



Implementation of school health promotion and the use of SHE materials in the time of COVID-19: status of The Netherlands.

Similar to many other countries, the pandemic hit the Netherlands in the spring. At first, schools stayed open but from half of March, a lockdown was inevitable. All children were educated online. The daycare-centres, primary schools, and special-needs schools were closed until half of May. Maintaining strict hygiene regulations, children up to the age of 12 could then go back to their usual life. Children older than the age of 12, so the pupils and students of our secondary (vocational) schools were still educated online. Since the new school year starting in September, the secondary (vocational) schools welcomed all children. Strict protocols are to be followed regarding amongst others: hygiene rules, walking routes to ensure keeping enough distance between children and teachers, and the (mandatory) use of a mouth mask. Students from higher education and universities are mainly still being educated through online lessons.

What we see is that in the protocols for schools there is much emphasis on hygiene rules. Within our School Health Programme in the Netherlands, hygiene is one of the healthy lifestyle themes schools can work on. Since the pandemic started, we saw an increased interest in this theme from schools. On the other hand, we noticed that schools - also the ones usually very active in promoting a healthy lifestyle among children - were way above their head coping with all the protocol regulations and going about in the new situation of re-opening the schools or making sure the quality of the education does not suffer from the way of teaching (through online lessons).

Usually, professionals from our municipal health services provide support at schools locally. However, in some regions where the number of infections was high, some of these professionals were relocated to other departments to do work related to the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance to assist in the source and contact research.

During the lockdown, we from the national programme of healthy schools thought of how can we support pupils and students to maintain a healthy lifestyle in this turbulent period with mostly home education. We came up with "Healthy School at HOME", bringing the elements from the Healthy School programme into the living rooms of the Dutch school-aged children. With this initiative, we provided schools and teachers with practical advice, tips, and activities that they can share with their pupils and students or with the parents or caregivers. The goal was to let pupils and students work on a healthy lifestyle at home in a casual and playful way. We also gave teachers tips on how to stay healthy. All ideas were applicable in the home situation and came from our knowledge partners and professionals in the field.