

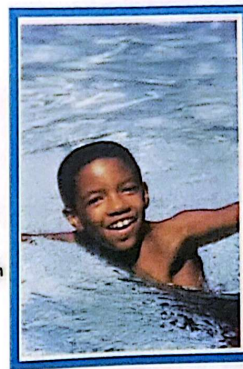
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- Injury or illness in the past five years
- Ear, eye and sleep disorders
- Shortness of breath
- Child's blood group
- Nervous or psychiatric disorders
- Allergies
- A lab report of the child's urine and stool
- List of medications used regularly or recently



2

A child's medical information is important because it guides the school on what activities he can be allowed to partake in and those that they should be excused from to avoid triggering a health problem. If a child is epileptic, he/she is excused from swimming



Why your child's medical form is important

By Jacqueline Emodok

As parents and guardians have taken children to school after the two-month holiday, emphasis is on school fees and requirements. For some schools, a medical examination form filled in by medical personnel is part of those requirements. This form is so crucial that without it, some schools will not allow a student. However, some parents undermine the importance of this form, yet this piece of paper could actually be more important than the other school requirements.

Dr Aggrey Murangira, a general practitioner at Jinja Hospital, explains that the medical examination forms contain information thorough medical checkups conducted by medical personnel; they indicate that a child is free of illness.

A typical medical form requests for information such as a child's medical history and conditions which teachers, the school nurse need to be aware of.

What to check for

Mt St Mary's college Namagunga's medical examination form requests for information on a child's health history such as any injury or illness in the past five years, eye disorders, ear disorders and heart surgery.

There is also a section for the child's blood group, nervous or psychiatric disorders, allergies, sleep disorders a laboratory report of the child's urine, stool and the list of medications used regularly or recently.

"Most times we check for malaria, typhoid, brucellosis, urinary tract infections and Hepatitis. Some schools demand a pregnancy test," Murangira says.

He explains that the pregnancy test is done to avoid scenarios of girls testing positive for pregnancy during the course of the term and yet there is lack of evidence that the girls were not at the beginning of the term; this will mean that the girl was impregnated in school which is unlawful.

Murangira observes that most of the medical forms are filled in at the start of the year.

However, MK Nabikyalo, the headteacher of Lohana Academy in Kololo, Kampala, notes that since the school is a day one, they do not request for a medical examination form. Instead, parents or guardians are requested to fill in an application form that has a segment for the child's health when the child is admitted to the school.

"This information is then entered into the database and shared with the school nurse. When the child falls sick, the nurse will be able to administer the right first aid before the child is taken to hospital," Nabikyalo



Medical tests help parents and teachers know the general health of the child

explains.

Murangira adds that the medical form can also help the school nurse to understand the urgency of handling some medical conditions.

Exemptions

Nabikyalo says the child's medical information is important because it guides the school on what activities he can be allowed to partake in and those that they should be excused from to avoid triggering a health problem.

"For example, at our school, swimming is compulsory, but if we know that a child is epileptic or has any other condition that prevents him/her from swimming, then the child is excused," Nabikyalo explains.

Sr Gladys Kachope, the headteacher of Immaculate Heart Girls School in Rukungiri adds that children with lung disease can also be exempted from running while those who are allergic to dust are exempted from sweeping.

Allergies are defined as an immune response by the body to a substance, especially food, pollen, fur or dust. An allergic reaction can cause one to sneeze, develop a skin rash and vomit.

"During medical examinations, the child will be asked if they scratch their eyes, have issues with light and other allergies which the medical personnel is supposed to list for the school. This will ensure that

schools protect a child from triggers of these allergies which would affect their performance," Murangira says.

Although most allergic reactions are not serious, some can be life-threatening as they can lead to breathing problems, a rapid decrease in blood pressure, shock and even death.

"The information on the medical forms shows the sickbay attendant the drugs children are allergic to so that they can avoid administering them," Kachope says.

She emphasises that the medical examination form is more important for children in boarding schools.

"A child in boarding spends more time at school than at home. The school needs to know the child's physical health status so that we can know how to handle them, especially when they have conditions such as sickle cell anaemia and epilepsy," Kachope says.

She also notes that the information on a child's medical form is instrumental in curbing the spread of contagious diseases in a school such as viral conjunctivitis which can be spread through hand-to-eye contact by hands and other diseases such as marburg fever, Ebola and cholera.

Ultimately, Murangira says a medical form is not a conclusion of medical tests, but also provides an avenue for further body checkups and diagnoses, especially by specialists.

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