

# GUIDE TO A HEALTHY FAMILY



Adopt a healthy lifestyle towards a harmonious  
and healthy family

# **A healthy family consists of members who are physically, psychologically, socially and spiritually healthy.**

## **Characteristics of a healthy family**

- ❖ Lives in a safe and proper home.
- ❖ Has adequate and appropriate education.
- ❖ Adopts healthy lifestyle practices (such as eats healthily, exercises regularly, abstains from smoking and practises good oral health).
- ❖ Practises optimal reproductive and sexual health.
- ❖ Has a sense of emotional security.
- ❖ Communicates and interacts positively.
- ❖ Assumes defined roles and responsibilities.
- ❖ Shares leisure time.
- ❖ Has adequate income/resources.
- ❖ Practises religious and moral values.
- ❖ Fosters social support.



# Importance of a healthy family

A healthy family is the foundation of a healthy nation. A healthy family is able to perform its function as a biological, social and psychological unit to the optimum, while promoting the health of its members and community in which it exists. Health for all begins at home because the family is the first provider of social and educational support and health care to the children. The home is the place where basic needs of the family members are met.



# Practices of a healthy family

- ❖ Eats healthily
- ❖ Exercises regularly
- ❖ Practises good oral health
- ❖ Abstains from smoking
- ❖ Practises good mental health
- ❖ Practises optimal reproductive and sexual health
- ❖ Ensures the home is safe for its members
- ❖ Practises religious and moral values
- ❖ Fosters social support



# Eat healthily

## Encourage healthy eating in your family

- Start your day with breakfast.
- Breakfast gives you the energy and nutrients to get you going through the day.
- Ensure that your family has regular meals.
- Snack smartly. Healthy snacks are a great way to refuel. Choose wholesome snacks that are low in fat, sugar and salt.



- Eat together as a family. This will help to establish closer family ties and educate family members about good eating habits.

**When preparing meals, consider the nutritional needs of all the family members, especially the young and the elderly and those with special nutritional needs.**

## Guidelines for healthy eating

- Eat a variety of foods.
- Eat more cereals, legumes, fruits and vegetables.



- Balance food intake with physical activities.
- Choose foods that are low in fat, cholesterol, salt and sugar.
- Drink at least 6 - 8 glasses of water a day.
- Prepare, serve and eat clean and safe food.



## FOOD PYRAMID



Use the **FOOD PYRAMID** as a guide.



# Exercise regularly

**Everyone in the family needs exercise - not only sportsmen. Everyone benefits from regular exercise and physical activity.**

## **Benefits of exercise**

- Keeps you fit.
- Controls your weight.
- Builds strength and stamina.
- Improves flexibility of joints, body movements and prevents injuries.
- Strengthens bones and joints.
- Improves your heart, lungs and blood circulation.
- Enhances muscle tone and body posture.
- Improves appearance and self-esteem.
- Relieves stress.
- Delays ageing process, for example, osteoporosis in post-menopausal women.
- Improves family interaction and relationship.



## Exercising with your family is fun

- Get your family members and friends to join you whenever you exercise.
- Know that there is a variety of exercise, games and sports that you and your family members can do together such as:
  - Brisk walking.
  - Rope jumping.
  - Jogging.
  - Swimming.
  - Cycling.
  - Aerobics.
  - Playing badminton.



**Choose games and sports that you and your family are interested in or enjoy playing together.**



## No time, no place to exercise?

Many of us are too busy to set aside time for exercising. However, we can still enjoy an active lifestyle by observing the following tips:

### On the way to work

- When you use a lift, get off two floors earlier and take the stairs the rest of the way.
- Get off the bus or LRT one stop earlier and walk the rest of the way.
- If you drive to work, exercise for 15 minutes before going to work.

### In the office

- Stand up and stretch after working for some time.
- Take the stairs instead of the lift.
- Have exercise breaks during long meetings.
- Get your colleagues to join in for a lunch time workout session.



## At home

- Do some stretches or sit-ups while watching TV.
- Join your children at the playground after work.
- Gardening is a good physical activity.



## While shopping

- Park your car some distance away from the shopping mall as walking is a good exercise.

**Exercise regularly at least 3 times a week  
for 20 - 30 minutes each time.**



# Practise good oral health



Good oral health means possessing a full set of teeth and healthy gums which are functional and free from dental and gum diseases.

## Good oral health is important for you to:

- Chew your food properly which will help digestion.
- Speak clearly.
- Have a beautiful smile and good appearance which will enhance self-confidence.
- Maintain a good set of teeth for life.
- Prevent dental and gum problems such as dental caries and gingivitis.



## How can your family practise good oral health?



- Every member of the family should practise good oral health from an early age.
- Brush your teeth effectively to remove plaque.
- Use a suitable toothbrush and fluoridated toothpaste.
- Floss your teeth to remove food debris.
- Gargle after every meal.
- Reduce sugar in your food and drinks.
- Take less sweetened food and drinks.
- Go for regular dental check-ups at least once a year.



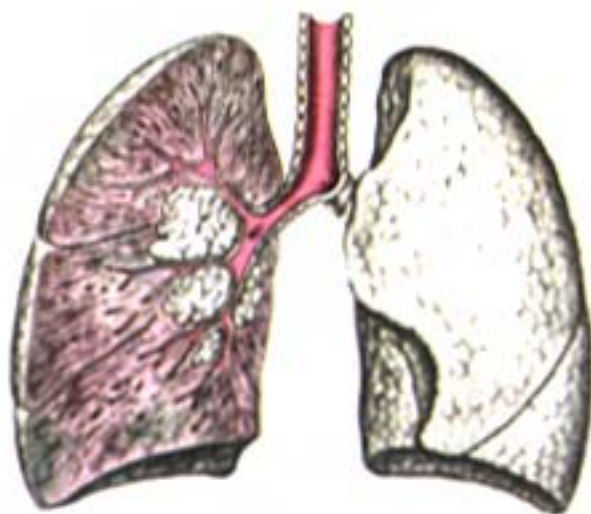


# Abstain from smoking

Smoking is a harmful habit and it has been proven to cause lung cancer.

Smoking also increases your risk of:

- Chronic lung diseases like bronchitis and emphysema.
- Heart attacks.
- Atherosclerosis (narrowing of blood vessel).
- High blood pressure and stroke.
- Diabetes.
- Ulcers in the stomach and intestines.
- Impotence and infertility.
- Osteoporosis (brittle bones).



Smoking leads to:

- More frequent coughs and colds.
- Lowered stamina and physical performance.
- Stained teeth and nails.
- Bad breath and early wrinkles.

**Smoking hurts those around you, especially your family members. About 85% to 90% of the smoke from each cigarette ends up in the air, where it is breathed in by other people. They may then develop:**

- Heart attacks.
- Lung cancer.
- Worsening of existing illnesses.
- Irritation of the eyes, nose and throat.



**Pregnant mothers who smoke or are exposed to cigarette smoke are more likely to have babies that are born prematurely, underweight or dead.**



**Your children exposed to cigarette smoke at home:**

- Fall sick more often with coughs, cold, ear, nose and throat infections.
- Have slower development of their lungs.
- May develop asthma.



## Be a non-smoker

- A family whose members do not smoke will be healthier.
- Every family member deserves to breathe clean air, free from cigarette smoke.
- The smoke from each cigarette contains chemicals which are poisonous and can cause cancer.
- Money spent on cigarettes can be used for other purposes which can benefit other family members.
- Smoking is forbidden by most religions.
- Protect yourself and your family at home by asking visitors not to smoke in your home and not keep any ashtrays and cigarettes in the house.



## Set yourself free from smoking

### Once you stop smoking

- Your body starts to repair much of the damage.
- Your risk of heart attacks and other diseases will gradually fall.
- The health of your loved ones will no longer be at risk.



### If you want to quit smoking

- Make a decision to quit and let your family members and friends know.
- Set a date to stop smoking.
- Throw away all your cigarettes and ashtrays.
- Get your family members to support you in your effort.
- Spend more time with non-smoking friends in smoke-free places.
- Join a programme or support group that helps smokers to stop.

**It is still never too late to quit smoking.**



# Practise good mental health

A family with good mental health has members who:



## Accept one another as members of the family

- Accepting one another's weaknesses, strengths and shortcomings.
- Respecting one another.
- Be tolerant to one another.



- Willing to accept disappointment.
- Have realistic expectations of family members.

## Are comfortable with one another

- Trust your family members.
- Get along with your family members.
- Be responsible to your family members.
- Respect and accept differences among your family members.
- Develop close family ties.



## Face life challenges as a family

- Contributing your efforts towards overcoming family problems and challenges.
- Plan well for your family's future.
- Be open to new knowledge and experiences.
- Set realistic goals for your family.
- Make joint decisions together with family members.



## Steps towards good mental health in a family

- Know the strengths and limitations of your family members.
- Set realistic goals.
- Think positively.
- Share your problems with your family.
- Learn to love yourself.
- Maintain close family ties.
- Be kind, loving and polite to your family.
- Learn to accept criticism as well.
- Plan your time well and make time for your family.
- Spread out changes in your family.
- Practise religious and moral values.



## Fostering emotional security

The family is the best place to build emotional security. Emotional security means the ability to believe in oneself, is self-sufficient and have a sense of stability.

## Characteristics of a person with emotional security

- Calm.
- In control.
- Self-confident.
- Independent.
- Sensitive and caring.
- Able to have secure relationships with others.
- Not afraid to seek help.



## Ways of fostering emotional security

- Show interest and care for your family members by asking questions and taking part in family activities.
- Expressing your care and love for your family in a physical manner through touching, patting and hugging.
- Give praise and appreciation verbally and non-verbally, for example, compliment your child for his/her achievements and say sorry when you know you are wrong.
- Respect the privacy and personal space of family members, for example, knock before entering your son's/daughter's room and get permission to use your son's/daughter's personal belongings.
- Give space and time for family members to develop their potentials, for example, allow them to learn from their own mistakes, accept new ideas and tolerate one another's weaknesses.
- Spend time with your family members, for example, have meals together and participate in sports together.





# Practise good reproductive health

Reproductive health is the state of physical, mental and social well being of an individual and not merely the absence of diseases related to the reproductive system and to its functions and processes.



## Importance of good reproductive health in the family

- For healthy family development and positive interactions among family members.
- To prevent unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases and sexual exploitation of family members.
- To ensure responsible and fulfilling sexual relationship among spouses.

## How to foster good reproductive health?

- Husbands and wives must be supportive and actively participate in enhancing each other's health.
- Couples should practise mutual respect and consent for a satisfying and equitable sexual relationship.
- Every pregnancy should be planned, wanted and safe.



- Every family member should ensure that the expecting mother receives the best care possible during pregnancy, birth and post-natal period.
- Parents should guide and provide sex education for their children which covers saying 'no' to peer pressure for sex and practising good moral and religious values.

- Parents must recognise that their adolescent children have specific reproductive health needs.



- Parents must protect their children from sexual abuse.
- Every family member should know that high-risk sexual behaviour can cause sexually transmitted diseases including AIDS.



# Safe home

**A safe home prevents injuries and ensures safety of the family members. Accidents can and do occur mostly in the kitchen, bathroom and living room, and especially among the very young and elderly.**

## Make your home safe

### Kitchen

- Keep washing detergents, chemicals and sharp objects like knives in a safe place and out of reach of children.
- Avoid overhanging table cloth which can be pulled by children.
- Keep your kitchen floor dry and non-slippery.



### Bathroom

- Ensure the bathroom floor is non-slippery.
- Keep detergents out of reach of children.
- All water containers must be closed to prevent children from drowning.

### Living Room

- Choose furniture without sharp edges and not made from glass.
- Arrange your furniture in a tidy manner to avoid obstruction of movements.
- Ensure carpets and rugs are flat and immovable.
- Keep living room floors clear from toys, newspapers and books.
- Keep all wall sockets closed and avoid dangling wires from electrical equipment.



# Practise religious and moral values

**A healthy family is built from sound religious knowledge and practices, love, respect, understanding, tolerance and responsibility. Religious and moral values are important for a well-balanced family life.**

## **How to practise religious and moral values in the family?**

- Make marriage a lifetime commitment and investment.
- Choose your partner carefully.



- Make wise changes in your family.
  - Honour your parents because the blessings you receive from your parents will ensure blessings from God.
  - Inculcate religious teachings in family life.
  - Share household responsibilities among family members.
  - Recognise and appreciate contributions of family members.
- Be a friend and role model to your children.
  - Discipline your children appropriately.
  - Practise moderation in daily living.



**Make your home a haven  
of love and peace for your family.**



# Foster social support

A healthy family is caring and responsible for the well-being of the community in which it lives in. Responsible citizenship and civic-mindedness starts in the family. Family and society must have a mutual obligation to each other.

## Practices which foster social support

- Showing concern and providing assistance to its members and friends when they are in need.
- Fostering neighbourliness and caring for its neighbours.
- Advocating goodwill and fighting evil in society.



- Valuing and not damaging public property.
- Playing an advocacy role in shaping the mass media to be a positive influence in society.
- Protecting family members from negative influences.



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