health

Mains: GS-II Issues Relating to Development and Management of Health

Why in News?

- ▶▶ According to the National Health Profile (NHP)-2019, which was recently released by the Union Health Ministry, “Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal reported a large number of patients and fatalities due to Acute Respiratory Infections (ARI)”.

About NHP:

- ▶▶ The NHP is prepared by the Central Bureau of Health Intelligence (CBHI) and covers comprehensive information on demographic, socio-economic health status, health finance indicators, health infrastructure and health of human resources in the country.
- ▶▶ The objective of the NHP is to create a versatile database of health information and making it available to all stakeholders in the healthcare sector.
- ▶▶ The NHP highlights substantial health information under major indicators viz. demographic indicators (population and vital statistics), socio-economic indicators (education, employment, housing and amenities, drinking water and sanitation) and health status indicators (incidence and prevalence of common communicable and non-communicable diseases and RCH), etc.
- ▶▶ It was released for the first time in 2005. 2019 is the 14th year the NHP is being released. A digital version of the report was also released.

Facts about ARI:

- ▶▶ Acute Respiratory Infections (ARI) accounted for 69.47% of morbidity last year which was the highest in the communicable disease category leading to 27.21% mortality.
- ▶▶ According to World Health Organisation, acute respiratory infection is a serious ailment that prevents normal breathing function and kills an estimated 2.6 million children annually every year worldwide.
- ▶▶ Indians face the double burden of heavy air pollution in addition to the high rate of ARI which hits children the hardest, said experts here.
- ▶▶ Doctors explained that the high level of air pollution would be an additional burden to the already high rate of ARI that the country is facing.

Effects of ARI:

- ▶▶ When we breathe in polluted air, particles and pollutants penetrate and inflame the linings of your bronchial tubes and lungs.
- ▶▶ This leads to respiratory illness such as Chronic Bronchitis, Emphysema, Heart Disease, Asthma, Wheezing, Coughing and difficulty in Breathing.

Effects on Pregnant Women and Children:

- ▶▶ The current level of air pollution poses a high risk to pregnant women and the baby. The foetus receives oxygen from the mother, and if she is breathing polluted air, it can increase the health risk of unborn babies.
- ▶▶ Pregnant women in the first trimester need to be more careful as risk increases and pollution can cause a medical condition called intrauterine inflammation.
- ▶▶ Prenatal exposure to pollutants increases risk of pre-term delivery and low birth weight, factors that can lead to developmental disabilities later on.
- ▶▶ Children are particularly susceptible as they “breathe through their mouths, bypassing the filtering effects of the nasal passages and allowing pollutants to travel deeper into the lungs.”
- ▶▶ Children may ignore early symptoms of air pollution effects, such as an asthma exacerbation, leading to attacks of increased severity. They seem to be most vulnerable to the harmful effects of air pollution.

