Greetings teachers and learners! A busy school year is almost behind us and the summer holidays are around the corner. This supplement, brought to you by the Health Promotion Directorate, will show you how to achieve and maintain good health over the holidays and beyond. Good health refers to physical, mental and spiritual well-being.

The Department of Education believes that schools should be centres of care, support and learning. The department is involved in the following health promotion programmes in schools:

1. An HIV and AIDS Education Programme that teaches all learners to make healthy life choices.
2. A Drug and Substance Abuse Prevention and Education Programme that educates learners, educators and parents about the dangers of drug abuse amongst South Africa’s youth.
3. A School Health Screening Programme whose objective is the early identification of health barriers to learning so that learners learn effectively.

Health promotion

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THE SOCIAL MODEL OF HEALTH: A recipe for good health

The recipe for good health includes the availability of adequate shelter, peace, income, food and water supply, employment, education, safety, a stable ecosystem, sustainable resources and socioeconomic status.

In the 1970s governments all over the world realised that, despite technological advances, many members of society still did not enjoy their right to good health. Nations – including South Africa – therefore started developing social models of health to identify social, environmental and economic causes of poor health. To create the conditions for sustainable healthy living for South Africans, different government departments (like labour, education, social development and transport) must work in close conjunction with private sector partners (like manufacturers of products or service providers).

Let’s use the example of road safety to illustrate what we mean. We all know that over the Christmas holidays, there is an increase in the number of road-related accidents and deaths. To reduce traffic-related injuries and fatalities, several sectors must work together:

- the roads must be well maintained;
- there must be a safe, affordable and well maintained public transport system;
- alcohol manufacturers and advertisers must promote responsible alcohol use;
- car manufacturers must include and promote safety features; and
- hotel managers and club owners must work to control excessive alcohol intake.

The social model of health also recognises other human rights related to health care. The Health Promotion Directorate encourages people to take control of their health by accessing skills and resources they need to change social factors affecting their health.

It also recognises that health services should be affordable and available according to people’s needs, and that health information should be available to all citizens.
Hanging out with Health Mate

We got chatting to some young South Africans about how they respond to peer pressure – and learnt a lot in the process! Basically, it seems we’re all pretty clued up about how to take care of ourselves – the big challenge lies in making the best choices for our social, emotional and sexual well-being!

Lethimpilo Campaign

Every child has the right to go to school, and to enjoy good health and social security.

The Department of Education is working closely with other government departments to help learners access these rights. This cooperation is called integrated service delivery, important services are delivered to learners in primary school and their parents who live in poor communities.

This programme is called the Lethimpilo Campaign and targets learners between Grade R and Grade 4 across the country.

Lethimpilo brings health education to these young learners and their families so that they can access their right to education. They are also screened for hearing, vision, dental health, and other physical problems that may affect learning.

An NGO that goes into schools to deliver services delivery. Important services are delivered to learners in primary school and their parents who live in poor communities.

The Department of Education

Dear Fiona

I found it really hard to get through the exams this year. The stress and pressure got to me, and I don’t want to let myself or my friends and family down. I’m very close to my friends and family and studied 24/7 to secure good results. Now exams are over, and I’m still stressed! I feel isolated and unsure how to move on. What should I be doing?

Unsettled from Umhlanga

Dear Fiona

Fiona de Villers has worked with teachers, learners and communities in schools, NGOs and businesses for nearly 20 years. She is particularly interested in empowering youth to make healthy life choices that will enable them to live productive, fulfilling lives.

Fiona worked in a high school based in Johannesburg for 15 years, and then moved on to develop education programmes for an NGO that goes into schools to deliver sexual health and HIV awareness messages to learners and teachers.

She now works with an NGO based in Orange Farm that seeks to teach learners traditional dance and music forms using marimbas. Fiona believes passionately in the value of life-long learning, and that we all learn and grow each other.

Dear Fiona

I’ve never been able to see the benefit of taking drugs. The guys who smoke weed think they’re so cool, but actually they’re just dodging out. They can’t work up the energy to participate in anything – apart from discussions about legalising dope – and the only time they’re enthusiastic about anything is when they’re competing with each other about who got the most stoned over the weekend. Quite honestly, I think it’s just childish.

NOMATTER, ON FASHION

There’s a huge peer pressure, especially in Grade 4 or 7, to smoke. I suppose it’s all about wanting to fit in and trying to project a grown-up image. It’s stupid really, because all the exercises, a huge class could help, prove yourself by really giving up because they feel so until and unhealthy! I choose not to smoke, but I do carry a lighter in my pocket whenever I go out. It’s a great way to meet girls, even if you then don’t want to get too close to them as their breath stinks like an ashtray!

DAVID, ON SMOKING

There’s too short to worry about what other people think of me! I’m assertive and outgoing, and I feel confident about my beliefs and values, so I’m not afraid to stand up for myself. I feel sad for shy, insecure people who think they’ll be made fun of or left behind. So when it comes to wearing the ‘right’ labels, there are loads of non-costly ways you can style and accessorise a dress, but only so much you can do with a pair of jeans and a T-shirt. I think it’s important to develop your own unique style rather than relying on a superficial label – created by someone else to make people think you’re cool.

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If you would like to ask Fiona a question write to: Sawubona Fiona, Health Promotion Directorate, Private Bag, X895, Pretoria, 0001 or email healthmate@eish.co.za

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Through Lethimpilo, learners and parents can also apply for social grants, social assistance and benefits.

The Department of Education held an Inter-Provincial Forum on 10 and 11 November 2008 to begin the process of mainstreaming this integrated approach in support of educators, learners and their families.
Smart snacking strategies

Good options include homemade "trail mix". Fresh fruit and vegetables. Small cheese sandwiches on whole-wheat bread, or cooked measles make great padkos. Rice cakes with peanut butter will give you sustained energy, and low-fat fruit yoghurt can satisfy cravings.

TREATS TO TRY

Banana Ice
Peel several very ripe bananas, break them into pieces, and freeze the pieces in a sealed bag. Just before serving, what the pieces in a blender with a small amount of water or juice. Serve right away. Add berries for a different flavour or top with fruit or nuts.

Happy Trails Mix
Combine 1 cup whole-grain toasted cereal with ¼ cup chopped walnuts and ¼ cup dried raisins for a healthy snack.

Top MOSH tips

These easy-to-follow top nosh tips are adapted from the South Africa Food Based Dietary Guidelines.

- Enjoy a variety of foods
- Be active
- Make starchy foods the basis of most meals
- Eat dry beans, split peas, lentils and soya regularly
- Chicken, fish, milk, meat or eggs can be eaten daily
- Drink lots of clean, safe water
- Eat plenty of vegetables and fruits every day
- Eat fats sparingly
- Use salt sparingly
- Use food and drinks containing sugar sparingly and not between meals.

KE MOJA – I’m fine without drugs!

Drug Testing and Random Searches in Schools

The Department of Education calls on all learners to say no to drugs. To keep our schools and learners safe and drug-free, the department has authorised school authorities to conduct random drug searches and testing if they suspect a problem.

If someone offers you drugs, say "Ke Moja – I’m fine without drugs!"

Be high on life – not drugs!

Be a friend

If you think a friend is involved with drugs:

- Don’t try to handle it alone. Talk to a trusted adult, or phone Childline, or the Department of Social Development
- Support your friend, but explain that their behaviour is not acceptable to you
- Give them suggestions, but don’t bully or threaten them
- If your friend decides to get help, support them

An educator’s responsibility

- Learn as much as possible about drug use and abuse.
- Recognise early symptoms of drug use and ensure intervention
- Form parent/teacher awareness groups

A parent’s duty

- Know and look out for signs of drug use
- If necessary, confront your child in a firm but supportive manner
- Present the evidence
- Promote healthy communication
- If necessary, consult a professional.

WIN WITH HEALTH MATE!

Friends, in these pages, we’ve discussed strategies to promote good mental and physical health. Now is your chance to join in this important national discussion. We would like to hear your opinions on the strategies we’ve outlined here.

Write to us and tell us what you think about “Health Mate”. The five best letters will be printed in the next issue of “Health Mate”, and will each win a CD (John Legend’s Green Light), sponsored by the Health Promotion Directorate.

Let’s all join together to promote good health. Remember, “He who has health has hope, and he who has hope has everything.”