

6

Let us make our school environment healthy

We spent most of our time with our family members, however we spend a substantial amount of time in school too. About one fifth of the population of Sri Lanka are of school going age. The school can have a positive influence on our behaviour from childhood. Schools can also influence society. As students you can help to improve the health status of your self, your family and society.

In grade 7 we discussed about health promotion in your family and about developing a healthy family environment.

In this lesson we will look at health promotion, strategies used in health promotion and how to develop a health promoting school.

How to identify a health promoting school

Nimali: Don't you think our school looks beautiful after our new principal's arrival?

Kamala: Yes it is very beautiful and clean. How did this change happen suddenly?

Nimali: The prefects, teachers and the principal, we all got together and prepared a plan. It succeeded because we all worked together. Now everyone comes to school by 7.00a.m. Everybody brings a lunch box and a bottle of boiled cooled water.

Kamala: Yes the parents also participate in the volunteer activities which our classes carry out.

Nimali: Sir has helped us to organise different programs which will show our talents such as concerts, sports meets. We won the “Productivity School” award because our school is very organised.

Kamala: Yes our teachers are also very happy and support us in all these activities. I don’t even feel the time passing by when I am in school.

Nimali: Yes. I too feel that way. We all must contribute to develop the school.

This is a conversation between two students of Senagama Vidyalaya. It describes many of the activities which are conducted in the school.



Figure 6.1 - Health promoted schools

A school that uses its full organisational capacity to promote the health of the school community including school children as well as staff called a health promotional school.

Health Promotion

We learnt about health promotion in Grade 7. Health promotion enables people to improve their health by controlling factors which influence health.

School health promotion

School health promotion help school children to promote the health of the school and the society they live in by helping them to influence and control factors which affect health.

You can contribute to health promotion through the Health Development Society and the Student Health Society in your school. This will help to develop your personality as well as improve your health.

Characteristics of a health promoting school

A school has a physical, psychological and social environment.

Physical environment

A school's physical environment consists of the class rooms, buildings, school garden, play ground, water supply and other physical features.

A healthy school physical environment should contain the following.

- Clean air
- Clean surroundings
- Attractiveness
- Clean class rooms
- Adequate and clean toilet facilities
- Clean, safe drinking water
- Adequate facilities for sports
- A clean and healthy canteen
- A safe environment

Clean air

Adequate distance between buildings is necessary to maintain proper ventilation. Growing trees in the school premises, opening doors and windows and not covering the ventilation holes in class rooms, laboratories, library, music room and auditoriums will provide clean air.



Figure 6.2 - Class rooms with ventilation

Clean surroundings

The classes can take turns to clean the play ground and other areas. The prefects can supervise the work. A health promotion school will have an efficient way of disposing garbage. Separate bins can be kept to collect garbage which degrade and do not degrade.

Degradable organic material can be used to make compost. Compost can be used in the cultivation of fruits, vegetables and herbs in the school garden. These cultivations can be maintained by different groups of students.

It is also important to maintain the drains and ensure that water does not collect in various places. You can get the help of the Health Promotion Committee and the Environmental Committee for these activities.



Figure 6.3 - Cultivations in the school garden

Attractiveness

The school and its environment must appear attractive. The entrance of the school, herbal garden, flower beds sign board etc. must be designed to look attractive and informative.



Figure 6.4 - Attractive environment

Clean class room

A daily roster can be maintained to clean the class room. The teachers table and chair, blackboard and the students desks and chairs must be cleaned and arranged neatly. A dust bin must be kept to collect garbage. The broom and other cleaning equipment must be stored neatly.



Figure 6.5 - Clean class rooms

Adequate and clean toilet facilities

The required toilet facilities will depend on the number of students in the school. Separate toilets should be available for staff and students. There should be separate facilities for males, females and disabled people. There should be adequate water, privacy and facilities for disposal of sanitary towels. Students can monitor the availability of facilities. Everyone in school should ensure that toilets are used properly and cleanliness is maintained.

clean, safe drinking water

You need water to drink, wash hands and for use in the toilet. If drinking water is obtained from a well, tank or stream the Public Health Inspector (PHI) should certify that the water is safe for use.



Figure 6.6 - Clean drinking water

Adequate facilities for sports

A health promotion school should have adequate facilities for sports. Trees can be planted around the play ground to provide shade and

improve the appearance. Students should ensure proper use of sports equipment and pay attention to safety in the play ground and other sporting facilities. They should make maximum use of the time allocated for sports.



Figure 6.7 - Sports facilities

A clean and healthy canteen

A health promotion school should pay adequate attention to the school canteen. Canteen should have clean water for drinking and washing hands and facilities for garbage disposal. The canteen must maintain cleanliness. Food should not contain excess sugar, salt or fat. Nutritious food such as sweet potatoes, different types of grains and pulses should be available in the canteen. The Health Society can ensure that fast food and junk food are not available in the canteen. The "School Canteen Circular" should be followed regarding food which they sell. Students have a right to request to follow this circular.

A Safety environment

A health promotion school should ensure the safety of the student. Students can be trained to act as traffic wardens outside the school. This will help reduce the risk of accidents. Students should also be trained to observe road rules.

If there are slopes in or around the school these areas should be secured with a fence. The slopes should be covered with vegetation to prevent the soil erosion.

School should be inspected for dengue mosquito breeding places. The school and its surroundings should be kept clean and any mosquito breeding places should be destroyed.

You must be vigilant to ensure that abuse does not take place in your school. If you suspect that such activity is occurring or feel unsafe you must tell your teachers about it.



Figure 6.8 - Safety in the school

You can contribute to making your school a safe place for you and others by being vigilant and educating others about possible dangers.

Psychological and social environment

A healthy psychological and social environment ensures that you can maintain healthy and happy relationships with others. Skills such as being able to recognise ones abilities, being able to face challenges, effective communication and empathy are necessary to maintain a healthy psychological and social environment.

Following are some of the characteristics of a healthy psychological and social environment.

1. Safety- Environment that is free of bullying, abuse, arguments, fights and physical punishment
2. Providing counselling services
3. Ensuring equal treatment for all
4. Opportunities for team work
5. Learning to appreciate others

Safety

We discussed about physical safety previously. In addition school should also provide psychological and social safety. The teachers are vigilant to ensure that you are not subjected to abuse while in school. The principal and teachers provide love and care similar to what you receive from your parents or guardians. In return you have to ensure that you obey school rules and behave appropriately. Just as you have a right not to be abused by teachers or other students you also have a responsibility to not subject others to abuse.



Figure 6.9 - Love and care from teachers

Providing counselling facilities

You will face stressful situations in life. Preparing for exams, studying, taking part in sports events, being bullied, problems with friends are some examples of stressful situations faced by students. Your school should have a counselling facility which enables students to discuss these issues. Those engaged in counselling services should be acceptable by students, ensure confidentiality of what is discussed and be available when needed.

If you or your friends have any problems you could discuss these with the teacher counsellor in your school.



Activity

Meet your counselling teacher. Discuss with the teacher about some of your friends who are not interested in their studies. Ask the teacher how you can help them.

3. Ensuring equal treatment for all

In a health promotion school every student is considered special by the principal and staff.

You should also treat all students equally. You should learn to love and respect all friends, teachers and other supporting staff in your school.

4. Opportunities for team work

Working in groups will help you develop many skills. Getting to know each other, listening to and respecting the ideas of others, expressing your own ideas are some of these. Working in a group helps you to identify the wishes, ideas, feelings and behaviours of different types of people. You also learn to be a leader and to respect the leadership of others.

Therefore participate in group work whenever the opportunity arises.



Figure 6.10 - Team work

5. Learning to appreciate others

Students have different types of abilities. We discussed in chapter one about the factors which influence our self esteem. The school provides opportunities for students to display their abilities and achievements in areas such as sports, dancing, music and oratory. The morning assembly, prize giving, concerts, sports meet and literary contests are some examples of opportunities to show your talent.

Prizes, trophies and certificates are awarded for special achievements. You should try with the help of your teachers to develop your talents.

You must also appreciate the success of others and follow their examples. Thank people when they help you and help others in return.

Activity

List out different activities in school to promote physical, mental and social health in school.

Themes for health promotion

We can carry out different activities in school to promote physical, mental and social health. In grade 7 we learnt five themes under which we could promote health of our families. We can adopt these five themes to promote health in the school too.

Themes for health promotion:

1. Developing policies which promote health
2. Improving knowledge and skills
3. Creating a healthy environment
4. Getting help from the community
5. Reorganising and making optimum use of health services

Improving knowledge regarding health alone is not adequate to promote health. Therefore health promotion can be carried out under the above themes.

Let us learn how we can use these themes to ensure that we consume healthy food in school.

1. Developing a policy of bringing only healthy food to school
2. Determine nutritional status and identify healthy food accordingly
3. Ensuring that the canteen serves only healthy food
4. The vendors around the school agrees to sell only healthy food
5. Getting help of the Medical Officer of Health to monitor nutritional status and problems in nutrition

Now we will learn how to use these themes for school health promotion;

1. Developing policies which promote health

Policies are implemented by law or with the help of everyone concerned. We can adopt suitable policies which promote health in our schools. Students can contribute to develop and implement these policies.

Examples of health related policies

- Separate containers for collecting garbage-polythene and other non-degradable items, degradable items, glass and paper
- Maintaining a clean, orderly canteen
- Providing clean safe water
- Conducting health camps
- Not bringing polythene to school
- Bringing only healthy food to school
- Not consuming artificial (carbanoide) drinks

You can develop and adopt healthy policies similar to ones mentioned above. Student Health Societies and Health Promotion Committee can help to develop such policies.



Figure 6.11 -Proper waste disposing



Figure 6.12 - School medical inspection



Activity

Break-up into groups of two and discuss other health policies you can develop for your school. Display a few of these policies in the school.

2. Improving knowledge and skills

You can help improve health promotional activities in your school by developing relevant knowledge and skills. We learnt in grade 6 about life skills which are important for maintaining health.

These are given below:

1. Self-understanding and self-esteem
2. Decision making
3. Problem solving
4. Coping with stress
5. Critical thinking
6. Creative thinking
7. Emotional balance
8. Good interpersonal relationships
9. Productive communication
10. Empathy



Figure 6.13 - Creative thinking

You can develop skills such as leadership skills, ability to work in a group and ability to work under the leadership of others. You can gain knowledge regarding health from books, teachers and other programmes. All these can help health promotional activities in your school.

Activity

Get the help of your classmates to develop and implement a plan to improve the appearance of your school garden.

3. Creating a healthy environment

We learnt previously that the physical, psychological and social environment of school influences our health. The experiences we have in school have a significant impact on our future life too.

Therefore it is important, as students, to learn to maintain a healthy physical, psychological and social environment in school.

4. Getting help from the community

The community can contribute a lot to improve the physical, mental and social health of the school. Parents, teachers, past pupils, those who live in the vicinity of the school and well wishers all have a role to play.

Good relationship with all these groups are essential.

The community can contribute to activities in the school and the school can provide in return.

eg:

Community contribution to the school

- Volunteer dengue control program
- Preventing the sale of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs in the vicinity of the school



Figure 6.14 - Shramadana campaigns

School contribution to the community

- Conducting an eye camp for parents
- Educating the community about child abuse

Activity

Tabulate the activities which your school and community can conduct to promote health.

School contribution to the community

Community contribution to the School

5. Reorganising and making optimum use of health services

Health services are institutions, personnels and programmes which help to maintain and promote your health.

The following public services help to promote health in the school.

People

- Medical Officer of Health (MOH)
- Public Health Inspector (PHI)
- Public Health Midwife (PHM)
- Agriculture officer
- Environment officer
- Child protection officer

Institutions

- Office of the Medical Officer of Health
- Hospital
- Police
- Red Cross Society
- St. John's Ambulance Service
- Saukyadana Movement

Programmes

- School medical inspection
- School dental health service
- Immunisation program
- School sanitary inspection
- Programme for Prevention of communicable and non-communicable diseases

The health service diagnoses and treats illnesses and disabilities. The student health record and the immunisation record show the health services obtained by students.

Following are some of the facilities provided by the health services.

- Prevention of communicable and non-communicable diseases
- Providing immunisation according to the recommended schedule
- Promoting dental health
- Identifying and treating visual defects
- Identifying nutritional deficiencies
- Health Education
- Educating about safety
- Identifying birth anomalies (congenital deformities)



Figure 6.15- Immunisation



Activity

Fill in the following table

Institution	Service	Location	Relevant person
MOH office			
School dental health clinic			
Police			
Hospital			
Others			

Students' contribution to health promotion in the school

- Establishing a health promotion committee in your class
- Carrying out health promotional activities with the help of the committee
- Following existing rules and policies
- Forming new policies related to health promotion
- Abstaining from tobacco and alcohol and engaging in tobacco and alcohol prevention activities with the help of the principal and staff
- Convey health related messages to your family and to the community



Activity

Evaluate the health status of your school using the school health indicators with the help of your teacher. Discuss how you can improve the health status of your school.

Summary

Health promotion is enabling people to improve their health by controlling factors which influence health.

Health promotion in the school contributes to a healthy society.

We need to have a healthy physical, psychological and social environment in school.

The five themes used in health promotion are developing policies which promote health, improving knowledge and skills, creating a healthy environment, getting help from the community and reorganising and making optimum use of health services.

You also can contribute to health promotion in your school by focussing on these five themes.

 **Exercises**

1. What is the meaning of health promotion school?
2. What are the themes of health promotion?
3. List some health policies which can be implement in your school
4. What skills do you need to promote health in your school?
5. As a student what are your responsibilities regarding promoting health in your school?