DIARRHEAL DISEASE & MALNUTRITION ARE INEXTRICABLY LINKED

Integrating WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene) and nutrition can achieve greater impact against diarrheal disease. Help us advocate for a combined approach.

It takes more than food to overcome malnutrition. Kids in poor communities ingest dangerous pathogens every day due to unsafe drinking water and limited sanitation and hygiene. Intestinal bugs that cause diarrhea or even lurk without symptoms can lead to long-term gut damage.

This long-term gut damage is called environmental enteropathy (EE), an irreversible process that can lead to development disabilities.

When the gut’s complex ecosystem is disrupted, health and development suffer. When children are malnourished, their bones and brains do not get the nutrients they need for healthy growth. The resulting physical and cognitive stunting cannot be undone, with devastating setbacks for future development.

IS A PREDICTOR OF GRADE FAILURE.
LEADS TO DIMINISHED INCOME-EARNING CAPACITY AND PRODUCTIVITY.
INHIBITS GROWTH AND INCREASES CHANCES OF DEVELOPING CHRONIC DISEASES LATER IN LIFE.

EE's effect on intestinal health

When children in poor communities ingest dangerous pathogens, the gut's complex ecosystem is disrupted, leading to long-term gut damage.

A. EE impacts the villi that line the small intestine to absorb nutrients. Blunted villi lead to a decreased surface area for nutrient absorption.

B. Unabsorbed by the damaged gut lining, some nutrients pass out of the body.

C. Pathogens leak through the gut lining, triggering an immune response that diverts nutrients from fueling growth to fighting infections.

Blunted villi
Healthy villi

INTEGRATING WASH (WATER, SANITATION, AND HYGIENE) AND NUTRITION CAN ACHIEVE GREATER IMPACT AGAINST DIARRHEAL DISEASE.