



सत्यमेव जयते
ग्रामीण विकास मंत्रालय
भारत सरकार



NUTRITION AND HEALTH FOR ADOLESCENTS

Facilitator Guide for SHG Meetings



Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM)
Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India



Dear Facilitator

This facilitator guide on **Nutrition and Health for Adolescents**, is designed to help all facilitators under State Rural Livelihood Missions (SRLMs) in rolling out the Flipbook and disseminating key messages within the SHG groups and other community cadres. This session is part of a training package on Food, Nutrition, Health and WASH (FNHW) consisting of Flip books, Facilitator guides, Posters, Counselling Cards and Stickers.

The objective of this training is to create awareness and provide information to the participants on the significance of Nutrition and Health for Adolescents and to empower SRLM staff, cadres and community at large with the knowledge to improve the behaviour related practices pertaining to nutrition and health needs of Adolescents. We all know that better health and nutrition results in higher productivity leading to reduction in poverty and improvement in quality of life.

It should be kept in mind that this orientation package, although meant for SHG women, should serve as reference material for the entire family. Information provided under each session through flipbooks and this guide should be seen as collective learning for the family, and each member of the family needs to play their part to ensure that the messages are adopted by them in everyday lives.

The responsibility of getting these behaviors imbibed does not lie with women only; the men/husbands/older boys in the family need to ensure making arrangements for whatever is required to follow these practices on FNHW.


Objectives

After going through the module, the facilitator will be able to:

- Explain to the group on the significance of nutrition and health care during adolescence.
- Explain what can be done to deal with malnutrition, anaemia and other important considerations during adolescents.
- Explain the group about adolescent friendly health clinics and how they can benefit.

Initiate the Session

It is very important that in this session facilitators do not allow the participants to perpetuate negative cultural taboos and myths. More importantly, ensure that participants truly understand, with cultural and gender sensitivity, the need for nutrition and health care during adolescence, their common health problems, how to handle their health issues.



Adolescence is a nutritionally vulnerable time when rapid physical growth increases nutrient demands. Dietary and other behaviors established during adolescence contribute to the healthy or unhealthy practices having consequences for long term health.

Case Study

Kripa's sister Roopa is 14-year-old studying in 8th standard, one day fainted at school during the sports time. Her class teacher observed Roopa to be underweight and very fussy towards eating habits and skip meals often. She looked pale, often fall sick, miss classes and could not focus much on her academics. Her teacher called her sister Kripa and explained her observations and requested her to take Roopa to a doctor. The teacher also added that Roopa is observed to be under weight, malnourished and anaemic and her lunch box lack greens, vegetables, fruits and nutritious snacks.

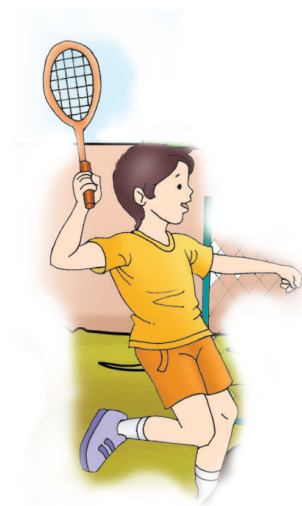
- ▶ What are the observations about Roopa's nutritional and health status?
- ▶ What should be done to help Roopa improve her status?

Note: Do not give any answers here, just listen to what the group has to say.

Step 1: Proper health and nutrition during adolescence ensures healthy life throughout

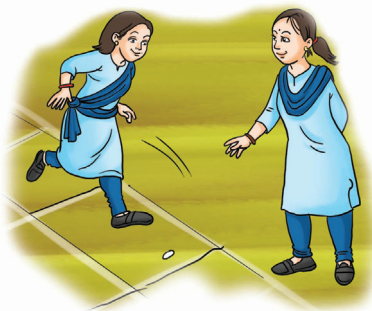
Initiate discussion by asking the participants their understanding on Adolescent age and the issues they may have faced in their children or other adolescent children of the family. List the concerns and probe with the group about what they think should be done. Explain to them the following points emphasising the importance of this stage of life.

- Adolescents are people aged between 10 to 19 yrs.
- It is a transitional stage of physical growth and mental development from childhood to adulthood.
- About 23% of the total population of India are adolescents.
- Adolescence is the fastest growing stage marked by the onset of puberty.
- It is characterized by physical growth, reproductive maturation, cognitive, functional and metabolic transformation. Physical



and lifestyle changes affect nutritional need and eating habits respectively.

- Adolescent girls are at greater physiological stress because of menstruation.
- Maintaining nutritional health is of utmost importance for optimum growth and for preventing future health related problems.



Step 2: Need for health and nutrition care during adolescence

Now, ask the participants on why do we need to pay more attention on the nutrition and health of adolescents and what practices should be adopted to improve their nutrition, health and wellness.

There are 253 million adolescents in the age group 10-19 years in India. This age group comprises of individuals in a transient phase of life requiring nutrition, education, counselling and guidance to ensure their development into healthy adults. They are susceptible to several preventable and treatable health and behavioural issues, like early & unintended pregnancy, unsafe sex leading to STI/HIV/AIDS, nutritional disorders like malnutrition, overweight, alcoholism, drug abuse and mental health disorders.

Government of India has recognized the importance of influencing health-seeking behaviour of adolescents. The health situation of this age group is a key determinant of India's overall health, mortality, morbidity and population growth scenario. Therefore, investments in adolescent reproductive and sexual health will yield dividends in terms of delaying age at marriage, reducing incidence of teenage pregnancy, meeting unmet contraception need, reducing the maternal mortality, reducing STI incidence and reducing HIV prevalence. It will also help India realize its demographic dividends, as healthy adolescents are an important resource for the economy. Adolescence offers a second chance to avert negative impacts of malnutrition that may have occurred during childhood.

It is thus understood that the adolescent stage is important to:

- Meet physical and cognitive growth demands.
- Nurture good lifestyle habits.
- Prevent adult onset of illnesses such as heart disease, diabetes, etc.








Inappropriate diet and health care during adolescence may lead to

- Retarded physical growth, delayed sexual maturation.
- Lack of concentration, poor school performance slow learning.
- Deficiencies and disorders such as anemia, undernutrition, obesity, eating disorders, diabetes, etc.

Step 3: Suggestions for improved nutrition

Ask the group on what the adolescents generally like to eat and what kind of diet pattern do they follow. Also try to probe on what are the likes and dislikes and ask the mothers what they do to make their adolescents eat healthy foods, what are the recipes they try.

Now discuss with participants about the do's and don'ts to improve an adolescent's nutritional status and also inform them that this information should be shared with the adolescents so that they imbibe good eating habits.

Do's	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Balanced diet is essential for optimal growth and development.• Add high protein foods - pulses, legumes, dairy, meat and eggs in the diet.• Consume plenty of green leafy vegetable and seasonal fruits.• Drink at least 6 - 8 glasses of water daily and plenty of other fluids.• Eat healthy snacks such as sprouts, murmura, chana, makhana, etc.• Ensure sunlight exposure for adequate vitamin D to help calcium absorption.• Exercise regularly. <div></div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do not skip meals.• Avoid excessive sugar and salt intake, fried and fast foods.• Do not consume alcohol or tobacco.• Do not watch television while having meals. Pay attention to what you are eating. <div></div>

Step 4: Malnutrition in adolescents

Explain the participants briefly about what is malnutrition and that being underweight as well as overweight both are categorised as being malnourished. Ask the participants about normal problems that an adolescent face during malnutrition and what can be done to prevent the same.

Underweight

Consequences

- Malnutrition
- Weak Immune system
- Anemia and other deficiencies
- Fragile bones
- Poor Learning Capacity



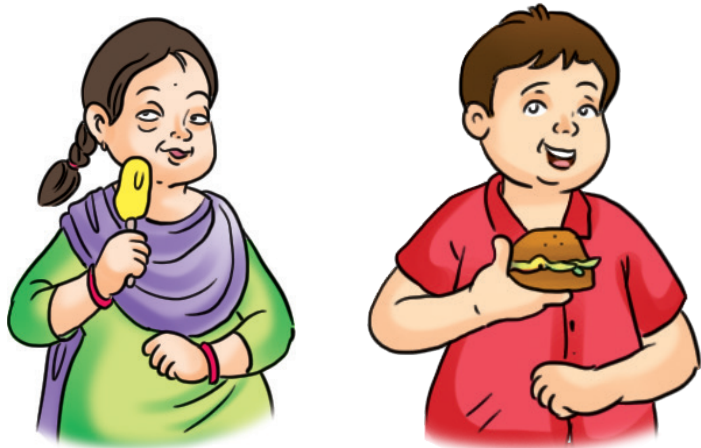
Prevention

- More number of meals
- Increase portion size
- Energy and protein rich foods
- More fruits leafy vegetables
- Regular intake of IFA
- Regular deworming

Overweight/Obese

Consequences

- Lethargic
- Heart diseases
- Diabetes
- Fatty liver
- Stomach ulcer



Prevention

- Small frequent meals
- Increase high fiber foods
- Use low fat dairy and lean meats only
- Adopt active lifestyle such as
 - Increase high fiber foods
 - Increase high fiber foods



Malnutrition denotes impairment of health arising either from deficiency or excess or imbalance of nutrients in the body. Inadequate nutrition in adolescence can potentially retard growth and sexual maturation, although these are likely consequences of chronic malnutrition in infancy and childhood. This stage, however is a chance to meet up some impairments and improve the nutritional status.

Discuss the issues faced by adolescents in case of being underweight or overweight. The suggestions given below should be followed but if no change is noticed in the weight of adolescents even after following these, it is advisable to consult a doctor.

Underweight adolescents have poor school performance and are not able to work hard. Especially for girls, underweight girls grow up as underweight women, give birth to a weak child and this leads to the vicious malnutrition cycle. These adolescents will have a weak immune system, may suffer from anemia, fragile bones and poor learning capacity.

Dietary Suggestions for such adolescents include -

- Increase number of meals and portion size.
- Consume high energy and protein rich foods like wheat, rice, dairy, pulses, meat, nuts, dry-fruits.
- Consume micronutrient rich foods like seasonal fruits and vegetables.
- Ensure regular deworming.


Overweight or Obese adolescents also have poor school performance, suffer from lethargy, may have onset of long-term chronic illnesses such as heart diseases, diabetes, fatty liver, stomach ulcers, etc. It should be understood that being overweight is the beginning of a number of complications and thus needs to be controlled.

Dietary Suggestions for such adolescents include -

- Eat frequent meals but in small portions. Do not eat heavy meals at a time.
- Include high fibre foods like whole grains and pulses, fruits, leafy vegetables in the diet.
- Choose low fat dairy and lean meats like chicken, fish and egg whites.
- Use healthy, non-fried snacks like sprouts, chana, poha, etc
- Exercise regularly and monitor weight regularly

Step 5: Anemia in Adolescents

Ask the participants about their understanding on anaemia during adolescence and what are the measures to prevent the same.



Based on WHO guideline, adolescents are said to be anaemic when their haemoglobin level is less than 12mg/dl. But, this might be affected due to the increased iron requirement, decreased iron intake, rapid physical growth, menstrual loss, and high iron demand for hemoglobin (Hgb) formation.

In India, approximately 40 percent of girls and 18 per cent of boys are anaemic. Anaemia among adolescents adversely affects growth, resistance to infections, cognitive development and work productivity. Adolescents need more nutrients than adults because they gain at least 40 percent of their adult weight and 15 percent of their adult height during this period. Inadequate intake can lead to delayed sexual development and slower linear growth.

Anaemia is decrease in the total amount of red blood cells or haemoglobin in the blood, or a lowered ability of the blood to carry oxygen.

Anaemia leads to poor cognition and physical development, poor concentration and school performance; decreased immunity and repeated infections; fatigue, shortness of breath, irregular menstruation and sometimes even loss of consciousness.

Key recommendations for prevention of or to deal with Anaemia includes -

- **Dietary recommendations:** Consume iron rich and Vitamin C rich diet. Vitamin C allows better absorption of iron in the body. Thus the diet should include green leafy vegetables and citrus fruits along with other items.
- **Iron Folic Acid:** Take one blue coloured iron tablet every week. Never take an iron tablet on an empty stomach. Do not take it with milk, tea or coffee. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare's Weekly Iron and Folic Acid Supplementation (WIFS) Programme is to meet the challenge of high prevalence and incidence of anaemia amongst adolescent girls and boys. This targets both in school and out of school adolescents.
- **Deworming:** To prevent stomach worms, take one tablet of Albendazole twice a year.
- If you feel tired, can't concentrate on work, forget important things or start feeling short of breath, go to the nearest health centre and get tested for anaemia.
- Both iron and Albendazole tablets are provided free of cost from the nearest health centre and Anganwadi and also in government schools.



Step 6: Other important considerations during adolescence

Initiate discussion with the participants that there are a number of other considerations requiring attention during adolescence. The National Health Mission under its “Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram” mentions six objectives that should be covered. Briefly discuss about each of them and their relevance in overall growth and personality development of adolescents.

Sexual and Reproductive Health:

Improved knowledge on sexual health for both boys and girls, consequences of early marriage and teenage pregnancies.



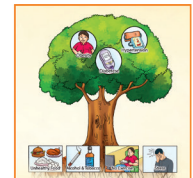
Improve nutrition



Sexual and reproductive health



Enhance mental health



Address NCDs

Mental Health: Stress, anxiety, depression, eating disorders, body shaming, etc. Ensure family support, encourage completing education and provide emotional support.



Menstrual health and hygiene



Prevent injuries and violence



Prevent substance misuse

Injuries and Violence: Promoting favourable environment to prevent gender-based violence, domestic violence, bullying, spirit of unhealthy competition, road injuries, etc.

Substance Abuse: adolescents are in exploratory stage and are more likely to fall into substance abuse. They should have complete awareness on the adverse effects and consequences.

Address NCDs: adolescence could be onset of NCDs due to improper nutrition, stress, other related behaviours. Knowledge on dietary practices and related behaviours to prevent the same should be ensured.

Menstruation related issues: Understanding on the natural biological process; pay attention to nutritious diet, proper hygiene and disposal methods (refer module on Menstrual Hygiene).

These issues should be addressed in discussion with ASHA/ANMs. Government has established **Adolescent Friendly Health Clinics**, for support to adolescents. Contact ASHA/ANM for more information. Contact and be part of Youth Groups/Clubs for more information.

Step 7: Adolescent friendly health clinics

Now, lead the discussion on the adolescent friendly health clinics, its facilities and advantages. Ask the group if they know about it and inform them –

- Adolescents hesitate in accessing health and other related services due to lack of knowledge, social and cultural deterrents, lack of privacy and sometimes non-friendliness of staff.



- Under the MoHFW, Adolescent Friendly Health Clinics (AFHC) provide clinical and counselling services on diverse adolescent health issues ranging from Sexual and Reproductive Health, Nutrition, Substance abuse, Injuries and Violence, Gender based violence, Non-Communicable Diseases and Mental Health.
- AFHCs, located at Primary Health Centers, Community Health Centers and District Hospitals and Medical Colleges are delivered through Medical Officers, ANM and Counselors.
- Counselors inform, educate and counsel the adolescents on health issues, refer them to health facilities, NCD clinics, de-addiction centre, etc.
- Besides this, outreach services by counselors are carried out at schools, youth clubs, and in communities to sensitize the adolescents, caregivers and influencers on available services.
- These centres also act as resource centre for capacity building of health care providers and repository for IEC materials on Adolescent Health and other related issues.

Tell the group that they should make sure and encourage their adolescent children to visit these centers and meet the counsellors for any support that they may need, but are hesitant in approaching their parents or other family members. Make sure that men/fathers also know about this and take responsibility for the overall development of their children.

Role of Self Help Group

- ▶ Encourage community members to listen to adolescents in their families, so that adolescent girls and boys feel they have a safe, supportive space to voice their problems and anxieties.
- ▶ The group members should also ensure that all adolescents in their families are aware of other issues and getting adequate information to deal with issues if they arise.
- ▶ The SHG members should be able to connect the adolescents in their families with the Adolescent Friendly Health Clinics for any counselling or support that may be required.

Note: The self-help group should be ready to support those members who face problems or find it difficult to convey these messages and convince their families.

Session concludes: End the session by revisiting the questions from the case study and their answers. Thank the participants and close.





The Food, Nutrition, Health and WASH (FNHW) Toolkit has been developed by the National Mission Management Unit (NMMU) with support from Technical Assistance agencies–TA- NRLM (PCI) and inputs from ROSHNI–Centre of Women Collectives led Social Action, National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD), State Institutes of Rural Development (SIRDs), National Resource Persons (NRPs), State Rural Livelihood Missions (SRLMs) of Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Maharashtra, JEEViKA Technical Support Program–Project Concern International (JTSP–PCI) and UNICEF state teams from Odisha, Bihar and Chhattisgarh.

The standard materials of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW), Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD), National Centre for Excellence & Advanced Research on Diets (NCEARD), Alive & Thrive, JTSP–PCI and UNICEF have been referred while finalizing the content.

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