

Chapter 2-

Role of the Government in Healthcare

1. In this chapter you have read that health is a wider concept than illness. Observe this quote from the Constitution and explain the terms 'living standard' and 'public health' in your own words. An important aspect of the Constitution says it is the "duty of the state to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living and to improve public health".

Solution: Living standard is defined as an individual's level of living with regards to wealth, comfort, material goods and in this context, health. Living in excellent hygienic conditions are a good indicator of how high the living standard of an individual or the nation in general is. On the contrary, the lower the hygiene standards, the lower the living standards. An example of it is staying in dirty surroundings and consuming unhygienic food.

Public health is defined as the science of protecting and improving the general health of the communities at large through education, policy-making and research for disease and injury prevention. Indicators such as mortality rate, birth rate, nutrition index etc. are used to measure how good or bad public health is for a given population

2. What are the different ways through which the government can take steps to provide healthcare to all? Discuss

Solution: The government can take the following steps in providing basic healthcare for its citizens

- As in the case of the Kerala government, state governments can empower local panchayats by providing funding to them, in the process making them a self-reliant healthcare unit.
- Governments can lay emphasis on imparting education regarding healthcare to the local populace, such as healthy habits and the benefits of a healthy lifestyle.
- By providing sanitation, safe drinking water, sanitation and nutrition
- Organization of free health check-ups on a monthly basis will also play a crucial role.

3. What differences do you find between private and public healthcare services in your area? Use the following table to compare and contrast these.

Facility	Cost of Services	Availability of service
Private		
Public		

Solution:

Facility	Cost of services	Availability of service
Private	High, very expensive	Everything is available but at a high cost
Public	Either free or at subsidised cost	There is always a rush at public hospitals. Even though the services are available there but it takes time

4. 'Improvement in water and sanitation can control many diseases'. Explain with the help of examples.

Solution: Poor quality of water leads to a rise in many communicable diseases like cholera, typhoid and jaundice in addition to the sources of such poor quality of water being a breeding ground for parasites and insects, particularly mosquitoes who are the agents of chikungunya, dengue and malaria etc. Eliminating breeding grounds of such parasites will prove crucial in improving the health conditions of the populace living nearby.

For this we can take the example of the recent outbreak of dengue that happened in Bangalore city. Negligence on the part of the civic authorities in maintaining the canals as lakes to a surge in dengue and malaria cases across the city. Mosquito larvae need stagnant water to grow. Due to pollution and faulty waste management practices, the waters of these canals and lakes had turn into an ideal breeding ground for mosquitoes. It was only after draining the canals and cleaning the lakes with the help of sewage treatment plants and solvents was the outbreak contained.

