

A message to educators on deworming of learners

Integrated School Health Programme

National School Nutrition Programme



Basic Education
Health
Social Development



Why is health screening important for learners?

The Department of Basic Education, in partnership with the Department of Health, is conducting health screening for learners as part of the Integrated School Health Programme. The screening aims to identify and address important health barriers to learning. Identifying health problems early will improve learners' overall development and assist with their ability to learn at school.

Why is it important to deworm learners?

Infection by worms (soil-transmitted helminthes), is widespread throughout the world. Millions of people are affected by intestinal worms. These worms live in the intestines and their numbers build up through repeated infection. Worms can cause serious illness such as long-term retardation of mental and physical development, reduced scholastic progress and malnutrition due to reduced appetite or poor food absorption. In very severe infections, it may even cause death.

Which are the most common intestinal parasitic worms?

There are over 100 different types of parasites that can live in the human body. Three of the most common types of worms that infect children are roundworm, whipworm and hookworm.



Roundworm



Whipworm



Hookworm

How are humans infected by worms?

Soil becomes contaminated with worms when it is contaminated by human faeces. Worms are very fertile and can release tens of thousands of eggs at a time. People become infected with hookworm when the young worms (larvae) burrow through the skin of bare feet.

In the case of roundworm and whipworm, people can become infected when they ingest the worm eggs, either by eating contaminated food (e.g. fruits or vegetables that have been watered with water containing contaminated soil), or by ingesting contaminated soil. Worms can also be transferred from pet to owner.



What are the symptoms of worm infestation?

Worms cause a number of health problems. The different types of worms cause different symptoms. Children with a few worms may not have any symptoms. With heavier infections, children with one or more kinds of worms may experience the following symptoms:

- a swollen or painful stomach
- coughing
- fever
- vomiting
- diarrhoea
- weakness and chronic fatigue
- a general feeling of being unwell
- hookworm can contribute to anaemia by causing intestinal bleeding and thus loss of blood
- fits (when the brain is infected)
- bowel obstruction in the case of heavy infection with roundworms.

What can be done?

It is crucial that any concerns for parasite infestation be investigated further. Inform the parent about your concern and request that an appointment is scheduled as soon as possible with the school nurse, health facility or doctor for an examination and assessment.

Treatment for intestinal worms is simple, cheap, and effective. It takes a single dose of medicine (albendazole, a chewable tablet, or mebendazole, a tablet taken with water) to kill the adult worms in an infected person. In areas where re-infection is likely to occur, treatment should take place every six months or once a year. Treating for worms brings many benefits to the children such as improvement in appetite and extra gains in weight and height. Children can infect others; treating worms benefits the whole community.

What role can the school/educator play?

Teachers can promote healthy behaviours amongst learners by teaching learners:

- proper hygiene i.e. washing hands after going to the toilet, playing outside and before preparing or eating food
- avoid swallowing river, stream or lake water when swimming in it
- drinking and using safe water
- washing all fruits and vegetables in clean water before eating
- wearing shoes or slippers (to prevent hookworm infection)
- defecating in a latrine or for young children, in a pot.

Teachers and schools can play a leading role in preventing and treating worms by advising parents on the following:

- It can be expected that children will become infected by worms and need to undergo a periodic (i.e. annual) deworming.
- Be sure that all meat, chicken and fish is cooked thoroughly.
- Wash all fruits and vegetables in clean water before eating.
- Always wash your hands, kitchen counters and utensils with hot soapy water after cutting or handling raw meat, chicken or fish.
- Do not use water from septic tanks or other potentially contaminated sources for watering vegetables.
- Contain all faecal matter by using a toilet.
- Deworm pets periodically.

LEARN ABOUT WORMS

Worms spread easily

When a child with worms goes to the toilet in the bush, thousands of worm eggs come out with the pooh. These eggs are too small to see and they get into our soil and water.



The worm eggs get onto our hands, under our finger nails and onto the food we eat.



Flies carry worm eggs and other germs onto our food.



When we swallow the eggs, they start to grow into worms inside us. These make us sick.



Worms make us sick

Worms live inside our bodies and eat our food and our blood.



Children with worms don't have enough energy to grow and to learn.

Protect your child from worms

All children should be treated for worms at school or pre-school.

Deworming medicine kills the worms and eggs, but there are also things you can do at home to protect your child from worms...



Let's stop worms spreading

1. Clean toilets

Encourage your family to use proper toilets where they have been provided.



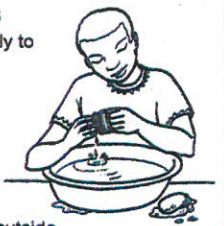
If you must go to the toilet in the bush, dig a hole first and then cover the pooh with sand to keep flies away.

2. Clean hands

Encourage your family to wash their hands ...

before

- eating or
- preparing food

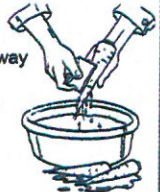


after

- going to the toilet
- playing or working outside
- playing with animals

3. Clean food

- Cover food to keep flies away
- Wash or cook fruit and vegetables before eating.



4. Clean home

Pick up rubbish and litter to stop flies spreading worms and other germs.



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