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FIRST-AID AND EMERGENCIES IN SCHOOLS

by

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1. Magnitude of accidents

Accidents are common in children of school age. They can occur in the home, on the way to school or in school. The magnitude of the problem cannot be estimated, except where correct statistical data are available, but children are killed or handicapped. In some countries where statistical data related to accidents are available, it is reported that a greater number of children and adolescents are killed by accidents than by all other diseases combined. In a survey of causes of death among school children in Egypt (1963-1965), it was found that 40 per cent died from accidents, mainly traffic accidents. Therefore, accidents are important as a cause of death or infirmity. Non-fatal accidents are much more numerous than fatal ones and are estimated to be 100 - 200 times greater.

The keystone in accident prevention is education. It is an essential part of education by parents and schools to make the child aware of the accident hazards of everyday life and the means to avoid them. Training on how to behave while walking early in the life of every child is a very important protection in modern society against vehicle and other accidents.

In addition, teachers should be aware of the significance of symptoms of sudden illness, such as high temperature, vomiting and diarrhoea, abdominal colic and should refer the child immediately for care.

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2. School responsibilities

In giving emergency care in schools the following are important points:

- to give immediate care to the sick or injured
- to notify the child's parents
- to get the child to hospital or home
- to guide parents about resources and treatment

First-aid is the immediate care given to the injured or sick child to save his life, prevent further injury and reduce his suffering. Every person in the school should know common first-aid procedures.

3. Training in first-aid

Training in first-aid should be given to all teachers. At least one or two teachers in each school should be properly trained for emergency care of pupils, if there is no nurse. The physician and nurse are responsible for this training during their periodic visits to schools. Organized training courses are also useful, as is the use of audio-visual aids.

All pupils should have training in methods related to emergencies according to their age. First-aid should be taught to students through the health and Red Crescent students' societies as a routine in schools.

Incidental teaching at the time an accident or sudden illness occurs, while it is fresh in the pupils' minds, is effective. Each situation should be used as a basis for individual or class teaching without injuring the feelings of the sick child. A lot of questions will be posed by the children in such a situation. Care should be taken also not to arouse fears.

4. The health room

A room should be set apart in each school where the injured and sick can rest and where other health activities could be conducted. Supplies and equipment for the emergency care room vary with the size and type of school and availability of emergency facilities nearby. The following list is recommended as basic equipment for each school:

Bed
Thermometer
Tongue depressor
Scissors
Syringe, needles
Boiler or disposable syringes
Tourniquet
Adhesive plaster

Cotton
Bandages
Antiseptics (tincture of iodine, mercurochrome and Dettol)

Some stimulant
Burn ointment
Splints

The scheme for action in case of any emergency should be available in this room.

5. Legal liability

Many times accidents to school children occur while they are in the school building, on the school grounds or athletic field, or attending school activities away from the school. A complete report is essential. It should include the time of the accident, how it occurred, first-aid applied and the witnesses thereto. This should be given careful consideration by the school personnel, as legal liability may result either from not doing what should be done or doing what should not be done. Some countries of the Region have insurance plans to cover a part or all of their school population.