

To preserve the life on earth,
Our scriptures say:

ॐ Alasyannadoshashch
vipramrityu jighansati ॐ



Faith for Life 

Hindu 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.
To preserve the life on earth, our scriptures say: "Alasyannadoshashch vipramrityu jighansati.
2. Observe any unusual signs and or symptoms that could lead to illness and seek help from a health worker.
Laziness, sins, indifference and wrong food habits give man different diseases and then become the reason for his reduced life span.
3. Ensure regular visits to health facilities for professional care and health advice.
Ayurveda has given solutions to all ailments in a body to maintain balance of vaat, kapha and pitta (means the three levels of energies in any human body) and to live a healthy life.
4. The nurture and wellbeing of a child is a collective responsibility of both parents, where applicable.
A joint family system or extended family will help in traditional health-seeking information passed on from older members to younger ones. This system also helps to build a bond, love and affections towards the elders and between siblings and cousins.



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.
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.
4. All mothers, including those who deliver at home, should attend post-natal clinics for care within two days of delivery.

Supportive Scripture reference

Ayurveda is a kind of medicinal science that focuses more on healthy living than treatment of diseases. A healthy body has enough immunity to overcome the problems caused by some foreign elements. That is why instead of focusing on the treatment or cure of a disease, one should concentrate on developing the immunity in the body as well as healthy regulation of body organs. The initiatives to live healthy should be taken right from the pre-natal phase and that is why Ayurveda emphasizes on the proper care and wellbeing of a child right from conception.

In the Vedas, mention that milk and breast are symbolic of longevity and nectarine sweetness. The breast has been conceived as a pitcher full of nectar (Atharva Veda). The Yajurveda (verse 17/87) reflects: "Drink in the middle of the flood, O Agni, this breast stored full of sap, teeming with water. Welcome this fountain redolent of sweetness. O courser, enter those thy watery dwelling." Ayurveda identifies breastfeeding as the easiest and the healthiest way to feed a newborn, as the milk is rich in nutrients. Breastfeeding reduces the chances of infection and increases the baby's immunity. Breast milk contains vitamins, minerals and enzymes, which aid the baby's digestion.

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.
2. Every newborn should be checked by a health worker 24 hours after birth, during the first week and again six weeks after birth.
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.

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.
2. Continue breastfeeding exclusively (give breast milk only) for the first six months.
3. After six months of exclusive breastfeeding continue breastfeeding as you give your baby other nutritious foods for the next two years and beyond.

Supportive Scripture reference

After the recommended period of breastfeeding, the diet should consist of wholesome food for the proper development of the child. Liquid diet made with husk-free and well washed sali or sasti rice (especially old rice), mixed with oleaginous substances and salt is ideal. The balance of Vata, Pitta and Kapha energies —the cornerstone of good health — can be achieved in early childhood. Health problems in children can be easily controlled by herbal preparations suggested by Ayurveda. The powders (flour) of wheat and barley can also be given according to congeniality. If the child is having pitta constitution, then grapes with honey and ghee are an ideal remedy.



COMMON CHILDHOOD & IMMUNIZABLE ILLNESSES

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.

a. Malaria

Malaria is a parasitic disease, typically characterized by shivering, chills alternating with fever, headache and nausea, and sometimes vomiting. Malaria is transmitted through mosquito bites. Sleeping under an insecticide-treated net is the best way to prevent the bites.

Key Messages

1. Seek correct treatment for malaria from a qualified health worker or an authorized health facility.
2. Everybody should sleep under an insecticide-treated net, especially pregnant women and children under five years who are at high risk.
3. Support preventive measures as recommended by health workers.
4. Support efforts to vaccinate all children as recommended by health workers.

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.
2. Whenever your child has a cough or difficulty in breathing and fever, they should be taken to a health provider for treatment.
3. Ensure your house is properly ventilated and that there is free circulation of clean air.

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.
2. Whenever a child develops skin rashes, red eyes, has a cough or fever they should be taken to a health provider for treatment.
3. Ensure children receive all other routine immunization as per the Ministry of Health recommended schedule.

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

Supportive Scripture reference

Kashyap Samhita describes the natural way to build up the power of immunity in children. The best way to develop immunity, maintain vitality in children, take care of the overall health of the infant and increases the mental capacity of the child is oil massage, referred to as 'snehana'. Massage with bala taila, oil specially formulated for children, is the first therapy that newborns should receive after birth.

Since children's skin is more permeable than that of adults, use of herbs with the massage oil is recommended. Apart from oil massage, medicated bath is quintessential to maintain overall health of the newborn. Moreover, basic hygiene is necessary to shield the child from diseases and infections. Therefore, the mouth of the children, especially after breastfeeding, should be cleaned.



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.
2. People living with HIV should visit the nearest health facility for access to appropriate services and support.
3. HIV positive persons should adhere to their medications as prescribed.
4. Everyone should show love and compassion to children and adults living with or affected by HIV.

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).
2. Maternal syphilis is also associated with increased risk of mother-to-child transmission of HIV during pregnancy, delivery and breastfeeding.
3. Children of HIV positive mothers can be prevented from getting HIV through the attendance of the synchronized mother-and-child clinics.
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.
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.

Supportive Scripture reference

1. One man one wife, no multiple sex partners
2. Segments (Ashrams) of life are:
 - Brahmacharya (celibacy);
 - Grahasthashrama (raising family)
 - Vanprasthashrama (a recluse seeking religious and spiritual knowledge);and
 - Sanyasashrama (renunciation).

Self-control (Atma samyam)

- Self-control and discipline in life.
- Acting responsibly on available information and correct formal education on sex



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.
2. Ensure justice for children by reporting child abuse offenders to the authorities and making follow-ups.
3. Female mutilation is a harmful and dehumanizing practice.
4. Emphasize the importance of good parenting.

Supportive Scripture reference

Preventing and detecting diseases comes naturally for human beings at a symptomatic stages. In contrast, illness behaviour refers to all those activities designed to recognize and explain symptoms after one feels ill, while sick role behaviour refers to all those activities designed to cure diseases and restore health after a diagnosis has been made. A person seeks ways of minimizing the suffering at the slightest opportunity.

Ayurveda has given solutions to all ailments in a body; maintain balance of vaat, kapha and pitta, and live a healthy life



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

Safe drinking water

1. Wash your hands with clean water and soap after visiting the toilet and after cleaning a baby who has defecated or changing their nappy.
2. Wash your hands before handling food, cooking or eating.
3. Always use a toilet and keep it clean

Supportive Scripture reference

1. Sun bath: Sun rays have a purifying effect on the atmosphere and human being. They improve appetite and enrich blood. A 30-minute daily sunbath can dramatically improve health and make the body disease free.
2. Namaste a holistic way of greetings, it avoids physical contact and transmission of bacteria from one person to the other.
3. Meals should ideally be taken twice during the day, i. e. in the morning and evening. After meals, the mouth should be thoroughly cleaned and hands washed.
4. Love for good upbringing and all round development of children.
5. Annad bhavanti bhutani parjanyaad annasambhavah. Yajnad bhavati parjanyo yajnah karmasamudbhavah. 3: 14



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.
2. Hope is the beginning for a mental health system that is geared toward recovery.
3. Early identification of mental illness is key in treatment and recovery.
4. Know when and how to seek help from family, friends or professionals and provide referrals to others who need them.

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.
2. Prevention and awareness are the key to coping with the struggle in overcoming addiction.
3. All it takes to overcome drug and alcohol addiction is focus, determination and hard work.
4. To reconfirm the confidence of the person, make them understand they are bigger than their problem

Supportive Scripture reference

1. A Hindu approach to addiction treatment is distinctly religious, and it may emphasize overcoming addiction as a way of living in harmony with the dharma. For Hindus, addiction treatment may involve meditation and other spiritual exercises that complement a standard programme of detox, medication and therapy.
2. Since Hinduism bestows importance on the community welfare, addiction experts believe that Hindus may benefit more from helping each other than from following the self-oriented programs.
3. Hindus can reach out to religious leaders for spiritually-focused guidance and support while they work to overcome addiction



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.

Supportive Scripture reference

1. Ayurveda is the oldest religious book of the Aryans, which picturizes their early lives and mentions various diseases.
2. The skin — both in health and diseases — had caught the attention of the Vedic sages. The skin was not merely an organ of attraction and look but its colour was important socially. Mentions of various diseases like leprosy, guinea worm and jaundice are interesting.
3. There is also mention of different disorders of nails and hair, though in a very primitive and mystic form.
4. The management strategy consisted of herbs, amulets, chanting of mantras, touching the body, uses of water and sunrays. It may be presumed that this Veda founded the base for the Āyurveda of the later period.



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'.
2. Education is important for the growth and development of a child.
3. Education provides:-
 - Knowledge and skills
 - Develops communication skills and values for harmonious co-existence
4. Education helps and makes a child to be self-dependent.

Supportive Scripture reference

Into blinding darkness enter those who worship ignorance and into greater darkness those who worship knowledge alone (Isa Upanishad).

Next, with regard to knowledge. The teacher is the former element, the pupil the latter, knowledge their union. That union takes place through the recitation of the Veda. So much with regard to knowledge (Taittiriya Upanishad).

To live in the right way is a very difficult art, and unless one begins to learn it when quite young and to make an effort, one never knows it well (The Mother). You think that you are sent to school, that you are made to do exercises, all this just for the pleasure of vexing you? Oh, no! It is because it's indispensable for you to have a frame in which you can learn how to form yourself (The Mother).



Handbook

REPUBLIC OF KENYA



MINISTRY OF HEALTH



INTER-RELIGIOUS COUNCIL *of* KENYA

