

# Promoting a healthy environment for children



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## **Introduction**

Creating and promoting a healthy environment for the children is undoubtedly a very important concern as only if they grow as a healthy adult, they are capable of contribute to the society at the fullest. Being healthy means being physically, mentally, spiritually and emotionally fit. The diet of the children have to contain necessary nutrition and calorie, the children can be made aware of the importance of a healthy by reading books, poems or watching cartoons, films they can relate with. The schools can have posters and games to encourage them in maintaining the hygiene. Playing games and doing physical exercise is also very important, it improves their physical health as well as their social skills. As the children are at the development stage, they, should not be pushed to anything, they must be allowed to rest and start when they are ready again. The parents can go to walk and play with the children, it improves the bonding and the helps the children emotionally and spiritually to grow as a healthy and confident human being. Child healthcare also involves the pre and post birth mother care.

## **Task 1: The Principles Underpinning the Rights of Children to a Healthy Lifestyle and Environment**

### **1. 1Legislation that Supports Children Rights to a Healthy Lifestyles**

There is good amount of legislation on this regard. Legislation is very important as it gives a structure for the services that needs to take place.

Some examples of legislation that are related to child healthcare are given below.

### **National Health Service Act 1946 (Scotland 1947)**

Today the healthcare in Scotland is almost free. It wasn't always free. Before the launch of the National Health Service (NHS) in 1948 most of the people had to pay for the medical care and people were reluctant to reach for proper care as it was expensive quite unaffordable for the low income families. After the World War II (1939-45) along with some other reforms the government decided to form National Health Service to provide medication according to the need, not the ability to pay for it.

The organization that started with a noble cause was however hard to maintain and fund. Many changes have been made to the act; the most recent amendment was in 2006 which stated that the medication is still to be free for everyone with the exceptions of prescriptions, glasses and dentures since 1951 and many more charges has been introduced from time to time.

### **National Health Service: Basic Structure**

The detailed and elaborated structure of the organization may change, but the basic structure remains approximately the same.

#### **Primary Care**

The primary care services comprises with medical professionals who perform day to day checkup and advice about proper diet and healthcare. The

receivers of the service here are mostly the children and their families. The work of the primary care consist of-

- Walk-in centers
- Health visitors
- Community health centers
- Family doctors
- Dentists
- Opticians
- Pharmacists
- Nurses
- Midwives etc.

### Secondary Care

Secondary care is mainly specialized care. It often comes as referrals from primary care. It involves emergency and more specialized treatments. For example a family doctor may refer the child to an eye specialist sensing a problem in the eyesight.

### **Health and Safety at Work 1974 (England)**

The act was formed to ensure the safety of the factory workers of England and Wales. It also benefits the child health as it provides proper guidelines about safe handling of harmful objects. For example it states fire safety rules and guidelines about the use of harmful chemicals.

### **Care Standard Act 2000**

This act introduced to provide a structure of regulations for all the organizations that work for child healthcare. This act is valid in all over

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England with variations but the main focus of this act is to ensure that the children receive quality care and physical safety. It is a standard or framework for inspecting healthcare legislation.

### **Education Act 2002**

Under this act the local authorities, organizations, schools and educational organizations were to 'Safeguard and Promote the Welfare of Children'. There were programs for promoting children safety practices and health care.

### **Every Child Matters and the Children Act 2004 (England)**

Every child matters program is a program to promote children welfare and protect the health of the children and the child act is an act established to strengthen the program. This act gives the authority and legislation to run the program properly.

This program is very helpful in this aspect as it promotes child safety and health care issues for children of all economic backgrounds and it combines the children safety and the educational professionals.

## **1. 2The Concept of Global Rights in Relation to Children's Health and Well-being**

### **The United Nations Convention on the right of the Child**

Health is now considered to be one of the primary rights of the children all over the world. The United Nations Convention on the right of the Child (UNCRC) publishes a list of facilities and benefits that a child should rightfully be entitled to. Many of these rights are directly concerned with child health

and safety issues and many of them are circumstantially related with the proper upbringing of a child as a healthy human being.

When a government signs the convention it undertakes some responsibilities to ensure the children of the country with proper medication, safety and healthy environment to live in.

### **World Health Organization (WHO)**

World Health Organization is an agency of the United Nations that is engaged in healthcare worldwide. It was established in 1948. It aims promote health globally and it also produce reports about world health issues. It actively involves with health concerned programs worldwide.

### **Food Standards Agency (FSA)**

This agency is a government agency that works independently. They are responsible for the public health and consumer rights protection concerning food items. It does these works in many ways but mainly they provide and spread guideline and information about the health and food safety issues.

They-

- Provide advices about healthy eating
- Manage a website with detailed food safety knowledge
- Launch public awareness campaigns etc.

For example nowadays they are encouraging the people to be aware about the amount and quality of salt in their foods.

## **Task 2: The Factors that Affect the Health of Children**

### **2.1 Influence of the Wider Environment on the Lifestyle of the Children**

The environment has a great effect on the children's well-being. For example a place full of noise can harm the children's hearing ability or a dusty environment can enhance the risk of asthma or skin diseases. Environment most of the time indirectly or directly influence good health of a child.

#### **Sociological Factors**

The social or economic condition a child is born into holds a great importance to the children health issues, as the children of the low earning families tend to be deprived of nutritious and healthy food as well as a clean hygienic environment.

#### **Poverty**

Poverty is the main sociological factor that causes poor health condition and deprivation of education of the children.

A country measures poverty in two ways-

1. Absolute poverty: Absolute poverty is the inability of the inhabitants of a country to pay for its basic needs like food, shelter, clothes, medication and education. These types of poverty are mostly seen in some underdeveloped and developing countries.
2. Relative poverty: Relative standard of a country is measured by comparing with the standard of living of that country. People living under the standard are considered to be poor.



Relative poverty is used as the base of statistical reports for most of the organizations.

### **How Poverty Affect Families**

Poverty can affect the families in many ways but mainly it takes away the choices from people. When there is poverty people don't get to decide where to live, what to eat what to feed the children because their choices are limited to what they are able to afford instead of what they would like to have for themselves. Families living under poverty are unable to take good care of their children even if they are willing enough.

### **Effects of Living in Poverty**

#### Health

- Poor diet is the main reason behind health problems
- Lack of housing facilities may become diseases like infections, diarrhea or bronchitis.
- Despair and depression of the children increases the propensity of addiction to drugs
- Cheap and low quality products or equipment lack safety concern and can lead to accidents.

#### Education

- Unavailability of study equipment or space for the children
- Children may lack self-confidence and feel awkward with other children
- Parents may not understand the reason behind their child and may not have the emotional strength to support their children.

- Teachers may think low of children from poor background
- It may be unaffordable by the parents to let their child learn extracurricular activities like singing or swimming lessons.

### Depression and Despair

- Worrying all the time for money may cause tension, depression and despair in the families
- Parents often feel helpless and depressed when they see their child in deprivation and cannot do anything about it
- Depression burns down hope when they cannot figure out any way to overcome the poverty
- Self-esteem, confidence and morale go down as money is the main thing that define a person's social standard
- Parents often feel embarrassed to ask for help like permission to pay less for school trips.

### **Children and Poverty**

A child mainly becomes the main victim of poverty. They are more prone to accident, they lack life expectancy, and their achievements are often lower. Children living under poverty miss many opportunities compared to others. Their potential talents, genius are most of the time nipped in the bud. Their parents are unable to pay for the piano lessons, sports training or even the uniform of the school so they may be able to feel equal to others.

It is proved that children who deal with poverty all the time have really expectation of where they want to go or what they want to achieve in life.

They often lack a good role model because they see older kids committing crimes and taking drugs and take that as a culture.

### **Psychological Factors**

Children's psychological or mental health was not considered as an important aspect of child health in the past. However, now it is taken as a critical part of the development of a child. Children who live under poverty are susceptible to psychological problems than others. There are many factors that may have effect on the mental health of a child. Some of these factors can be short term and some can affect the children for a longer time.

### **Signs that Show the Children Might be under Stress**

These signs are different for children according to the difference of individual child and their age. How the adult support them can make a great deal of difference in the upbringing of the children. There are the causes of stress among the children-

- Poverty
- Uncooperative parents
- Separated parents
- Bullying
- Abuse
- Excess pressure from parents and teachers
- Family problems
- School change
- Death of a close family member or a friend

## **2. 2 The Range of Factors That May Affect the Health of Children at Different Times in Their Lives**

### **Diet and Exercise**

Right amount of exercise and proper diet plays a vital role in a child's development.

Breast Milk: At the earliest of a child's life proper diet is very important.

Breast milk is helpful in cognitive development and preventing cardiovascular diseases. Breast milk provides the children with antibodies that lessen risk of catching diseases at the beginning months.

Awareness about the importance of breast milk should be raised by campaigning and promoting programs. As it is seen that mothers with economical disadvantages and low income are less aware of this fact, the campaigns should be mainly targeted to them.

Fruits and vegetables: A child's diet must contain a certain amount of fruits and vegetables, it is very important for the growth of the child as well as the well-being of all the body parts.

Exercise: To remain healthy and to develop, exercise is a must. Exercise is mainly about playing so it should be done as a fun work rather than a disciplined organized hard work.

Children from all age groups need physical exercise. The British Heart Foundation declared that young people and children need one hour of physical activity a day at the lowest. This may include dancing, walking, swimming cycling etc.

Children might want to rest for a few minutes and start playing again after rest. When children start playing outdoors they learn to naturally pace themselves which is why it is really important for the children to have outdoor play opportunity.

Physical exercise is now declined everywhere due to some reasons. These reasons are given below.

1. Fear of child abuse
2. Fear of Traffic
3. Lack of facilities
4. Health and Safety
5. Domination of Computer, Media and Television

### **Illness and Disability**

Illness and disability both can affect the development and health of a child, although the degree of the effect depends on the duration and nature of the disease. It is very important that the adults try to make supportive environment in spite of their illness. Some effects of illness and disability are-

- Child's inability to take hard exercise. It may be consulted with the physician about what type of exercise that child can undertake.
- Growth and development might also be hampered by some kind of disability or illness
- Diet and feeding can also be restricted by some types of illness like premature diabetics.

## **2. 3 Assessment of the effects of these factors in ways that show an understanding of the implications of each factor**

### **Diet**

To fulfill their energy need, the children must eat a balanced diet complete with the necessary nutrition.

There are many short term and long term effects of poor diet. These include-

- Cardiovascular diseases
- Cancer
- Diabetics
- Tooth decay
- Poor self-image and low self esteem
- Weight problems
- Musculoskeletal diseases etc.

### **Exercise**

There are some benefits of exercises given here-

- Stimulation to the activity of brain
- Strengthening the muscles
- Hormone release
- Lung capacity development
- Improvement of digestion
- Development and maintenance of bone density

**Illness and disabilities**

Disabilities and illness can bring a huge effect on the health and development of a child. Short or long whatever the duration of the illness might be, it restricts the development of the children accordingly.

**Task 3: How to Plan and Implement Routines and Activities for Children****3. 1 How to Plan and Implement routines for Children which Will Support Their Rights to a Healthy Lifestyle**

Planning and implementing a routine for the children can help a great deal in the development of the children. The children need proper plan and implementation of a routine containing the activities that are critical elements to leading a healthy lifestyle. These routine should include-

- Healthy diet
- Physical activities
- Entertainment
- Proper sleep
- Study time

There are some things that should be kept in mind while preparing the routine.

- Children can go to the toilet or washroom whenever they want but an adult must keep notice whether the child need any kind of help or support.
- Children should be able to choose what he or she wants to play and the equipment must be check previously to ensure safety.
- Children should have the opportunity to take rest if they are tired.

- There should be little snack break every few hours where they can take healthy fruits or juice.
- There should be some time for studying every day, so they can complete their daily homework and they grow the habit of studying a little every day.
- The need for sleep is different for children of every age. They should have enough sleep for having a sound mind.

### **3. 2 How to Plan and implement activities for children that can contribute to promoting and maintaining a healthy lifestyle**

There are some critical things that the children need for maintaining a happy and healthy life. They should be taught about this so that they learn to take care of themselves.

#### **Healthy Diet**

It is important for the routine to have the child eating a variety of food to keep them healthy and provide them with all necessary nutrition. From the very beginning the food of the children must contain a good number of fruit and vegetables. Junk foods and foods containing sugar should be avoided as much as possible. Children should be taught to serve for themselves so they can learn how much they can and should eat.

They can learn these by-

- Learning at home from parents or nannies
- They can learn preparing and serving food and drink as an extracurricular activity in nurseries, preschools and day care



- They can learn about these from school, after-school and holiday clubs.

### **Exercise**

As we know children need exercise to develop properly at all ages. Children should have ample scope and opportunities for playing and walking or just moving around. Babies, toddlers, school going kids everyone should have routine time and opportunity to exercise for at least an hour every day.

They can practice exercise in many ways.

- At homes, parks or streets with adult supervision and help.
- At nurseries, day care centers or preschools with other kids.
- There are many after school or holiday club or many sports activities they can take part into.

### **Conclusion**

The children are the future on the making. A healthy child is a step towards a healthy future. To protect the future of the world the children must be raised as a healthy human being and to protect their right to a healthy life the proper implication of the legislation is unavoidable. The wider environment must also be made safe for a child as it has a great impact on their growth and wellbeing. The routine of a child must contain all the elements that a child need. Healthy child means healthy future; we must protect and promote children health with honest care.

### **Reference**

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