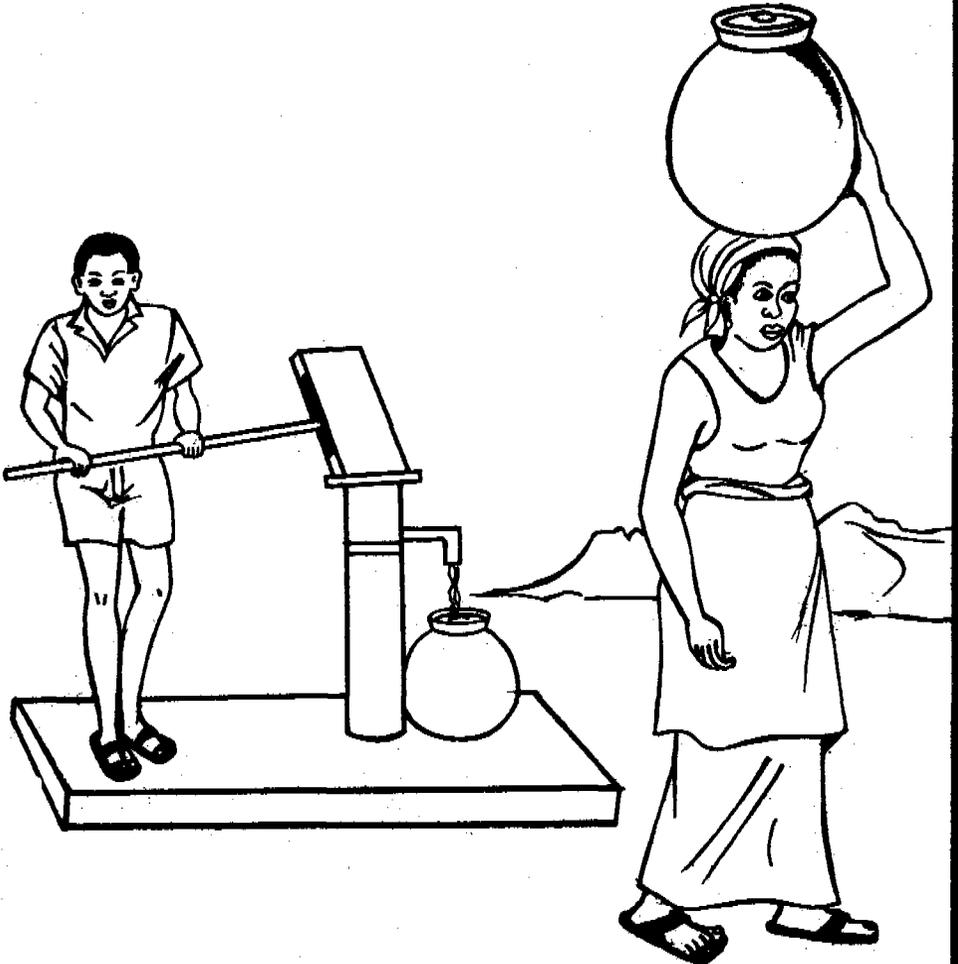


Water & Your Health



INTRODUCTION

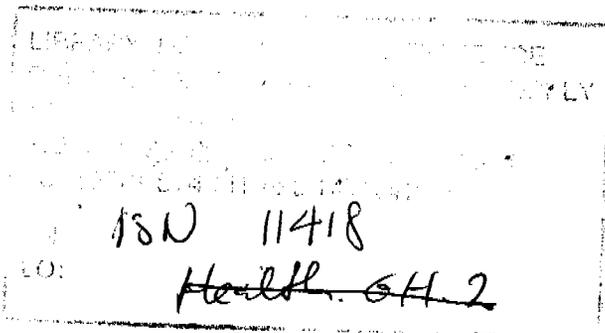
As an important part of the Primary Health Care Programme, Environmental Health emphasizes the prevention and control of factors in our surroundings that may affect our well being.

In Ghana, majority of diseases reported in our hospitals, clinics and health centres are related to our environment. A few simple measures can be taken to prevent most of these diseases.

These include: Good Housing, Water Supply, Proper Human Waste Disposal, Refuse Disposal, Food Hygiene and the Control of Disease Carrying Insects and other Animals.

In this leaflet we would discuss water supply and how water affects our health.

We would be treating the other areas in subsequent issues. Please, make sure that you read all of them.



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WATER

Water is one of the three natural things man needs in order to live. The other two things are air and food. Water is very important for life

The human body needs at least three (3) beer bottles of water each day for it to work properly.

Industries and other business establishments also need water in their operations.

In the home, water is very useful. It is used for drinking, washing, bathing and in cooking food.

However, just like water gives us life, it can also bring us diseases if it is not properly taken care of.

SOME OF THE USES OF WATER IN THE HOME:-



DRINKING



WASHING



COOKING

SOURCES OF WATER

The common sources from which water can be obtained include: Pipes, Wells, Ponds, Streams, Rivers, Lakes, Springs, etc.

In most rural areas in the country, people depend on ponds, streams, rivers and shallow wells. In many cases water from these sources are not safe.

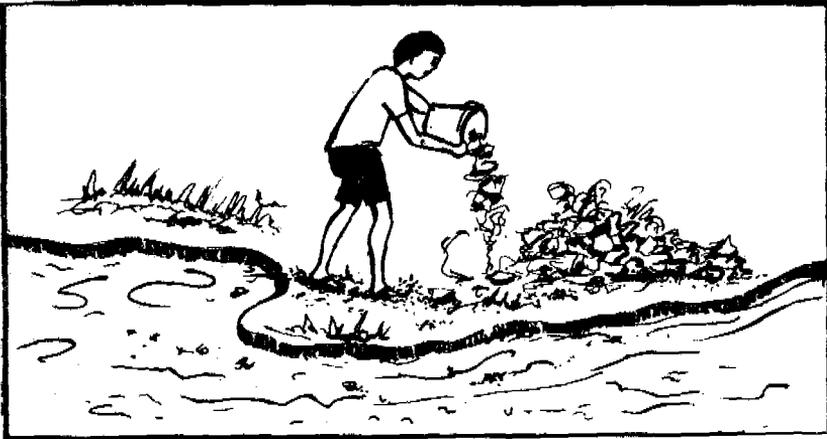
In towns and cities, water is obtained from standpipes, boreholes and deep wells which are safer.

HOW IS WATER MADE UNSAFE

Water is made unsafe by:

1. Improper disposal of refuse and human excreta

Refuse and human excreta and droppings from animals should not be disposed of near sources of water because they can contaminate it when it rains, thereby making it unsafe for drinking. Such water can spread diseases like cholera, dysentery, etc.



Disposal of refuse near a water source will contaminate it.

2. Wading or standing in Water

This may introduce disease germs such as those which cause guinea worm into the water thereby making it unsafe. Animals eg. cattle wading or drinking from a common source of water as human beings make the water unsafe.



Wading or standing in water source will contaminate it

3. Building a pit latrine close to the source of water can also contaminate the water.

4. Washing close to the banks of a river or stream can contaminate the source of water.

DISEASES ASSOCIATED WITH UNSAFE WATER

When water is contaminated through improper disposal of refuse or human excreta, wading, etc., diseases are likely to spread.

Some of the diseases which one can contract by using unsafe water include;

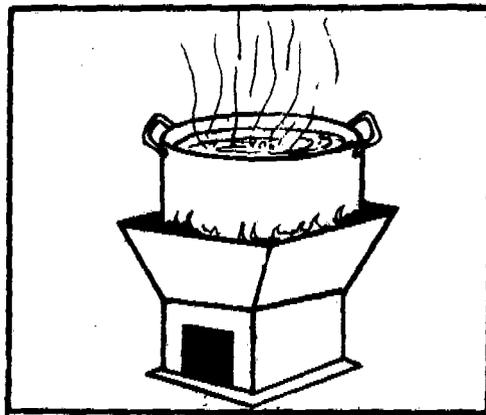
- cholera
- dysentery
- bilharzia (schistosomiasis)
- guinea worm, etc.

It is therefore important that water is properly protected so as to prevent the spread of water-borne diseases.

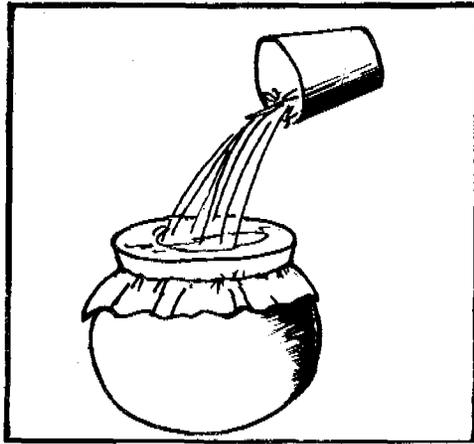
HOW TO MAKE WATER SAFE FOR DRINKING

Usually water fetched from taps and deep wells are safe for drinking. Water from other sources however, need to be boiled or at least filtered to make it safe eg. ponds, streams, rivers, etc.

BOILING: This kills many of the disease germs that may be present in the water. However after boiling, the water should be stored in a container with a lid to prevent dust dirt and germs from getting into it again.

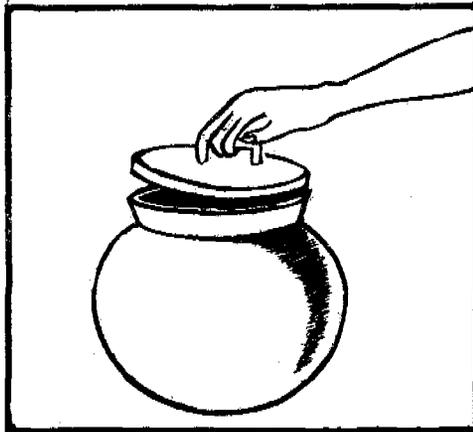


Water from unsafe sources must be boiled before drinking



Filter or sieve your water with a clean piece of cloth

FILTRATION OR SIEVING (WITH A CLEAN CLOTH): This would help to remove any harmful impurities and water fleas such as cyclops which may help in the spreading of guinea worm. Filtered water may still contain certain disease agents eg. cholera germs.



Always cover your stored water

STORAGE OF WATER

At home, water should be stored in clean pots or containers with well fitting covers. This is to prevent contamination by dust, dirt, etc.

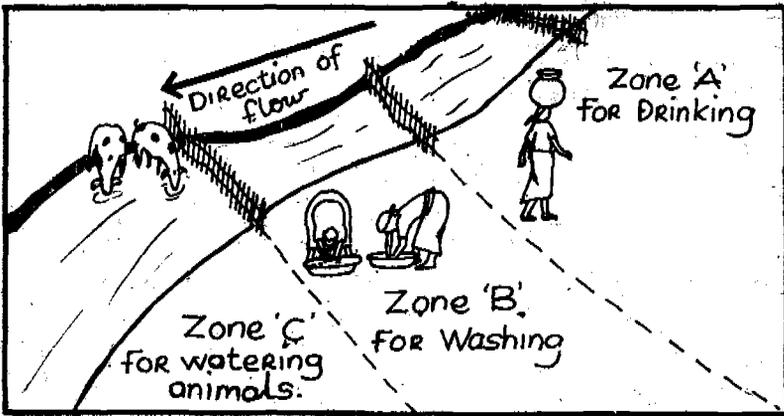
Only clean cups or calabashes should be used in taking water from a waterpot or container.

Always wash your hands and cups before fetching water.

PROTECTING SOURCES OF WATER

Rivers, streams, wells, ponds, etc on which communities depend need to be protected against contamination. Some of the methods by which these sources of water can be protected include:

Zoning: By this method a river or stream is divided into parts or zones and each zone used for a specified purpose. In other words the river or stream is divided such that part A is used for drinking, part B for washing and part C for watering animals, etc.

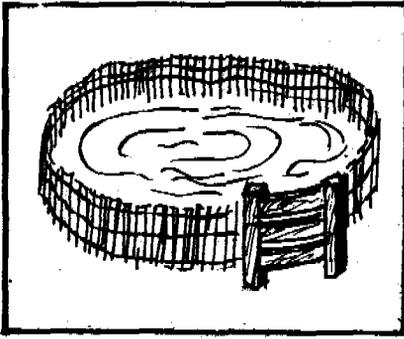


Zone or divide rivers which are used as sources of water as above

Fencing: This method prevents animals such as cattle from contaminating the water. For example if source of water is a pond, it can be fenced with sticks and a gate provided through which people can pass to fetch the water.

Deepening: Ponds, especially can be deepened so as to conserve more water and also to improve upon sedimentation.

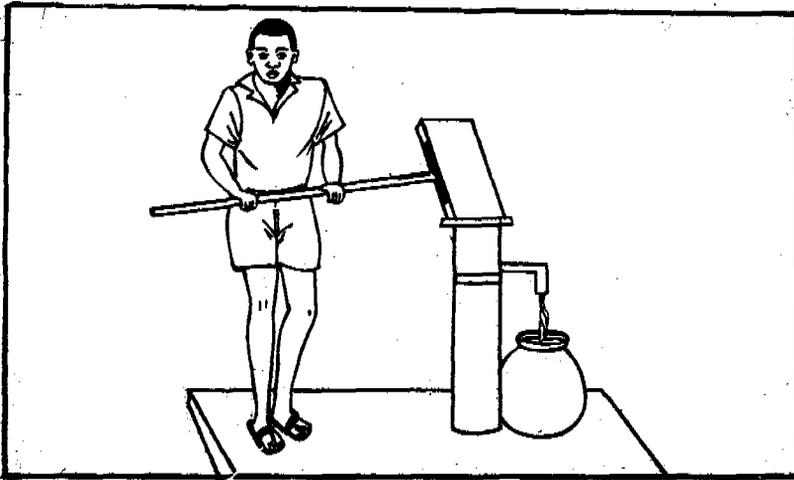
Platform: Building a platform at the point of water collection, prevents people from wading through the water source. This can prevent a disease like guinea worm.



Fence ponds to prevent animals from contaminating them



Build and stand on a platform when collecting water



Wells and boreholes are safe sources of water

Weeding: The surroundings of the source of water should be weeded and kept constantly clean so that no dirty materials are carried into the water.

Providing safe water

All communities should endeavour to provide wells and boreholes where stand pipes are not available. Using water from safe sources prevents water-borne diseases.

**DESIGNED AND PRODUCED BY THE HEALTH EDUCATION DIVISION
(MINISTRY OF HEALTH), ACCRA, GHANA.**