

# 1

## Let us build a healthy society

School health programmes in Sri Lanka are implemented with the vision of building a “healthy and active young generation”. The main objective of these programmes is to obtain the maximum benefit from academic opportunities to improve the health status of school children and develop skills in personal, family and community health promotion. The school health promotion programmes also help to build a healthy environment within schools, carry out immunization programmes, detect unidentified illnesses and impart health education to families.

You have studied the different areas of health promotion in the previous years and are now well aware of the concept of total health and the factors that affect it, as well as what steps need to be taken to maintain it.

In this lesson we will focus on learning about health promotion and quality of life.

### Health Promotion

The World Health Organization definition of health promotion is as follows.

Health promotion is the process of enabling people to increase control over, and to improve their health. It moves beyond a focus on individual behaviour towards a wide range of social and environmental interventions.

What is clear from the above definition is that promotion of health is not something that is limited to the behaviours of a single individual, but it is a broader concept that requires the involvement of the entire society. It is only by empowering yourself as a person who has the capability to control and improve the factors that affect your health and that of your family and the society that promotion of health can be made a reality.

## Strategies of Health promotion

Diagram 1.1 - Methods of health promotion



## Centres of health promotion

Health promotion can be carried out in various settings. Just as we can make our home a health promoting centre, the school, village, city, hospital and work places can be converted to health promoting centres.

The common strategies of health promotion, which can be utilized in any of these settings, are shown in diagram 1.1. They can be used for health promotion in your school as well.

## Actions to develop school health promotion

### 1. Formulation of health promotion policies

The development of pro health policies can create an environment, favourable to the promotion of health within the entire school system. In formulating a health policy the first step is to identify the current health issues the school is faced with and means of eliminating or reducing these factors. Once the policy is formulated the laws and circulars required to implement the policy are made.

As students you have a great responsibility to make school health promotion policies and work according to them at school level.

eg: Policies for waste management

**Some school health promotion policies are listed below**

- Students should be provided with adequate knowledge on health
- Clean drinking water should be made available within schools
- Schools must have hygienic canteens
- The school environment should be accident free
- Students who are aged 12 years and below, should be provided with school dental services
- School books should be printed with different font sizes and colours as appropriate for each age group
- The type and the appropriate height of desks and chairs, should be determined for each age group



Figure 1.1 - Providing healthy food

If we are to build a healthy environment through such policies all stakeholders including education authorities, principals, teachers, parents and students should be aware of these policies and they must be in agreement with them.

**2. Building an environment favourable for health promotion**

The environment, which we live in has an impact on our health. Listed below are some of the factors that should be present in our physical, mental and social environment to promote health.

## Physical environment

- Provision of clean drinking water
- Provision of adequate toilet facilities - at least one toilet per 50 students
- Building class rooms with adequate light and ventilation
- Proper disposal of waste - for this purpose methods of waste management should be introduced
- School gardening
- Accident and danger free environment
- Provision of adequate facilities for sports



Class room with adequate space



Facilities to engage in sport activities

Figure 1.2

## Mental environment

- Students should not be insulted
- There should not be any form of abuse
- All students should be treated equally
- Counselling services should be established so that students can discuss their difficulties
- The school environment should be free of stress



Counselling Services



Treating equally

Figure 1.3

## Social environment

- Safeguard democracy
- Availability of space for group activities
- Healthy student teacher relationships
- Availability of programmes to spend leisure time in a useful manner
- The presence of clubs and associations for different activities
- Providing opportunities for sports activities



Figure 1.4 - Cordial student teacher relationship

### 3. Community participation in health promotion

The school health promotion programmes give rise to health promotion in the community as well. For example, parents and other members of the community assist in the dengue eradication campaign carried out by the school. As a result of this, their awareness and interest in dengue eradication may be increased and therefore they may carry out similar programmes in other places in the community.

Similarly community participation should be enlisted for school health promotion. For example, shramadana campaigns by members of the community to minimize accidents that can occur in school premises, constructing a sports ground for the school and reducing cigarette sales outlets around the school to prevent school children from being introduced to smoking, are some of the ways in which the community can aid school health promotion.



Figure 1.5 - Conducting community cleaning programmes

#### 4. Developing skills required for health promotion

This involves improving skills to develop health promoting behaviour.

eg:

Good decision making – selecting healthy food from what is available in the market

Effective communication – the ability to understand what is implied in advertisements correctly

To improve the health status of a school, workplace or village some behavioural modifications are required. Developing skills such as consuming healthy meals, following an active lifestyle and being able to face life stresses are essential for health promotion. Skills can be developed by providing knowledge through books and educational workshops, group competitions, debates and sports competitions.



Figure 1.6 - Providing health education through work shops

## 5. Provision of required services for health promotion

The government carries out school health inspections to improve the health status of school children. All students must undergo school health inspections during specified periods so that any health deficiencies can be identified and corrected. They are also provided with iron and folate tablets. The Public Health Inspector (PHI) carries out an annual School Sanitation Survey through which areas that can give rise to illness or accidents are identified and measures taken to prevent them.



Figure 1.7 - Annual school sanitation survey

In addition, if there are any shortcomings in these services correcting them and making them more efficient, as well as implementing new services for newly identified needs are other methods of health promotion.



Figure 1.8 - Providing adequate sanitary facilities



## Activity

Study the school health promotion programme 2007/21 circular issued by the Ministry of Education with the assistance of your health teacher. Gather the following information about your school according to the circular.

- The school health promotion committee and its activities
- The status of the school sanitation facilities
- The hygienic status of the school cafeteria and provision of healthy food
- Implementation of the morning physical exercise programme
- Assessment of physical fitness of students

Using the above information evaluate your school and identify the health promotion status of your school. Discuss what steps need to be taken to improve it further.

## Criteria for school health promotion evaluation

In order to improve health promotion activities in schools, an initial evaluation of the school's health promotion status could be done using a set of criteria.

Stated below are several criteria that can be used to evaluate the success of each of the above methods.

- The school accepting the need to follow established health policies
- Recognition of health policies that can be carried out by the school
- Identifying methods of carrying out these health policies





## Activity

Discuss methods of improving the level of health promotion in your school and complete the table given below.

Method	Current status	The way in which it should be changed	The steps that can be taken
<b>1. Health policies</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Waste management policies</li><li>• Policies for hygienic cafeterias</li></ul>			
<b>2. Health friendly environment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Availability of adequate toilet facilities</li><li>• Availability of a sports ground</li></ul>			
<b>3. Community participation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Carrying out shramadana campaigns</li><li>• Organizing dengue eradication programmes</li></ul>			
<b>4. Knowledge and skills development</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identifying your own nutritional status</li><li>• Identifying your level of physical fitness</li></ul>			
<b>5. Organization of health services</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Learning about reproductive health</li><li>• Obtaining immunization</li></ul>			

## Laws pertaining to school health promotion in Sri Lanka

1. Compulsory health education from grade 6 to grade 9 (according to the syllabus)
2. Compulsory provision of health facilities

Facts regarding provision of health facilities

- Ensure that the well is protected
  - Provide one toilet per 50 students
  - Create an accident free school environment
  - Carry out dengue eradication programmes
3. Prohibit the consumption or sale of unhealthy food
  4. Prohibit the possession or use of cigarettes, alcohol and drugs



Figure 1.9 - Health facilities

## Activity

Make a list of health promotion measures carried out at the National level.

## Quality of life

Quality of life is the general well being of a person. Improved quality of life leads to increase in longevity, reduction in disease and infirmity and a happy and active life.



Figure 1.10

## Factors that affect the quality of life

There are many factors that affect the quality of life. A few of them are listed below.

- Health status
- Economic status
- A clean environment
- Opportunity to receive an education
- Opportunity to engage in suitable employment
- A good family life

## Activity

Discuss other factors that affect the quality of life which are not mentioned above.

An individual's health is a major determinant of his quality of life. As we have learned earlier, total health is not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, but the presence of physical, mental, social and spiritual well being. Contracting communicable and non-communicable diseases can reduce the quality of life. Therefore quality of life can be improved by improving resilience towards illness by vaccination and good health practices

The improvement in quality of life due to improvement in the health status can be measured by the following features.

### Features of a community with a high quality of life



Figure 1.11

- Efficiency in doing work
- Increased life expectancy (Sri Lankan males 73 years; females 76 years) \*
- Reduced prevalence of non-communicable diseases
- Following a healthy diet
- Exercising in the correct manner and being able to control psychological stress

\* Annual Health Bulletin 2012

- Abstaining from cigarettes, alcohol and drugs
- Acting according to principles
- Improving mental well being / being happy
- Leading a simple lifestyle
- Literacy

The health status of a community can be measured using the above criteria while other criteria can be used for evaluating the health status of an individual.

## Criteria used to measure an individual's health status

- Body Mass Index (BMI)
- Waist circumference
- Physical fitness
- Memory
- Resilience towards illness
- Being active
- Pleasant appearance
- Hygiene and good habits
- Interpersonal relationships



Body Mass Index



Pleasant appearance

Figure 1.12

## Summary

There are five main strategies used in health promotion. These include formulating policies, building a health promoting environment, developing community participation, developing skills and providing necessary services for health promotion.

School health promotion can be carried out using these strategies. This process includes identifying the areas favourable to health and those unfavourable, taking necessary measures to correct these and evaluating their success by using criteria.

Many factors such as the health status, economic status, clean environment and educational status affect our quality of life. There are many criteria to evaluate the quality of life of a community as well as that of an individual.



## Exercise

1. What is health promotion?
2. Name five strategies that can be used in health promotion.
3. Name five places where health promotion can be carried out.
4. Describe three health promotion policies carried out in your school.
5. Describe four features that can be seen in your school from those that are present in a health promoting school environment.
6. Name three services utilized for school health promotion.
7. Name five laws / rules that apply to your school's health promotion.
8. Explain quality of life with the use of examples.
9. Name five criteria that can be used to measure a person's quality of life.
10. Name five features seen in a community with high quality of life.