



Radio Stations : **All Community Radio Stations**
Subject : **Early Childhood Development**
Audience : **Parents, caregivers and educators**
Program Topic : **Preventing childhood illness and death in the home (PROTECTION)**

Guidelines to the presenter

- Presenter – please familiarize yourself with the brief and the use the facts effectively by referring to them from time to time during the show.
- You should be seen as a peer, rather than an authority.
- Offer guidance or opinion, rather than telling people what to do.
- Encourage people to seek further information – including referring to the Ilifa website: www.ilifalabantwana.co.za.
- Always keep the objectives and outcomes in mind and drive these.

Topic

Preventing childhood illness and death in the home

Objectives

- To increase greater awareness of the risk of childhood illness and death at home
- To raise awareness of the particular risk to young children of diarrhoea and pneumonia
- To prevent illness and reduce morbidity and mortality in young children
- To build understanding of the important role that families play in the health of children
- To increase practice of the key family practices to support the health of young children

Introduction

Many children under 5 become seriously ill and even die from illnesses that are preventable and easy to treat, if only they are caught early enough. Much of this doesn't happen in a hospital or clinic, but in the home. Parents, caregivers and families are the most important role-players in keeping children alive and healthy. In order to do so, it's important to be aware of potential

hazards and understand the basic good practices we can employ at home to help prevent illness and death and ensure that our children have the best chance of being healthy.

Questions	Facts/Information
<p>1. <i>Are young children in South Africa at particular risk of death?</i></p>	<p>The World Health Organisation states that every year, worldwide, millions of children die before reaching their fifth birthday. In 2013, 6.3 million children under the age of five died. In South Africa, the latest statistics show that the rate of death for under-5s decreased between 2009 and 2012, but it's still high. More than 40 under-5s die every year per 1,000 live births in the same year. Compare that with the UK, where in the last 5 years the rate has been consistently 5 under-5s dying per 1,000 live births.</p>
<p>2. <i>What are the common causes of death among young children?</i></p>	<p>Children do not always die of complicated medical conditions, but often from preventable and treatable diseases. The majority of under-5s in the developing world die from either pneumonia (or other acute respiratory infections), diarrhoea, malaria or measles. This is incredibly sad when you consider that all these diseases are preventable. In South Africa, deaths from pneumonia and diarrhoea are common and could often be prevented by simple treatment with antibiotics and oral rehydration. Improved nutrition, particularly by encouraging breastfeeding, could also help to prevent many deaths in children.</p>
<p>3. <i>Diarrhoea seems like such an easy condition to recover from, so can you explain more about why it's so dangerous for young children?</i></p>	<p>Diarrhoea is a major cause of disease and death. 88 per cent of cases of diarrhoea worldwide result in up to 1.5 million deaths of children under the age of 5, each year. This is as a result of inadequate sanitation, insufficient hygiene or drinking unsafe water. The only way to reduce this massive burden of disease is through the provision and use of safe drinking water, sanitation and improved hygiene practices.</p>

<p>4. <i>So what can we do to prevent diarrhoea?</i></p>	<p>In order to prevent it, we need to be aware of, and practice, a few basic things:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get rid of human excrement and nappies safely – clean up excrement immediately and throw away nappies safely. Whereas families may have and use pit latrines, sometimes babies’ stools are not disposed of safely, as mothers may not understand that they are an important cause of infection. Families need to know that babies’ stools should be disposed in a toilet or latrine or, at a minimum, by burial in the ground. • Wash hands thoroughly • Wash faces with soap and water every day • Use clean, safe water • Keep food clean and healthy • And get rid of household waste safely
<p>5. <i>Can you explain why washing your hands and face is so important for preventing such illness?</i></p>	<p>Improving hand-washing practices has been shown to reduce cases of diarrhoea by half! And it’s very important for maintaining good health, generally. Teaching children to wash their hands with soap and water every time they go to the toilet or changes nappies and before eating and preparing food is essential. It’s also important that adults in the family wash their hands with soap after defecation, before preparing meals, and before feeding children. Parents and caregivers need to educate their children that washing your face with soap and water daily is also important, as a dirty face attracts flies that carry germs, so having clean faces helps keep children healthy.</p>
<p>6. <i>What can you do if you don’t have easy access to running water?</i></p>	<p>You can put a bowl of soapy water out (or example, in a 2 litre ice-cream container) for family members to wash their hands and keep reminding everyone to use it. It’s also important to have soap available. A trick with keeping the soap nearby, is to put it in a sock. This way it doesn’t get lost and used up too quickly. You</p>

<p>7. <i>In order to prevent childhood deaths and illness, why is it important to focus on the home?</i></p>	<p>must change the bowl of water regularly, otherwise the water will become too dirty and won't be hygienic.</p> <p>Obviously, as the people primarily responsible for the care of young children, parents and caregivers have a critical role to play in their children's health. So it's important to help them understand what to do and why. Research has shown that most children who become seriously ill or die in South Africa, die at home or in the community, but many such incidences of illness or deaths are preventable. It's important, therefore, to promote good practices which parents, caregivers and other family members can use to maintain the health of children at home and ensure that preventable deaths don't happen.</p>
<p>8. <i>Have such good practices been documented somewhere?</i></p>	<p>Yes. A list of what are known as 'key family practices' was developed by the World Health Organisation and the United Nations Children's Fund (known as UNICEF), as part of an international strategy called the Integrated Management of Childhood Illness – or IMCI - to help manage and reduce childhood illnesses and child death or mortality. The idea was to promote a series of key practices addressing illness prevention and cure and growth promotion, in the family home and the child's community.</p>
<p>9. <i>Are these practices easy for parents and caregivers to understand and follow?</i></p>	<p>Good practices are mostly quite basic and easy for families to follow – things such as nutrition, infection and injury prevention, and immunization. They also include preventing abuse and the kind of focus on hygiene that we've already mentioned. And there are not too many to remember. The list of key family health practices comprises 16 basic things parents and caregivers should know to practice. There are four main focus areas – to support physical</p>

<p>10. <i>What are the key practices that can help protect children from sickness and injury?</i></p>	<p>growth and mental development, disease prevention, appropriate home care and knowing when to seek care.</p> <p>These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months of a child's life • Taking children for a full course of immunisations (Bacille Calmette-Guerin/BCG, diphtheria, pertussis [whooping cough] and tetanus, oral polio vaccine and measles) before their first birthday • If you're in a malarial area, ensuring that children sleep under recommended insecticide-treated mosquito bed nets. • Preventing and providing appropriate treatment for child injuries • And preventing child abuse and neglect and taking appropriate action when it has occurred
<p>11. <i>You mentioned breastfeeding – how is that a key illness prevention practice?</i></p>	<p>It's really important. Breast milk contains all the nutrients a baby needs to grow and develop. These nutrients protect her from infections and illnesses such as pneumonia and diarrhoea, which are major killers of children under 5 in South Arica. So exclusive breastfeeding (no food or water except medicine for the first 6 months) is essential to protect infants from infections. However, many babies in our communities are weaned as early as 2 weeks. All mothers, unless medically indicated (or advised because of HIV status), should breastfeed their babies exclusively for the first 6 months. HIV positive mothers should be given special counselling on infant feeding to understand and practice the safest options.</p>
<p>12. <i>How important is nutrition generally in preventing childhood illness?</i></p>	<p>It's critical. About 45% of all child deaths are linked to malnutrition. Not eating the right foods (especially minerals and vitamins) can make it</p>

<p><i>13. What should parents and caregivers do to ensure good nutrition for their children and thus reduce the chances of illness?</i></p>	<p>easy for your child to get sick. If a child is weak from poor nutrition, he will have a weak immune system and is much more likely to be susceptible to infections and illnesses than children who are well nourished. In fact, good nutrition for children starts in pregnancy. By eating a healthy diet and avoiding alcohol and other substances when they are pregnant, a mother can help to strengthen her child's immune system before he is even born.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We've talked about breastfeeding, which is, of course, the first important practice. • Then, starting at about six months of age, feed children freshly prepared energy-and nutrient-rich complementary foods, while continuing to breastfeed up to two years or longer. Young children should also be taken to the clinic every six months for regular weighing and growth monitoring, to ensure that all is well or that any problems with malnutrition are picked up early. • Make sure that children receive adequate amounts of micronutrients (vitamin A and iron, in particular), either in their diets or through supplementation. Vitamin A is one of the most important minerals, and should be given to children between 6 months and 5 years. Children should be taken regularly (every six months) to receive their Vitamin A supplementation.
<p><i>14. When children are sick, what can you do to care for them at home?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to feed and offer them plenty of fluids, including breast milk, when they are sick. • Give sick children appropriate home treatment for infections. • But it's also important to recognize when sick children need treatment outside the home and take them for health care to the appropriate providers. When you do this,

<p>15. <i>What signs should a parent or caregiver look out for that a child needs to be treated for illness outside the home?</i></p>	<p>follow the health worker's advice about treatment, follow-up, and referral.</p> <p>It is important to know to take your child to the clinic urgently if he shows any of the following danger signs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He is too weak or unable to drink or breastfeed • He vomits everything and cannot keep food down • The child has had convulsions with this illness • She is lethargic or unconscious • She has a cough and is breathing fast – like a dog panting - as this can be a sign of pneumonia • The child has a bad cough and sucks in the lower part of the chest when she breathes in • He has sunken eyes and a soft spot on the top of his head • The child has diarrhoea with blood in the poo • A baby under 2 months has a fever or is not feeding properly
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Conclusion

We've heard today that children do not always die of complicated medical conditions, but often from preventable and treatable diseases such as pneumonia, diarrhea, malaria or measles. Simple practices can make a huge difference to children's good health - such as creating a hygienic environment by disposing of faeces and dirty matter properly and washing hands with soap after using the toilet and before preparing food. By following straightforward family health practices, and learning to spot early warning signs of illness and find treatment quickly, families can make sure that the risks of their children becoming seriously sick at home and even dying are reduced significantly.

Learning outcomes

After listening to this show the audience should:

- Understand that young children are at risk of serious illness and death in the home
- Know about the key family practices to prevent treatable disease

- Ensure that faeces are disposed of properly
- Understand the importance of exclusive breastfeeding and good nutrition for reducing the risk of childhood illness
- Know how to recognise danger signals and take their child to the clinic when necessary