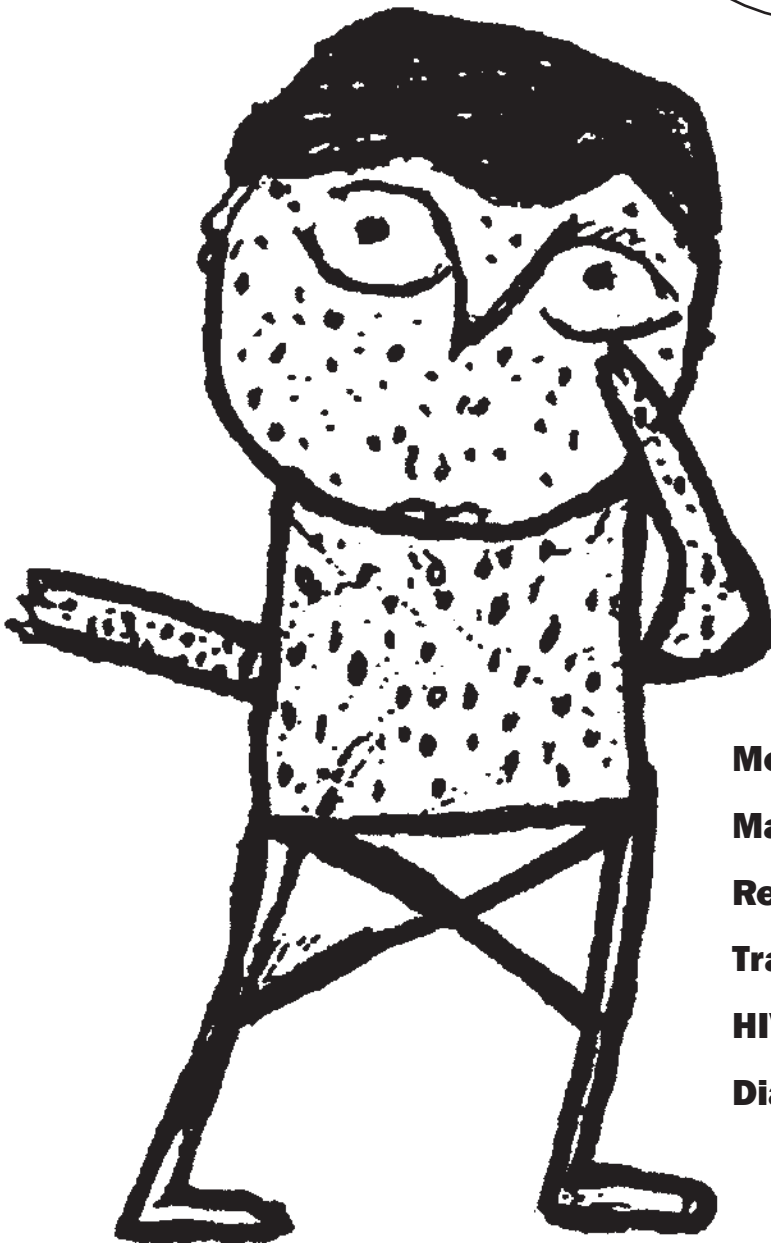


4 Prevent blindness from sickness

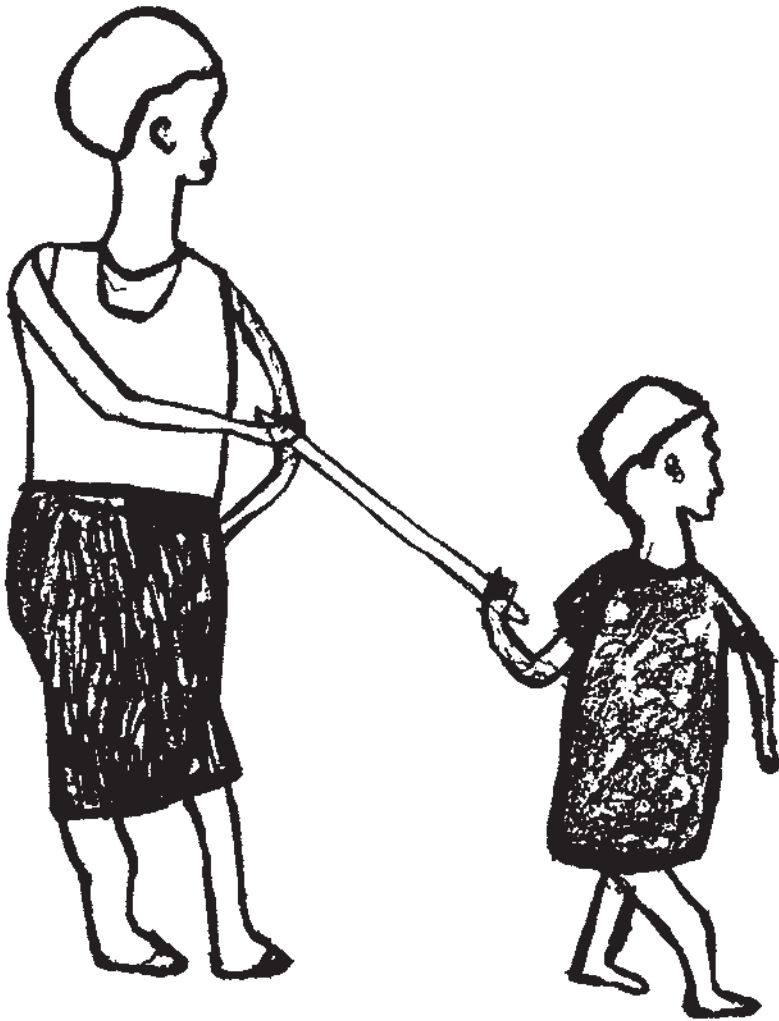


Some sicknesses can make a person blind.



- Measles** can make a child go blind
- Malnutrition** can make a child go blind
- Red painful eyes** can cause blindness
- Trachoma** can lead to blindness
- HIV** can cause blindness
- Diabetes** can cause blindness

Measles can make a child go blind



This is Absiig Azong. She was blind since she was a child. This is because she had measles. During that measles they were always waking her. They thought if she slept she would go blind. A herbalist person put herbs in Absiig Azong's eyes. until now, she is blind.



Class Discussion

Is there a word for measles where you live?

Write it here

Is it true that children with measles will go blind if you let them sleep?

Is it a good idea to put herbs in the eyes?

How could Absiig's mother have prevented her from getting measles?

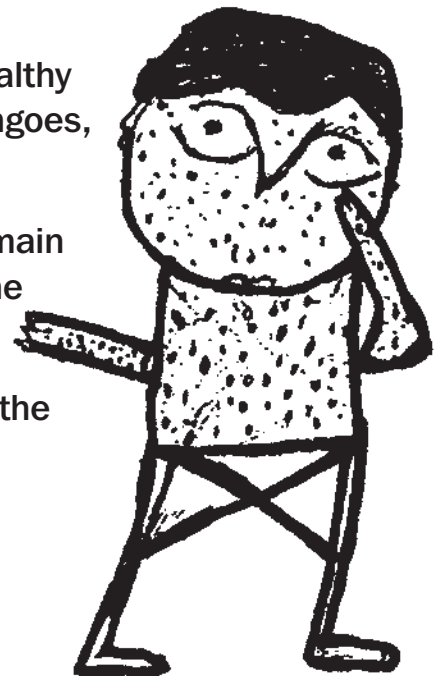


Health Messages

Measles is usually a sickness of children. It passes from one child to another. Children who have this sickness have a fever, rashes on the skin, painful eyes when they look at light and they do not want to eat.

What you can do to prevent blindness from measles

- Parents should take their babies for immunisation against measles.
- If a child has measles, do not put local medicines in the eyes.
- Do not put any medicines in the eyes unless a health worker gives them to you.
- Children who have measles should drink a lot of fluids (water, juice, liquid porridge, soups, milk).
- When a baby has measles, the mother should continue to breastfeed as often as possible.
- When a child has measles, you should give her healthy foods that are easy to eat, like pumpkin, fish, mangoes, milk, eggs, bananas.
- If the child cannot open the eyes or if the eyes remain sore after the rash has gone, take him or her to the health centre as soon as possible.
- A child with measles should be given vitamin A by the doctor as part of the treatment.



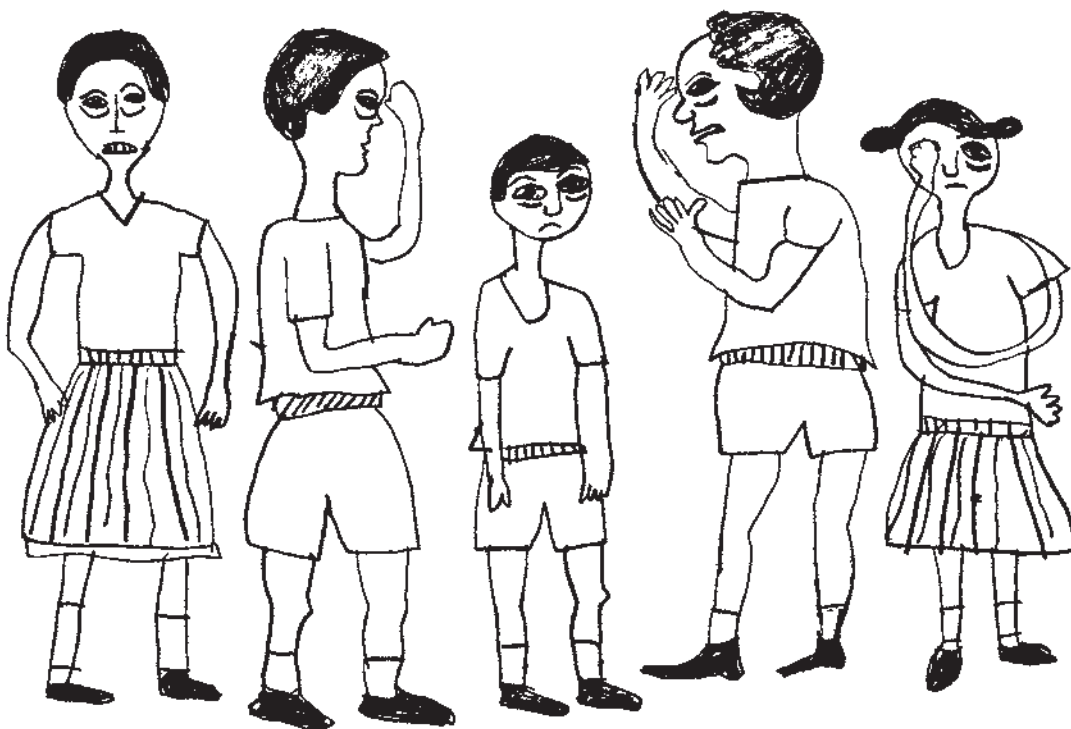
Home Activity

Is there a baby in your house? Has he or she been immunised against measles?

Prevent blindness from red and painful eyes



Children who have red sore eyes might have an infection in the eyes. Painful eyes that are not treated properly can make a person become blind.



There was a time when many children in our school had red eyes. Their eyes were running and the children were rubbing them all the time. Some had their eyelashes stuck together in the morning. The teachers told our parents that all the children should stay at home. Before we went home, the health worker came to speak to the whole school. She explained that many of us had an eye disease called conjunctivitis. She said that we should not put anything into the eyes unless a health worker advises us. She also told us that we should wash our hands and faces with clean water and try to keep very clean.



Class Discussion

Does it ever happen in your community that many children suffer from painful red eyes at the same time? Is there a name for this disease?

Write it here

What do people do when this happens?

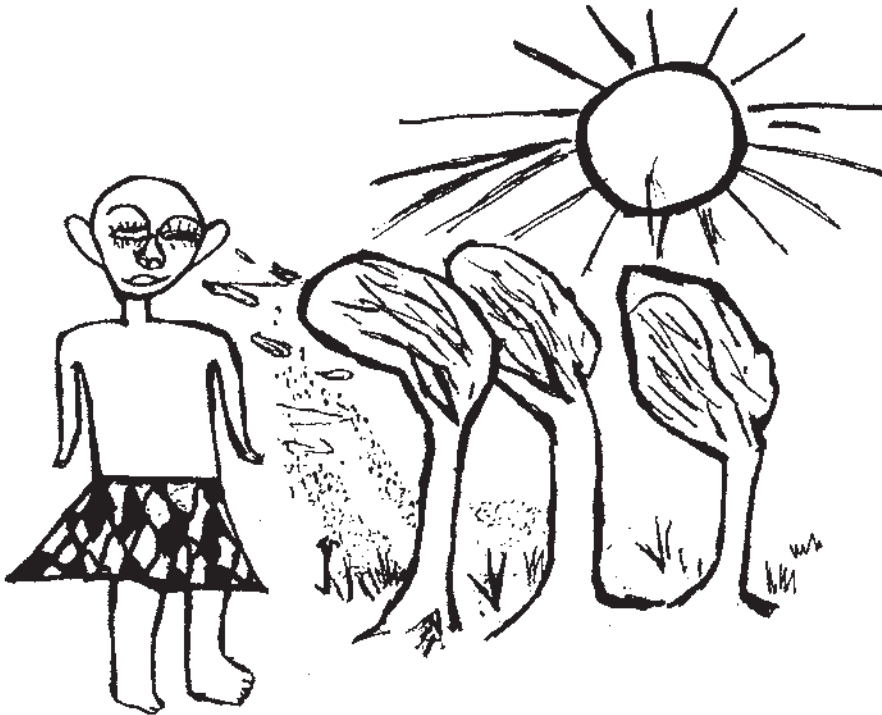


Health Messages

How to take care of red or painful eyes

- Only put ointment in the eyes if a health worker gives it to you.
- Never put traditional treatments in sore, red eyes.
- Never use old medicines or medicines which are meant for another person to treat eyes.
- Eye problems spread easily from person to person. You should keep your face and hands clean to prevent the infection from spreading.
- Keep your eyes clean.
- If the eyes are not better after one day, go to the nearest clinic.

Prevent blindness from trachoma



This is a story about Lemekeza. She stayed in a dry and dusty place. It was very hot. There were many flies at that place. Her eyes were often paining her. They were itching and the tears came out.

The health worker told her that she had a disease called trachoma. The health worker gave her mother eye ointment to put in the eyes of Lemekeza and her brothers and sisters. She was told to repeat this for many weeks to make sure that the infection went away. She was also told to wash her face often and to keep her eyes very clean.



Class Discussion

Have you ever heard about a disease called trachoma?

Do you know another word for this disease?

Write it here

Have you ever seen people in your community who have eyelashes that turn in and scratch the eye? Is there name for this?

Write it here



Health Messages

Prevent blindness from trachoma

The disease called trachoma has made many people blind. People with the trachoma infection have very painful and itchy eyes, especially inside the eyelids. Flies and dirty hands can carry the disease from one person's eyes to another person's eyes.

When a person suffers from trachoma infection many times, the inside of the eyelid becomes scarred. This makes the skin tight. The eyelashes turn inwards and scratch the cornea (remember the picture on page 4. The cornea is the window of the eye). This is what causes blindness. There is a small operation that can cure this.

There are four things that can prevent blindness from trachoma. You can remember them by remembering the word **SAFE**.



S

Surgery. A simple operation can prevent blindness from inturned eyelashes scratching the cornea.



A

Antibiotic medicine can treat the infection. The antibiotic can be given as a medicine to swallow, or as an eye medicine to put in the eyes.



F

Keep your **face** clean and you will be less likely to get the infection. Trachoma is most common in places where water is not plentiful.



E

Keep your **environment** clean. Toilets and clean surroundings will prevent flies from spreading diseases. A clean water supply will help people to wash their hands and faces often.

Can AIDS make a person blind?



AIDS can affect the eyes too. It can even make the person blind. This can lead to greater hardship and depression for the person suffering from AIDS.



Uncle Ali became quite ill and then slim suddenly. There was rumour in the village that he was suffering from AIDS. One day we saw Uncle Ali walking slowly and not sure of where he was going. He could not recognise people he knew from afar. My father advised him to go to the eye clinic. He was examined but was told that he will not be able to see again. I have been wondering: can AIDS make one blind?

Can diabetes make a person blind?

The mother of Tonga went to the optician to get her vision tested. She was surprised when the eye doctor suggested tests for diabetes and then told her that she was suffering from diabetes. The doctor explained that diabetes can cause eye problems. When her sugar level was controlled her sight improved.



Health Messages

- Anyone with diabetes should have his or her eyes checked once a year.
- People with diabetes should not smoke.
- People with diabetes should reduce their weight.
- People with diabetes should follow the recommended diet and should not drink alcohol.
- If a person is often thirsty, hungry and needs to urinate often, they should go to the clinic to be checked for diabetes.