

Domain: Environmental sanitation
Subject: Worm infections

Age group: 5–14 years

2.3 The unseen enemy

Learning goals:

Knowledge:

- Children can describe the transmission routes of worm infections.
- They can list ways by which transmission of worm infections can be prevented.
- They can list the signs and symptoms shown by a person infested with worms.

Attitude:

- They appreciate the importance of handwashing and cooking food thoroughly.
- They demonstrate willingness to prevent worm transmission and to get medication for treatment if infected.

Practical skills:

- They develop drawing skills for diagrams.
- They can wash hands correctly to prevent worm transmission.

Psychosocial life skills:

- They can make correct decisions not to play in soil and understand the importance of handwashing at critical times.
- They communicate effectively to others about the prevention of worm transmission.
- They are assertive in seeking for help and treatment for worm infections.

Participatory methods:

- Storytelling
- Drawing – F diagram
- Picture and/or word matching
- Interaction with guest speaker
- Field trip

Materials:

Pictures of different transmission points (F diagram), cards, pencil/marker, eraser, newsprint paper, manila paper, wool or string or local materials such as stalks of grass or thin twigs that can be shaped into arrows

Activities:

Storymaking and telling

- Ask the children to think of/write a story and give it an interesting title e.g. “My Life as a Worm”.
- Ask each child to share his/her story with the rest of the class. (Creative writing and speech skills will be developed in this exercise.)

Drawing F diagram and discussion (for older children)

- Help the children to draw the F diagram.
- First ask a child to draw a picture of a child with worms and to place this on the left-hand side of the blackboard or on the ground on the left-hand side in a circle of standing or sitting children.
- Ask another child to draw a picture of a healthy child and place this on the right-hand side.
- Ask the children how the worms can travel from the child with worms to the healthy child.
- Ask some children to draw a picture of each travel mode, or to write the word concerned on a card, slip of paper, or slate and place the pictures or cards/slates between the pictures of the children.
- Ask the other children to introduce transmission lines, using, for example, twigs or twine, until the diagram is completed.
- Check the work to see that all risky practices and connections are included.
- Now ask the children to describe these transmission routes and discuss how transmission can be prevented.

The activity can also be done in small groups. The teacher then helps to compare the results in plenary and makes corrections or additions as needed. The activity can also be used to add local words, match them with terms in the official language, and play card placing games to develop language skills.

Picture and word matching

- Collect pictures and match written words and sentences depicting different situations related to a child suffering from worms.
- Mix them and display them on a table or on the ground.
- Ask the children to pick one picture and one matched written card, read out the card and explain the relationship. (This method helps to make children observe, analyse critically and develop speech and language skills.)

Guest speaker and field trip

- Invite a health specialist such as the local nurse to come and speak about worms, transmission and prevention, and when the children can and should come for treatment. Plan for a related field trip, e.g. to the hospital or to areas commonly used for defecation, such as waste fields, canal, lake or river banks, bushes on the way to school and around water points.
- Visit the school toilets with the health specialist for observation of faecal contamination, or its absence. (Mud, sand or dust in latrines are no health risk and may be unavoidable in some seasons.)

Application:

Social map

- Ask groups of older children to prepare social maps on which they depict the main locations in their community where children and adults defecate.
- Ask them to present their maps in class.
- Facilitate a discussion asking what the consequences may be, why this behaviour is practised and what they can do about it.
- A special point for discussion is what happens to the stools of babies and infants. Can they also contain worms? People often wrongly believed that this is not so, but stools of young children often contain worms. What can be done to avoid worms from babies being passed to other people, such as sisters and brothers, and mothers?

Washing hands before school meals

This is often difficult to organise and a good topic for taking up as a problem solving exercise.

- Ask an older school class or the school health club to think of ways in which they could get everyone to wash hands before eating – and how to do so quickly.
- Ask them to think of ways to ensure the availability of soap or soap alternatives.
- Ask them to think of ways to ensure that the handwashing area stays clean and waste water is properly disposed of.
- Challenge them to come up with methods that are sustainable and equitable.
- Help them to try out the methods and if necessary improve them.

Learning indicators:

- Children can describe at least three routes of worm transmission and two major methods of worm prevention.
- They can mention the risks of worm infection and give examples of infection and treatment in their own school/home environment.
- They are aware of safe areas to play.
- Handwashing facilities are seen to be available and toilets are observed to be free of faecal contamination at all times.
- School toilets are used by the schoolchildren and they and the school surroundings are free from faecal contamination.
- Children practise good hygiene, e.g. wash their hands at critical times and in the right way, use toilets, observe hygiene in toilets, cover food and water, etc.
- They assist smaller children and younger brothers and sisters to improve their hygiene practices.
- They can describe how they, their friends, sisters or brothers were treated against worms.

Competence:**Hygienic practices to reduce worm infestations**