

# Maharashtra's mass drug administration against Lymphatic Filariasis

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## In news

The state government of Maharashtra has flagged off its mass drug administration drive for the elimination of lymphatic filariasis and become the first State in the country to resume giving rounds of the drug after the second wave of COVID-19.

## About Mass Drug Administration(MDA) drive

- It will be conducted in six districts Bhandara, Chandrapur, Gadchiroli, Gondia, Yavatmal and Nanded till July 15.
- Of the six districts, Gadchiroli, Chandrapur and Bhandara will undertake the triple drug therapy.
- Maharashtra has 18 filariasis endemic districts.
- MDA is one of the two pillars of the National Programme for Elimination of Lymphatic Filariasis, under which anti-filaria drugs are administered to the eligible population once a year.
- Everyone except pregnant women, children below five years and seriously ill people will be administered the drugs in the presence of health workers.
- Triple-drug therapy is a new drug combination approved by the WHO, has been proven to be more effective and helpful in reducing the number of MDA rounds needed to eliminate filariasis.

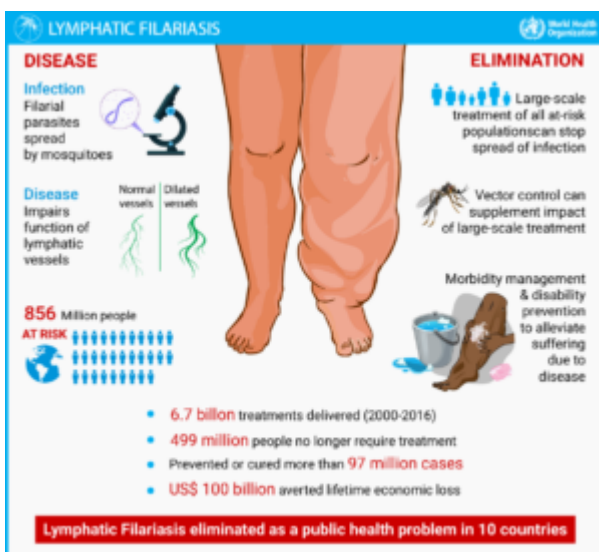
## What are the drugs used in the drive?

A combination of two drugs, diethylcarbamazine (DEC) and albendazole, or three Ivermectin, DEC, and Albendazole will be

administered during the drive.

## About Lymphatic Filariasis

- Known as elephantiasis, filariasis is the second most disabling disease after mental health according to WHO and is transmitted by infected mosquitoes.
  - It is a painful and profoundly disfiguring disease.
  - It is caused by infection with parasites classified as nematodes (roundworms) of the family Filarioidea that are transmitted through the bites of infected mosquitos.
- **90% of cases are accounted for by Wuchereria Bancrofti worms.**
  - **The rest of the remaining cases are caused by Brugia Malayi and Brugia Timori.**
  - Mosquito-transmitted larvae are deposited on the skin from where they can enter the body.
  - The larvae then migrate to the lymphatic vessels where they develop into adult worms, thus continuing a cycle of transmission.
  - It is a neglected tropical disease.



- Usually acquired in childhood, the infection damages the lymphatic system and if left untreated, causes enlargement of body parts.
- Most cases are symptomless. Rarely, long-term damage to the lymph system causes swelling in the legs, arms and genitalia.
- It also increases the risk of frequent bacterial infections that harden and thicken the skin (elephantiasis).

### **Case in India**

- About 5 crore people in India were carrying the worm as of the early 2010s, which is 40% of all the cases in the world.
- Indian government introduced the Accelerated Lymph Filariasis Elimination Plan (APELF) in 2018.
- In October 2019 the Union health minister said that India's current plan is on schedule to eradicate filariasis by 2021.

### **Global Programme to Eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis (GPELF)**

- In 2000, WHO established the GPELF to stop transmission of infection with mass drug administration (MDA) and to alleviate suffering among people affected by the disease through morbidity management and disability prevention (MMDP)
- GPELF aims to reduce the prevalence of infection below target thresholds and to alleviate the suffering of people affected by lymphoedema and hydrocele, the chronic manifestations of the disease
- The target set by GPELF in 2000 to eliminate LF as a public health problem globally by 2020 will not be achieved by then.
- Despite setbacks due to COVID-19, WHO will accelerate work to achieve this target by 2030