



Health Promotion

Health Promotion supports the notion that being healthy isn't just about 'not being sick' or physically unwell, it takes a holistic view towards health, acknowledging that good health involves supportive environments, and social and emotional factors that affect health and well being.

MCHS has a strong organisational commitment to community focused and evidence based health promotion and specifically to addressing the social determinants of health. The key principles supporting health promotion at MCHS include; partnerships, community participation, responsiveness, effectiveness and sustainability.

Merri Community Health Services has identified four priority issues for health promotion interventions in 2009-2012. These are:

1. Physical activity and active communities
2. Mental well-being & social inclusion
3. Access to nutritious food
4. Building organisational capacity for health promotion

Physical activity and active communities

There is a lot of evidence to show that being active is important for good health and wellbeing – mentally, physically and emotionally. We also know that everyone, from young children to older adults, can benefit from physical activity and that people of all ability levels can enjoy being active in a range of ways. You don't have to be a sports star! Our work aims to increase the number and variety of physical activity opportunities in Moreland. We make sure that our activities are low-cost, or free, and encourage as many

people as possible to take part. In particular we work with those people who are usually most inactive, for example mothers with young children, those with disabilities and older adults who are socially isolated. Usually we work together with other agencies who provide community services, such as local leisure centres, libraries and neighbourhood houses.

Some of our current programs include:

- Heart Foundation Walking groups – join one of the many friendly walking groups in Moreland, or start your own!
- Pedometer Library Loan Scheme – pedometers count the number of steps you take each day
- Active Living in Fawkner

Mental well-being & social inclusion

Positive mental well-being is related to a number of factors including feeling connected to the community you live in and feeling safe and valued. Our aim is to work with those groups within our local community who are often marginalised – who don't always feel connected or included for a variety of reasons. Working with families to ensure our children feel safe, supported and develop positive relationships is also an important focus of our work.

Some of our current programs include:

- Developing partnerships with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and refugee and newly arrived groups, and with other agencies that provide relevant services.
- Working with primary schools across Moreland in adapting a Health Promoting Schools Framework to build community capacity within schools, and improve links with schools and the community, and improve opportunities for health and well being.

Access to Nutritious Food

Being able to find, buy, store and prepare food that is affordable and good for you is considered a basic human right. It is also very important for people to be able to access food that is relevant to their cultural or religious beliefs. However, we have found that not all people in Moreland are able to buy the sorts of food they would like to, and often run out of food or have difficulty getting to the shops. In order to improve this, we are conducting a range of different programs that aim to:

- Promote the growing and sharing of fruits and vegetables in Moreland – in public spaces, community gardens and at home.
- Promote affordable food in local shops.
- Promote the development of skills and knowledge in healthy shopping and cooking on a budget.
- Promote food access by advocating to appropriate bodies on related issues (such as public transport and environmental issues).

Some of our current programs include:

- Community Kitchens – these cooking groups are run by community organisations and are supported by our staff. The groups meet weekly to plan their meals, buy the food and learn how to safely cook great tasting and healthy dishes. Everyone then shares a meal together, and usually take food home for later. There is a small fee to cover the cost of the food. We also have a cooking group for men called 'Food in a Flash'
- Community Gardens – Development of Community Gardens in public spaces, including schools, where

everybody is involved in the planting, growing and nurturing of a variety of fruits and vegetables.

Oral Health

Smiles 4 Miles involves preschool children and families learning how to look after their teeth and gums. Each year new preschools are invited to be involved and the children receive Smiles 4 Miles lunch bags, drink bottles, toothbrushes to help them to 'Eat Well', 'Drink Well' and 'Brush Well' everyday. Parents and preschool staff are given information, resources and support to help the preschools gain Smiles 4 Miles Awards from Dental Health Services Victoria.

Would you like to get involved? We are always looking for people to join our walking groups, become walk leaders or assist us in many other ways. Please contact our Volunteer Coordinator on 9389 2229.

Community Based Research

Teeth Tales is a community based research project being conducted in partnership with the University of Melbourne. It aims to reduce oral health inequities in migrant communities. Oral health was identified by local Iraqi, Lebanese and Pakistani community leaders and families as a priority issue and a needs assessment identified sociocultural risk factors contributing to poor oral health. To gain a greater understanding of the effects of culture, migration and acculturation on the oral health of children, consultations were conducted with 200 community members from the Iraqi, Lebanese and Pakistani communities in Moreland. The information gained will be analysed (with input from the participants and in light of current evidence base) and used to inform the development and trial of culturally appropriate oral health promotion interventions.

MCHS is committed to using QIPPS (Quality Improvement Program Planning System) software to plan, monitor and evaluate programs and projects.

For more information on any of these research areas please contact the Health Promotion and Research Team: healthpromotion@mchs.org.au or phone 8319 7419.