

“I have come that they
may have life, and
have it to the full.”

John 10:10



Faith for Life 

Catholic Handbook

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ABOUT THIS BOOKLET

Health is a prerequisite for continuity of life and comfortable living. The Faith for Life (F4L) booklet is a compilation of appropriate health messages linked and backed by scriptures from our Holy books. The booklet has essential messages that religious leaders and faith communities need to know to intervene on:

- Health-seeking behaviour
- Maternal, child healthcare and nutrition
- Common childhood and immunizable illnesses
- HIV/AIDS
- Child Protection
- Water sanitation and hygiene
- Mental health and substance use disorders
- Disease surveillance and outbreak response
- Early childhood education.

The booklet supports and complements the efforts of the government in improving the health and well-being of children, mothers, youth and communities. Faith communities are urged to embrace these teachings that will help them overcome the many challenges faced by children, mothers, youth and communities.



HEALTH-SEEKING BEHAVIOUR

Introduction

Health-seeking behaviour means any action undertaken by individuals who perceive themselves to have a health problem or to be ill for the purpose of finding an appropriate remedy or treatment by a qualified healthcare provider. Proper use of available healthcare services at our facilities e.g., immunization, family planning, antenatal and child welfare services for our wellbeing and enjoyment of good health, is part of health-seeking behaviours.

Key Messages

1. Always consult a qualified healthcare giver whenever you feel ill, in addition to prayer.
Proverbs 4:7 — *The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever you get, get insight.*
2. Observe any unusual signs and or symptoms that could lead to illness and seek help from a health worker.
Proverbs 22:3 — *A prudent man sees danger and hides himself, but the simple go on, and suffer for it.*
3. Ensure regular visits to health facilities for professional care and health advice.
Luke 17:14 — *When he saw them, he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed.*
- 3 John 1:2 Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in health. I know it is well with your soul.
4. The nurture and well-being of a child is a collective responsibility of both parents, where applicable.
Genesis 33:5 — *"When Esau looked about, he saw the women and children, 'Who are these with you?' he asked. Jacob answered; 'They are the children whom God has graciously bestowed on your servant.'"*

Catholic social teaching

Parents are required to seek treatment for their children with a free and informed consent. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Instruction on Respect for Human Life in its origin and on the Dignity of Procreation, Replies to certain questions of the Ddy, 28).

In promoting a culture more capable of protecting people's health, especially the little ones, parents are the first custodians and managers. (Audience with Members of the Italian Federation of Primary Care Pediatricians, 21.03.2019



MATERNAL-CHILD HEALTH CARE & NUTRITION

a. Care of pregnant women

Nearly 5,000 women and girls die annually due to pregnancy and childbirth complications such as bleeding during or after delivery, obstructed labour, high blood pressure and infections like malaria, HIV and anaemia

Key Messages

1. Every woman should attend antenatal clinics as soon as she knows that she is pregnant.
Judges: 13:14 — *She may not eat of anything that comes from the vine, neither her drink wine or strong drink, or eat any unclean thing; all that I command her to observe.*
2. Every pregnant woman should be issued with the MCH Handbook and should bring it with her during clinic visits.
3. For the health of both mothers and children, a woman should wait until her last child is at least two years old before becoming pregnant again.
1 Corinthians 7:5 — *Do not refuse one another except perhaps by agreement for a season, that you may devote yourselves to prayer, but then come together again, lest Satan tempt you through lack of self-control.*
4. All mothers, including those who deliver at home, should attend post-natal clinics for care within two days of delivery.
Proverbs 4:7 — *The beginning of Wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whenever you get insight.*

b. Newborn Care

Approximately 1,600,000 babies are born in Kenya annually, or around 4,300 every day, according to UNICEF (2022). Among young women aged between 20 and 24 years, 23 per cent gave birth by the age of 18. Approximately 92 babies will die each day before reaching their first month; while 96 stillbirths occur every day.

Newborns need round-the-clock care and love. They should be exclusively breastfed for six months, kept clean, warm and fed appropriately.

Key Messages

1. Every newborn should begin breastfeeding immediately after birth and continue exclusive breastfeeding for six months.
1 Peter 2:2 — *As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.*
Isaiah 66:11 — *That you may suck and be satisfied with her consoling breasts; that you may drink deeply with delight from the abundance of her glory*
2. Every newborn should be checked by a health worker 24 hours after birth, during the first week and again six weeks after birth.
Proverbs 22:3 — *A prudent man sees danger and hides himself, but the simple go on, and suffer for it.*
3. Every mother should look out for danger signs of illness in a newborn, for example, refusal to feed, infection of the cord, fast breathing, lethargy (not active) and fever.
Proverbs 22:3 — *A prudent man sees danger and hides himself, but the simple go on, and suffer for it*

c. Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding is an unequalled way of providing ideal food and care for the health, growth and development of the infant. WHO (2021) estimates that exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life, can save the lives of at least 800,000 children annually. Continued breastfeeding for up to two years or more improves the health and development of millions of children.

Key Messages

1. All mothers should start breastfeeding immediately after birth.

Proverbs 4:7 — *The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever you get, get insight.*

2. Continue breastfeeding exclusively (give breast milk only) for the first six months.

Proverbs 4:7 — *The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever you get, get insight.*

3. After six months of exclusive breastfeeding continue breastfeeding as you give your baby other nutritious foods for the next two years and beyond.

Genesis 21:7-8 — *And Sarah said: "God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh over me." And she said: "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would suckle children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age."*

d. Catholic social teaching

The Church supports breastfeeding of children for four to six months from birth and continue this — supplemented by other appropriate foods — up to the second year of life or beyond (Friday, May, 12, 1995, the Holy Father met the participants in a study session on breastfeeding, science and society organized by the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and the Royal Society of Great Britain).



COMMON CHILDHOOD & IMMUNIZABLE ILLNESSES

a. Malaria

Children are more prone to illnesses for a number of reasons, the major one being their low immunity. This is because they have limited exposure to illness and, therefore, haven't built the required immunity to fight infections.

Major causes of death among children vary by age. Children under five years are especially vulnerable to infectious diseases like malaria, pneumonia, diarrhoea and many others. Despite being entirely preventable and treatable, common infectious diseases are still killing young children in large numbers in Africa.

Key Messages

1. Seek correct treatment for malaria from a qualified health worker or an authorized health facility.
Proverbs 4:7 — *The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever you get, get insight.*
2. Everybody should sleep under an insecticide-treated net, especially pregnant women and children under five years who are at high risk.
Proverbs 22:3 — *A prudent man sees danger and hides himself, but the simple go on, and suffer for it.*
3. Support preventive measures as recommended by health workers.
Proverbs 22:3 — *A prudent man sees danger and hides himself, but the simple go on, and suffer for it.*

b. Pneumonia

Pneumonia remains the leading infectious cause of death globally among children under five, killing approximately 2,000 children a day (WHO, 2020). Kenya is currently ranked among the 15 countries with the highest estimated number of deaths due to pneumonia.

Key Messages

1. Ensure that your child completes all recommended immunizations.
Leviticus 14:54-57 — *“These are the regulations for any infectious skin disease, for an itch, for mildew in clothing or in the house, and for swelling, a rash or a bright spot, to determine when something is clean or unclean. These are the regulations for infectious skin diseases and mildew.”*
2. Whenever your child has a cough or difficulty in breathing and fever, they should be taken to a health provider for treatment
Proverbs 22:3 — *A prudent man sees danger and hides himself, but the simple go on, and suffer for it.*
3. Ensure your house is properly ventilated and that there is free circulation of clean air.
Isaiah 32:18 — *“My people will live in peaceful country, in secure dwellings and quiet resting places*

c. Measles and rubella

Measles and rubella are contagious viral diseases that are highly spread through direct contact with saliva and mucus of an infected person or through droplets produced from coughing or sneezing. They are characterized by rashes, eye redness, headache and runny nose.

Key Messages

1. Ensure children receive two measles rubella doses at the recommended age.
Proverbs 23:12 — *Apply your heart to instruction, And your ears to words of knowledge.*
2. Whenever a child develops skin rashes, red eyes, has a cough or fever they should be taken to a health provider for treatment.
Leviticus 14:54-57 — *“These are the regulations for any infectious skin disease, for an itch, for mildew in clothing or in the house, and for swelling, a rash or a bright spot, to determine when something is clean or unclean. These are the regulations for infectious skin diseases and mildew.”*
3. Ensure children receive all other routine immunization as per the Ministry of Health recommended schedule.
Proverbs 23:12 — *Apply your heart to instruction, And your ears to words of knowledge*

Recommended routine immunization schedule

Vaccine	Age	Diseases prevented	Route of administration
BCG	At birth, or two weeks after birth	Tuberculosis	Injection
Oral Polio Vaccines (OPV)	At birth, six weeks; 10 weeks	Polio	Drops to the mouth
Rotavirus	At six weeks; 10weeks	Diarrhea	Drops to the mouth
Inactivated Polio Vaccine (IPV)	At 14 weeks	Polio	Injection
Pentavalent vaccine	At six weeks; 10 weeks; and 14 weeks	Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis, whooping cough, meningitis, Haemophilus influenza Type B	Injection
Pneumococcal vaccine	At six weeks; 10 weeks; and 14 weeks	Pneumonia	Injection
Measles-rubella vaccine	At nine months; 18 months	Measles-rubella	Injection
Malaria vaccine(in selected counties)	At six months; 24 weeks	Malaria	Injection
Yellow fever vaccine (in selected counties)	At nine months	Yellow fever	Injection
HPV vaccine	Dose 1: At 10 -14 years; Dose 2: Six months after Dose 1	Cervical cancer	Injection

Catholic social teaching

The Church advocates the provision of sufficient food to avoid hunger and malnourishment of children. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, instruction *Dignitas Personae*, on certain Bioethical Questions, 36).



HIV & AIDS

HIV is transmitted through; Unprotected sex with an HIV-infected person; HIV-infected woman to her baby during pregnancy, childbirth or breastfeeding; Blood from HIV-contaminated syringes, needles or other sharp instruments and from transfusion with HIV-contaminated blood.

Key Messages

1. Everybody is encouraged to take a HIV test to establish their status as the first step of prevention.

Proverbs 22:3 — *A prudent man sees danger and hides himself, but the simple go on, and suffer for it.*
2. People living with HIV should visit the nearest health facility for access to appropriate services and support.

Proverbs 4:7 — *The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever you get, get insight.*
3. HIV positive persons should adhere to their medications as prescribed.

Romans 13:11 — *And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.*
4. Everyone should show love and compassion to children and adults living with or affected by HIV.

1 Peter 3:8 — *Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous:*

1 John 3:17 — *But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him.*

PREVENTION OF MOTHER-TO-CHILD TRANSMISSION

Transmission of HIV from an HIV-positive mother to her child can happen during pregnancy, labour, delivery or breastfeeding. In the absence of any intervention, transmission rates range from 15 to 45 per cent and half of the babies infected with HIV die before they are two years old.

Key Messages

1. All pregnant women should attend at least eight antenatal clinics and ensure they get triple elimination services (prevention of HIV, syphilis and hepatitis B).
3 John 1:2 — *Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.*
2. Maternal syphilis is also associated with increased risk of mother-to-child transmission of HIV during pregnancy, delivery and breastfeeding.
3 John 1:2 — *Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.*
3. Children of HIV positive mothers can be prevented from getting HIV through the attendance of the synchronized mother-and-child clinics.
Ezekiel 33:6 — *But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet to warn the people and the sword comes and takes someone's life, that person's life will be taken because of their sin, but I will hold the watchman accountable for their blood.*
4. All pregnant women should ensure they deliver in a health facility (skilled birth delivery was at 62 per cent in 2015); if HIV positive, they should receive services to prevent the child from getting the HIV virus.
Proverbs 4:6 — *Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you.*
5. HIV positive mothers should exclusively breastfeed for six months and ensure the baby is on HIV drugs for the period recommended by the health care workers.
Galatians 6:9 — *Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.*

Catholic social teaching

The appropriate goals of AIDS-related legislation include helping to prevent the transmission of HIV; providing adequate medical care; and protecting civil rights. (USCCB, Called to Compassion and Responsibility).



CHILD PROTECTION

Child protection is the safeguarding of children from violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect. There are various harmful practices that injure the rights of the child including: child labor, violence against children, child marriage and female genital mutilation.

Key Messages

1. Always protect and promote the child's safety.

Matthew 18:10 — *See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven.*

2. Ensure justice for children by reporting child abuse offenders to the authorities and making follow-ups.

Ephesians 5:11 — *Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.*

3. Female mutilation is a harmful and dehumanizing practice.

Genesis 1:31 — *Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good.*

4. Emphasize the importance of good parenting.

Proverbs 22:6 *Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it*

Catholic social teaching

In the Apostolic exhortation *The Joy of Love (Amoris Letitia)*, Pope Francis decries unacceptable cultural practices that enslave and dehumanize the human e.g. female genital mutilation etc.



WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE

Safe water, sanitation and hygiene are important to human health and well-being. They contribute to livelihoods, school attendance and reduce disease transmission, promote dignity and create healthy living environments for communities. Living in a clean and safe environment is everyone's right. Access to clean water and environment, and good hygiene practices not only keeps communities thriving but also gives them healthier lives.

Key Messages

1. Always collect and store drinking water hygienically.

Exodus 7:24 — *And all the Egyptians dug along the Nile to get drinking water, because they could not drink the water of the river.*

2. Treat water by boiling, filtration, distillation and chlorination

2 Kings 2:20-22 — *Bring me a new bowl," he said, "and put salt in it." So they brought it to him. Then he went out to the spring and threw the salt into it, saying: "This is what the Lord says: 'I have healed this water. Never again will it cause death or make the land unproductive.'" And the water has remained pure to this day, according to the word Elisha had spoken.*

3. Ensure water sources are protected from contamination.

Exodus 7:24 — *And all the Egyptians dug along the Nile to get drinking water, because they could not drink the water of the river*

Catholic social teaching

The Church warns against the use of unsafe water that results in many deaths and spread of water-related diseases, including those caused by micro-organisms and chemical substances



MENTAL HEALTH & SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS

a. Mental Health

Mental health refers to our emotional, psychological and social well-being. It helps in determining how we relate to others, make choices and handle stress. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood to adulthood.

Key Messages

“There is no health without mental health”

1. Mental health is essential to both the individual and society.

Philippians 4:6-7 — *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

2. Hope is the beginning for a mental health system that is geared toward recovery.

1 Peter 5:7 — *Casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.*

3. Early identification of mental illness is key in treatment and recovery.

1 Peter 3:8 — *Be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble.*

4. Know when and how to seek help from family, friends or professionals and provide referrals to others who need them.

Ephesians 4:32 — *Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*

b. Substance Abuse

Substance (drug) abuse is increasing in Kenya, especially among the youth. Current statistics indicate that more than half of drug users are aged between 10 and 19 years. The youth are the backbone of any country for socio-economic development and any disruption to the social fabric within this age group results in a decline in literacy levels, loss of productivity and, therefore, economic loss to the country.

Key Messages

1. Do not rely on self-medication as it could be the beginning of an addiction.
Romans 12:1 — *I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.*
2. Prevention and awareness are the key to coping with the struggle in overcoming addiction.
Galatians 5:19-21 — *Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*
3. All it takes to overcome drug and alcohol addiction is focus, determination and hard work.
Proverbs 23:31 — *Look not on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the glass. It goes down smoothly, but in the end it bites like a serpent, or like a poisonous adder.*
4. To reconfirm the confidence of the person, make them understand they are bigger than their problem.
Hebrews 10:35 — *So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded.*

Catholic social teaching

The Catechism of the Catholic Church No. 2290 teaches against the abuse of food, alcohol, tobacco or even medicine.

In its social teaching, the Church itself on the Pontifical Council for Healthcare Workers on Drugs and Drug Addiction of December 22nd, 2001 talks of drugs as one of the main threats facing young people today. Some see it as a way of expressing personal liberty, pleasure, escape from suffering, solitude and isolation, feeling of frustration and lack of meaning in life. Catholic morality rejects illegal use of drugs and calls peddlers of drugs merchants of death.



DISEASE SURVEILLANCE & OUTBREAK RESPONSE

It is important for every community member to actively take up the role of identifying and reporting any health threats spotted within the community to the nearest health facility or health worker. Disease prevention and control are important in ensuring that the public remains healthy at all times. From time to time, the country is bound to face disease outbreaks and emergencies from both emerging and re-emerging diseases such as COVID-19, polio, yellow fever, Rift Valley fever, influenza, diarrhoea and cholera, among others.

Suspected illness	Illnesses signs to look for
Diarrhea (loose stools)	Any person aged two years or more, with three or more watery or blood-stained loose stools in 24 hours.
Chest infection	Any person aged less than five years with cough and difficulty breathing.
	Any person with body hotness and cough.
	Any person with a cough for more than two weeks.
Severe weight loss	Any person with rapid weight loss and frequent illness.
Sexually transmitted infections	Any person with discharge, ulcer or pimple on his/her private parts.
Skin disease	Any person with a skin patch or worm emerging from the skin.
Polio	Any person aged less than 15 years with sudden loss of movement of one or both legs or arm or both with no report of injury.
New-born tetanus	Any new-born who is normal at birth, then after two days is unable to suck or feed and has body stiffness
Malnutrition	Any child aged less than five years with severe weight loss or swelling of both legs.
Animal bites	Any person who has been bitten or scratched by a domestic or wild animal.
Maternal death	Death of a woman during pregnancy, childbirth, miscarriage or within 42 days after delivery.
New-born death	Death of a new-born within 28 days of delivery.

Catholic social teaching

The protection of human life and dignity is at the centre of the Catholic social teaching. This requires us to help people avoid infection, overcome illness and recover from the virus whenever possible. The loss of life is horrific and growing in our nation and around the world. There is a compelling moral obligation to avoid actions, behaviours and attitudes which permit the virus to spread and threaten the life and health of others.



EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Education is a fundamental right in Kenya, which a majority of children do not enjoy. Equitable and inclusive primary education gives all children a fair chance to learn and develop the skills they need to thrive. An inclusive education system considers the unique contributions of students of all backgrounds and allows diverse groups to grow to the benefit of all.

Key Messages

1. Education helps a child to know the 'good' and the 'bad'.

Proverbs 1:7-9 — *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools[a] despise wisdom and instruction. Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching. They are a garland to grace your head and a chain to adorn your neck.*

2. Education is important for the growth and development of a child.

Proverbs 4:13 — *Hold on to instruction, do not let it go; guard it well, for it is your life.*

3. Education provides:-

- Knowledge and skills
- Develops communication skills and values for harmonious co-existence

Luke 2:52 — *And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men.*

4. Education helps and makes a child to be self-dependent.

Isaiah 54:13 — *All your children shall be taught by the Lord, and great shall be the peace of your children.*

Catholic social teaching

Catholic social teaching The Church teaches the safeguarding of the wellbeing of children and their rights.



Handbook

REPUBLIC OF KENYA



MINISTRY OF HEALTH



INTER-RELIGIOUS COUNCIL *of* KENYA

