HEALTH OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN- SOME MEDICAL AND SOCIAL ASPECTS

Desislava Bakova
Department of Health Care Management, Faculty of Health Care, Medical University of Plovdiv, Bulgaria desislavabakova@abv.bg
Elina Petkova-Gueorguieva
Medical University of Plovdiv, Bulgaria elinapetkova@abv.bg
Stanislav Gueorguiev
Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences, Faculty of Pharmacy, Medical University of Plovdiv, Bulgaria stanley_tm@abv.bg
Vasil Madzharov
Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences, Faculty of Pharmacy, Medical University of Plovdiv, Bulgaria vmadzharov@abv.bg

Abstract: In contemporary society child health is perceived as socially significant and its promotion and care includes knowledge from the psychological, pedagogical, social, medical and biological sciences. The overall children’s upbringing is aimed at promoting a healthy and active way of life. An essential aspect of preschool upbringing is the care for physical health and mental well-being. The present article discusses some medical and social aspects related to healthcare of preschool children. Some of the most important aspects of promoting the health of preschool children are physical activity, personal hygiene and body conditioning. Furthermore, the healthy lifestyle of the parents is of crucial importance. The child undergoes an important part of his/her development until the age of 7 which is related to his/her physical health as well as to his/her personal traits. This imposes the necessity for creating a solid background of knowledge and skills to lead a healthy lifestyle.

Keywords: child’s health, disease prevention, healthy lifestyle

COMPONENTS OF HEALTH AT THE PRESCHOOL AGE
To many parents the establishment of a healthy lifestyle for preschool children is limited mainly to the physical development of the child. The normal activity of every young body is ensured by biological, mental and social components [Chertok & Nibsh 1987]. These components are in close interrelationships. The child’s lifestyle influences to a significant extent his/her biological health. Other factors which also exert a significant influence are genetic predisposition, quality of healthcare and environmental conditions [Notara et al. 2018, Turnovska et al. 2014]. Quite frequently, the child’s health depends directly on the lifestyle of his/her parents. Their bad habits influence the child’s development even during pregnancy. Excessive physical activities of pregnant women, unhealthy eating, overeating, sleep disorders, and emotional overload etc. have a negative effect on the fetal development. In the antepartum period, the mental and social health of the child is entirely in the hands of his parents. Creating health culture in preschool children should begin with the parents’ example. A peaceful family environment, adequate reactions to difficulties contribute to a normal mental health of preschool children [Albitsky & Baranov 1986].

The social background of health in the preschool and school ages is not only related to the parents but also to relatives and friends. An unfavorable environment influences the individual’s development. Therefore, it is essential to create an environment for the child which would have a positive effect on him/her [Adamo et al. 2014]. This is related to the establishment of moral ideals and values as well as social adaptation. All that was mentioned so far is of importance for the development of a health culture in pre-school children. One of the best ways to improve social health is work. It is the involvement of the child in a working activity appropriate for his/her age that creates a feeling of empathy and belonging to society.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT
Developing skills for leading a healthy lifestyle among preschool children cannot be accomplished without physical activity. In the last years, from a very early age many children develop the so-called diagnosis “hypodynamics” which is related to a disturbance in the main bodily functions and limited physical activity. According to a number of medical studies, a greater part of children between age 4 and 6 can endure only around 4 to 6 minutes in the appropriate body position necessary for the educational process [O’Dwyer et al. 2012, Brown et al. 2006, Pfeiffer et al. 2013]. A main reason for this fact is weak muscles. In this sense, health promotion of preschool children has to
be related to the establishment of a special organization of the educational process in the kindergarten [Goldfield et al. 2012]. Motor activity is at the heart of a healthy lifestyle, which means health. This is especially true of children whose organism is in the process of growth and development, the refinement of the proportions of the body, of physical and mental maturation. Through motor activity, children acquire the new motor skills they need to build up during the exercises and the earlier they start, the easier it is to master them [Kasnakova & Stankova 2016]. Games are the chief method for maintaining the child’s physical activity. They not only contribute to promotion of child’s health but they also improve their mental and physical condition. Power training at this age is important but is recommended for only a few minutes a day. The rest of the time should be spent in playing games. It is necessary to maintain a constant balance between physical activity and rest. Therefore, it is recommended to switch from active to quiet games, as well as to alternate between games in the open air and indoor activities. The positive emotions they cause in patients cannot be achieved by other methods and means of modern rehabilitation. The role of game playing activity in practice is crucial to the achievement of one of the important tasks in implementing rehabilitation measures, namely to evacuate the patient from the depressed mental state, to distract him from the disease process and to focus on mobilizing his healing powers. The basis of the motor movement training game methodology and the improvement of motor movement skills is the activation of the thought processes and emotional experiences, the development of the functions of the musculoskeletal system, the cardiovascular system and the respiratory system [Kasnakova 2018].

Stimulating a healthy lifestyle in preschool children begins with stimulating physical activity. This may include morning exercises, physical exercises which may be done at home and in the kindergarten as well, exercise after the afternoon nap etc. Relaxing water activities also have really good effect on children [Saunders et al. 2005]. Personal hygiene is also extremely important for the health of the child. From a very early age the child should be taught that it is necessary to take care of his/her body. The child should have personal belongings: a comb, a tooth brush, a towel etc. which he/she should use correctly [Chertok & Nibsh 1987]. Establishing a healthy lifestyle in preschool children is related to the general conditioning of the child’s body although this procedure is related to practicing risk measures. Body conditioning is an efficient method for disease prevention and strengthening the immune system. If the main methods of body conditioning are followed appropriately, the child’s body gradually becomes resistant to the environment’s influence. It is important to practice body conditioning especially in winter. The principle of gradation should be leading. There is no problem for the body to adapt to the changes in the external environment especially if this is done gradually. However, the individual characteristics of children should also be kept in mind. If a child does not tolerate well a certain procedure, it is not advisable to perform that procedure.

THE ROLE OF EDUCATION
The healthy lifestyle of preschool children includes not only physical activity but also a series of measures which must be a priority for parents from the very birth of the child. Nowadays the institutions concerned emphasize on the educational system, free time, prevention and measure for maintaining a healthy lifestyle [Saunders et al. 2006]. The application of activities in preschool age which benefit to health is an important step in the development of a complete and physically healthy child (figure 1). Their goal is to maintain good health and to provide basic knowledge on healthy lifestyle in children.

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**Fig. 1 Activities in preschool age**
DISEASE PREVENTION
Children at preschool age are extremely susceptible to diseases. This is due to the constant contact with objects and people at kindergarten as well as with the lack of awareness and non-compliance with the rules for personal hygiene [Turnovska et al. 2014]. A major part of the diseases in children’s pathology is occupied by respiratory diseases among which the most common ones are acute respiratory infections (ARI) often called ‘colds’. They are much more common in childhood than among adolescents and adults [Genev 2011]. A study of the structure of the disease in the pediatric ward confirms the data that bronchopneumonia acquired in society is one of the most common diagnoses among children requiring hospitalization [Koleva & Hadzhiieva 2011].

One of the main areas for decreasing morbidity in frequently ill children is immune prophylaxis. It enhances the resistance of the child’s body to various types of pathogens - viruses, bacteria and fungi and it is important not only for their current health but also for their proper growth. The stimulation of the immune system and prevention of chronic diseases provides a preparation for good health throughout one’s life. It not only stimulates the children’s immune system but also allows the decrease in the frequent antibiotic use [Zaplatnikov 2010]. Dental health in preschool is an important point in the proper development of the facial skeleton and the esthetic appearance of children. It is strongly influenced by a number of factors - good nutrition, physical development, diseases of hard dental tissues (caries), traumas, bad habits (open mouth breathing, finger sucking, lips sucking, etc.), genetic conditioning [Peeva et al. 2014, Yovcheva et al. 2017, Yovcheva et al. 2017, Belcheva et al. 2008]. These factors may result in maldevelopment or malformation of the upper or lower jaw, hypodontia (lack of single or group teeth), orthodontic abnormalities, malformation of the permanent teeth whose embryos are formed during this period [Yordanova et al. 2011, Tomov et al. 2009, Torpomanov et al. 2018, Belcheva et al. 2016]. The treatment of children requires the use of atraumatic methods and materials that would involve the child and his or her parents [Belcheva 2009, Karatsanova 2010, Belcheva 2009]. In modern dental medicine, lasers are increasingly being used as a method of treating carious defects, mild surgery and physiotherapy [Belcheva & Shindova 2014, Yordanova et al. 2015].

Childhood disease prevention must encompass all aspects and be directed at the complete recovery of the child. The child’s organism is in constant development and undergoes different changes. Disease prevention in children is based on several basic measures:

- **The period of intrauterine development** is the first stage which determines the possible pathology. Therefore, a woman should be consulted not only with gynecologists throughout the period of a pregnancy but also with other specialists who can identify and prevent possible subsequent diseases.

- **Parents’ family habits.** Children spend most of the time at home where they face most of the risk factors which have direct impact on the health of the young generation. The possible genetic predisposition to chronic diseases on the side of the parents should also be kept in mind [Notara et al. 2018, O'Dwyer et al. 2012].

- **The environment** in which the child grows has an influence on the child’s general status and his/her predisposition to diseases. In this respect, the fact that the improvement of the conditions of living influence directly the development of the child’s organism should be kept in mind [Turnovska et al. 2014].

- **The active way of life** and body conditioning should be part of the child’s life ever since his/her birth. They have the best effect on his/her body’s health and ability to resist diseases [Saunders et al. 2006].

- **Rhythmic alternation of exertion and relaxation**, avoidance of stress and tension in family relationships should be regulated by parents and relatives of the child.

All these measures together with secondary prophylaxis and the lack of congenital pathology may contribute considerably to the improvement of the quality of life of children. What matter for each child are the procedures of body conditioning. From an early childhood age the most important and easily applicable methods of physical medicine are the natural factors: water, air, movement, sun. They are successfully combined with preformed physical factors: air ionization and ultraviolet exposure - fotariums, artificial sun. The physiological effects of algorithms for healthy behavior which include daily air and sun baths, aeration, hydrotherapy, annual thalasso procedures - sea inhalations, bathing, tourism in average mountain climate, prophylaxis of hypodynamics, games with aerobic physical exertion, sports according to the individual abilities and the psycho-emotional status of the child- have been proven many times. The establishment of an appropriate regime for body conditioning, dietary regime, daytime wakefulness and physical activity combined with regular physical and prophylactic procedures are a prerequisite for the growth of health and harmoniously developed children [Kasnakova et al. 2019].
CONCLUSION
In organizing activities for the children at preschool age physical activity and leisure activities occupy a principal place. They contribute to a considerable extent to the body’s strengthening. To ensure the proper physical and mental development of children and to maintain and strengthen their health it is important for parents and teachers to combine their efforts. These mutual efforts would create conditions for building up habits for a healthy way of life. This process requires considerable efforts of each person which proves to be extremely difficult for children having in mind the fact that they are insufficiently mentally and physically stable. Therefore, when working with children it is extremely important to remind them constantly what is allowed and what is forbidden. In this way “unpleasant” things would easily be transformed into sustainable behavior. Childhood disease prevention should be performed most of all as an activity promoting health. From a very early age each child should be taught how to wash his/her hands thoroughly, to communicate with his/her peers etc. An important element is the example of the parents who determine the hygienic habit of the child. In relation to all this, a specific attention is paid to the search for new efficient means and ways for prophylaxis and treatment of frequently ill children. Experience has shown that the maximum efficiency is achieved through a complex approach in the basis of which is the individual choice of healing and prophylactic activities by giving account to the causes which lead to the increased morbidity, child’s age, hereditary predisposition, concomitant pathology etc.

REFERENCES


