

# 4 What keeps you healthy?

This section establishes the connections between health, environment, clean water and nutrition. Art prints, photographs, activities and discussion help students to explain poor health conditions in developing countries and identify solutions.

## Objectives

Students will:

- Recognize factors contributing to good health in their own lives
- Compare health conditions in developing and developed countries
- Give reasons for high mortality rates in developing countries
- Explain simple steps to improve health care

Materials	
<b>Arts Prints:</b>	<i>How I Stay Healthy</i> by Nahelia Damaris Castillo, Honduras
<b>Photographs:</b>	<i>Carrying Water</i> (India)
<b>Chart:</b>	<i>Basic Indicators Table</i> (Activity #4)
<b>Activity Sheets:</b>	What keeps you healthy? Activities #1 - #5
<b>Maps, Globes:</b>	

## Getting started

Ask students to explain the statement, "Health is not everything, but without health you have nothing." *What happens when you are sick? What does it mean to be healthy? What keeps you healthy?* Encourage students to think of the environment as well as medical care.

There are basic things in our daily life that keep us healthy. Use the visual images and labels from the art print *How I Stay Healthy* from Honduras to identify some basic health measures such as regular checkups and immunizations at a health center, washing and bathing, and access to doctors and medicines. Most child-deaths in developing countries are caused by illnesses that can be easily prevented.

The photograph *Carrying Water* highlights the vital role of clean water. In rural areas of developing countries, water for drinking, cooking, and often washing must be brought from a well. Protected wells provide a clean source of drinking water. Water from streams and ponds contain harmful bacteria. The leading cause of child deaths in developing countries is illness resulting from unclean water.

## Teacher background information

**WHAT DOES HEALTH MEAN?** For many in developing countries, health means survival. The combined factors of poor sanitation, lack of clean water, malnutrition and lack of access to health care cause many child deaths. In Honduras, 111 of every 1,000 children die before they reach age five, compared to 15 per 1,000 in the United States.

**SCARCITY OF CLEAN WATER AND POOR SANITATION** cause 80% of infection and disease in the world, according to the World Health Organization. Contaminated drinking water often carries parasites that cause diarrhea and stomach disorders. Mosquitoes that carry malaria and yellow fever breed in stagnant water. Blackflies, which can cause river blindness, are found near fast-moving water. Poor sanitation helps spread communicable disease. Frequent illness and inadequate diet lead to malnutrition and a high rate of child mortality.

**HEALTH SERVICES** in rural areas are limited. In some rural areas, villagers cannot get to a hospital during the rainy season. Many children are not immunized against the six killer diseases - measles,

tetanus, whooping cough, diphtheria, tuberculosis and polio. Educating parents about the value of immunizations is a critical step.

Often, villagers cannot afford the expense of traveling to a clinic or the doctor's high fees, and they rely on traditional methods of healing such as herbal medicines and visits to a traditional healer. These healers can provide treatment for many ailments. Modern medicine was derived in part from traditional herbal medicines.

Health facilities are more readily available to city dwellers, but these facilities are hard-pressed to meet the needs of the growing number of urban poor.

**EDUCATION AND PREVENTIVE CARE** play a crucial role in reducing infant mortality. UNICEF has identified four low-cost health measures which can potentially cut in half the number of young children dying in the developing world. These measures are identified by the acronym "GOBI" for Growth monitoring, Oral rehydration, Breast feeding, and Immunization.

The most dramatic of these measures is oral rehydration therapy, ORT, a drink of clean water with sugar and salt to treat diarrhea. Dehydration caused by diarrhea is the single largest killer of children in the developing world, so it was a breakthrough to distribute a simple remedy that can be administered by a parent or health worker in the home for less than ten cents per treatment.

The number of deaths caused by diarrheal dehydration is steadily falling. According to the World Health Organization, ORT may now be preventing almost one million dehydration deaths a year.



**"I did not like the fact that they have no medical care because it's just not fair."** -6th grader, Cranston, RI

### Activity Sheets: What keeps you healthy?

#1. **What keeps you healthy?:** Students identify three things that keep them healthy. They can compare their responses with ideas suggested by the art prints and photographs.

#2. **How I Stay Healthy:** Students use the glossary to translate Spanish labels on the art print from Honduras.

#3. **Everyday Water:** Students record daily water use and compute the number of trips to the well, miles they would have to walk and time it would take if they lived in Honduras or Sierra Leone. Simulate this by having students walk around the building with a bucket of water.

#4. **Simple steps to good health:** Students use checklist to learn basic preventive health care measures. Have them prepare Oral Rehydration Therapy (ORT) with different measuring devices and describe its taste.

#5. **Measuring Health:** Students interpret a table showing indicators used to measure a country's health and explain differing conditions. Students use data from *Basic Indicators* table to complete bar graphs comparing life expectancy rates in selected countries and analyze their relation to other indicators. Students use data from *Basic Indicators* table to complete pie charts comparing under 5 mortality rates in selected countries. Students use data from *Basic Indicators* table to fill in bar graphs. Line graphs can be introduced to compare changes over a period of time.

### **Developing critical thinking: questions for further exploration**

- Why are health conditions generally poorer in developing countries than in developed countries?
- How does education play a crucial role in improving health conditions in all countries?
- What can we, in the United States, learn from traditional health care practices in developing countries?

### **Multidisciplinary approaches**

**Art.** Collage, mural or drawing on "water" theme, expressing feelings and attitudes towards water.

**Health.** Students bring in baby pictures and "baby books" or interview their parents to find out weight and height at birth. Discuss importance of birth weight. Make arm circumference bands, a simple device used in developing countries to monitor growth and detect malnutrition. Graph student's weights on growth charts.

**Language Arts.** Imagine a state of emergency in which all water has been contaminated and has to be rationed on the basis of need. Students develop a list and debate priorities.

**Social Studies/Art.** Students compare their homes with housing in Sierra Leone and Thailand. Discuss how environmental safety and health concerns affect the way people build their houses and the kind of clothes they wear.

**Social Studies/Role-Play.** Students take turns carrying water in buckets from a distant source to the classroom for drinking and washing hands. Discuss how in the developing world this burden falls on women and children and may take up to six hours daily.

### **Revolutions in Health**

"In a little over a decade, a public health revolution has quietly taken place."

On October 26, 1977, after an intense 10-year immunization campaign, the last case of smallpox was reported in East Africa. For the first time, a devastating human disease was eradicated from the earth!

Although the vaccine was developed in 1796, as recently as 1967 almost 15 million people contracted smallpox each year and some two million died.

The success of the smallpox eradication campaign was due to a dramatic international effort. The campaign, coordinated by the World Health Organization, combined the best of researchers with the energetic and committed workers in the field to administer the vaccine.

By the year 2000, the fight against polio can also be won.

JOURNEY Magazine  
Summer 1988  
PLAN International USA