Syllabus subtopic: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

News: Since 2009, November 12 has been observed as World Pneumonia Day to raise awareness about the infection

Prelims and mains focus: About Pneumonia - burden, symptoms, spread, vulnerability and treatment.

About Pneumonia:

The World Health Organisation (WHO) identifies pneumonia is the single largest cause of death in children worldwide.

Every year, it kills an estimated 1.4 million children under the age of five years, accounting for 18% of all deaths of children under five years old worldwide, according to the WHO. This, despite pneumonia being preventable and treatable.

Infection

Infectious agents may include bacteria, viruses and fungi.

Streptococcus pneumoniae is the most common cause of bacterial pneumonia in children, and Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib) is the second most common cause of bacterial pneumonia. Respiratory syncytial virus is the most common viral cause of pneumonia.

Air sacs in an infected individual’s lungs (alveoli) become inflamed due to deposits of fluid and pus, making it painful and difficult for them to breathe.

Children and the elderly above the age of 65 years are especially vulnerable.

Symptoms:

Symptoms include high fever and chills, cough with phlegm, physical weakness and a feeling of being unwell, shortness of breath and rapid breathing, and a racing pulse.

Prevention and treatment:
Preventive measures include maintaining hygiene and getting vaccinations against certain pneumonia causing bacteria.

Saving a child from pneumonia requires urgent treatment, that usually involves the administration of antibiotics, which typically do not cost much. On average, treatment lasts for about five to seven days.

Disease burden

According to UNICEF, a child dies of pneumonia every 39 seconds, which translates to roughly 8,00,000 children every year, and over 2,200 every day, including 1,53,000 newborns.