



Lymphatic Filariasis

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Why in News?

Recently, the Union Health Minister inaugurated the **second phase of the [Annual Nationwide Mass Drug Administration \(MDA\) initiative for Lymphatic Filariasis](#)**.

- **India aims to eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis by 2027**, three years ahead of the global target, through a mission-driven strategy.

What is Lymphatic Filariasis?

- **About:**
 - Lymphatic filariasis, commonly known as **elephantiasis**, is a **neglected tropical disease** caused by **parasitic infection** which is transmitted through the **bite of infected mosquitoes**.
 - This impacts millions of individuals in tropical and subtropical regions across the globe.
- **Causes and Transmission:**
 - **Lymphatic filariasis** is caused by **infection with parasites classified as nematodes (roundworms)** of the family Filariodidea.
 - **There are 3 types of these thread-like filarial worms:**
 - ***Wuchereria bancrofti***, which is responsible for 90% of the cases,
 - ***Brugia malayi***, which causes most of the remainder of the cases,
 - ***Brugia timori***, which also causes the disease.
- **Symptoms:**
 - Lymphatic filariasis infection involves asymptomatic, acute, and chronic conditions.
 - In chronic conditions, it leads to **lymphoedema (tissue swelling) or elephantiasis (skin/tissue thickening) of limbs** and hydrocele (scrotal swelling).
- **Treatment:**
 - The **[World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#)** recommends three drug treatments to accelerate the global elimination of lymphatic filariasis. The treatment, known as **IDA**, involves a **combination of ivermectin, diethylcarbamazine citrate and albendazole**.
 - The plan is to administer these drugs for two consecutive years. **The life of the adult worm is hardly four years, so it would die a natural death without causing any harm to the person.**
- **Global Threat and Preventive Measures:**
 - Over **882 million people in 44 countries** face the threat of lymphatic filariasis and require preventive chemotherapy.
 - Preventive measures involve **mass drug administration (MDA)** to the at-risk population using safe medicine combinations.
 - More than **9 billion treatments** have been administered since 2000 to halt infection spread.
- **Progress and Achievements:**
 - Successful MDA efforts have reduced transmission and infection prevalence.

- **740 million people no longer require preventive chemotherapy.**
- In 2018, 51 million people were infected, marking a 74% reduction since the initiation of global elimination efforts.
- **Vector Control and WHO's Approach:**
 - Mosquito control, such as insecticide-treated nets and indoor residual spraying, supplements preventive chemotherapy.
 - WHO's [Global Programme to Eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis \(GPELF\)](#) launched in 2000 with a mission to eradicate the disease.
 - GPELF aims to validate **elimination in 80% of endemic countries by achieving sustained low infection rates and providing care.**
 - The program strives for post-MDA surveillance in all endemic countries and ultimately reduces the population needing MDA to zero.
 - The strategy focuses on stopping infection spread and providing essential care to affected individuals.

What are India's Initiatives for Lymphatic Filariasis Eradication?

- Nationwide **Mass Drug Administration campaigns** administer preventive medicines in endemic areas.
- Collaboration with various stakeholders, sectors, and NGOs enhances the initiative's impact.
- **“Through Jan Bhagidaari and ‘Whole of Government’ and ‘Whole of Society’** approach, India shall be able to eliminate this disease from the country”.
- **Second phase of the MDA initiative targets 81 districts in 9 endemic states for targeted intervention. (Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Odisha, Telangana and Uttar Pradesh).**
- State-central collaborations enhance healthcare, surveillance, prevention, and treatment.
- Encouraging medication consumption in the presence of healthcare workers promotes adherence.

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