

Question no. 2 (a):

Define the term malnutrition, elaborate its major causes and consequences?

Definition

According to World Health Organization (WHO), "Malnutrition refers to deficiencies in nutrient intake, imbalance of essential nutrients or impaired nutrient utilization."

Causes of malnutrition

1 Limited access to nutritious food

Limited access to nutritious food cause to malnutrition. Insufficient or limited access may be due to poverty, food scarcity or poor distribution of food alongwith famine.

2 Illness and disease

Certain diseases and conditions can affect the body's ability to absorb or utilize food. It can cause to malnutrition. Some illnesses such as tuberculosis, gastrointestinal disorders can lead to malnutrition by affecting appetite or digestion.

3 Limited financial resources

Limited financial resources and economic hardship can limit access to diverse range of foods, particularly those that are nutrient-dense. As per UNICEF, over 7 million children under the age of 5 remain under-nourished across Ethiopia, Kenya and

Somalia (countries of Africa) due to economic factors.

4 Social and cultural factors

Cultural practices and social norms can influence dietary habits. In some cultures, some foods might be restricted which cause health issues and leading to malnutrition.

5 Mental health conditions

According to the American Dietetic Association, people tend to eat too much or too little when depressed or under stress. In these mental health situations, chances of malnutrition increase because intaking of food is not normal as usual.

Consequences of malnutrition

1 Cognitive and developmental impairments

Malnutrition can negatively impact brain development and cognitive functions leading to lethargy, irritability and irrational thinking. It may also cause to learn new things difficultly.

2 Reduced immunity, wounds, healing and infection fighting

Reduce intakes lead to reduced metabolic activity. Without getting enough food intake, body cannot develop enough energy to keep human in a healthy state.

3 Socio-economic impact

Malnutrition can perpetuate cycles of poverty as affected individuals are

not able to work properly and earn enough money to live a good life. So, it cause to poverty and disturb socio-economic factor.

4 Anemia

Nutritional-deficiency anemia is a common cause that can happen if the body does not absorb enough nutrients. Anemia is a severe disease which can also cause to other diseases and this happens due to malnutrition.

5 Increased mortality rates

Severe malnutrition can lead to complications that significantly increase mortality rates, particularly among vulnerable populations like young children and elder people. According to WHO, nearly half of deaths among children under 5 years of are linked to malnutrition.
