Living Water International  
Participatory Hygiene Lesson  

Worms and Parasites

**Message:**
- Parasites and worms can cause illness and harm.
- They can be prevented.
- Methods of treatment

**Background:**
This lesson is intended for a train the trainers session, but can be used in any group setting where there is a need for education on parasites.

**Materials Needed:**
- “Role Play for Worms”
- Drawings of worms.
- Drawings and Text for Hookworm Flipchart.

**Starter:**
Role play performed by two class participants. See “Role Play for Worms” text.

**Method:**
- “Today we will be discussing parasites and worms. How many of you have ever had or known someone with parasites or worms?”
- “We must start by defining what a parasite is. A parasite is a small insect like animal that gets into our bodies and then gets their food from our bodies. Scientists say that our bodies become their ‘host.’ When you hear the word ‘host’ what do you think of?” (Someone who takes care of and feeds a guest…the guest eats the food the host provides)
- Parasites are like uninvited guests that won’t go away and keep eating our food!
- Many times we can see the worms, but we can seldom see their eggs.
- How do the parasites get into our bodies?
  - By eating food with dirty hands.
  - Putting dirty hands in our mouths.
  - Not wearing shoes.
  - Drinking contaminated water
  - Eating fruits and vegetables that have not been washed.
  - Eating beef and pork that has not been cooked well
- “If people do not use latrines or dispose of stools properly, parasites can get onto the things we touch. Flies can move the eggs from stools onto the things we eat or the dishes we use. Then we swallow the eggs without knowing.”
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Types of worms:

Show the drawing of each worm while stating the facts. After each worm, review the facts by asking the class what they know about the worm.

Threadworm (pinworms):
- Tiny white worms that can be seen. Can be seen on the child’s anus (especially at night) because the female comes out to lay her sticky eggs.
- Get under fingernails when the person scratches their bottom, then they are carried to anything the child touches.
- The person will have an itchy bottom, be tired from having an itchy anus at night, bad tempered and may not be very strong.
- It is important to keep nails short, hands and bottoms clean, keep clothes and bed clothes clean, use the latrine, or dispose of stools properly.

Roundworm:
- Long, pink worms with pointed ends. Can easily be seen in stools. Sometimes children will cough them up and spit them out.
- They live in the intestines and lay thousands of eggs that have hard shells. Because of the hard shells they can live for a long time in the soil.
- The eggs can get into water sources, be carried by flies and be found on fruit and vegetables that have not been washed, and on hands.
- The person will have stomach pain, be thin and weak and sometimes have a big belly and no appetite from the stomach being full of worms. If not taken care of, the worms can cause an intestinal blockage and need emergency surgery. This can be life threatening.
- It is important to wash hands, use the latrine or dispose of stools safely, kill flies, use clean water.

Tapeworm:
- Tapeworms are long and flat and have segments that can be seen in the stools. As the segments fill up with eggs, they fall off the worm and are excreted in the stools.
- If stools are not disposed of properly, cows and pigs can eat the eggs. The eggs get into their flesh. When people eat the meat, they eat the eggs.
- The person with tapeworm will be very tired and weak. The tapeworm takes the nourishment from the food that the person eats. They may have a tapeworm for along time before they realize they need help. This is very dangerous, especially for children
- It is important to cook all beef and pork completely before eating so that the eggs will be killed.

Hookworm:
- Are very dangerous because they cannot be seen or felt when they get into our body through our skin. They can get into any skin that comes in contact with them…feet, bottoms, hands. Once inside the body, they make their way to the intestine, attach themselves to the wall of the intestine and suck the blood. They produce millions of eggs.
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- Eggs are passed in the stools of the infected person and then hatch into larvae that bite and enter the exposed skin.
- The person with hookworm will be weak and tired from the anemia that is caused by the hookworm sucking the blood. They get sick with other illnesses; sometimes have diarrhea and a dry cough. Children do not do well at school because of the anemia. They have trouble thinking paying attention. Children can die from hookworm infections.
- It is important to always wear shoes, use the latrine or dispose of stools properly, make a clean place for small children to play and crawl.

Hookworm Flipchart:

- Tell the story of Paco, the boy with hookworm using the flipchart.
- “What are the 6 most important things to do to prevent worms?”
  1. Wash hands frequently.
  2. Dispose of stools properly/ use the latrine.
  4. Always drink clean water.
  5. Wash fruits and vegetables
  6. Cook all meat well.

Reference: Living Water International; Mercy Ships
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Worms and Parasites Role Play

Method:
Choose two volunteers from the class. Instruct them to role play the following scenario without giving verbal clues to what is happening: ie: not to use words that would make it clear the child has worms.

Role Play:
A small child is outside playing. The child does not appear happy. He is scratching his bottom a lot, and also putting his fingers in his mouth as he is playing.

His mother calls him to come eat. He is very grumpy, but when he goes in the house he does not wash his hands and begins eating, even though it is obvious that he has no appetite.

Ask the class SHOWD questions:
- What did you see?
- What was happening?
- Does this happen in our community?
- What should have happened?
- What can we do to prevent parasites and worms?

Reference: Mercy Ships, Living Water International