

Tamil Nadu schools to have three breaks to ensure kids drink enough water



CHENNAI: To ensure students drink enough water during the day, the school education department has designated three special breaks during school hours into water breaks. "The teachers should ensure children are drinking enough water during three breaks - morning, lunch and evening - during school hours," school education director S Kannappan said in a circular issued on Monday.

Currently, schools give two 10-minute break in the morning and the evening. Students also get a 45-minute lunch break. Children need to

drink two to three litres of water every day. Even mild dehydration leads to fatigue, headache and poor endurance.

"Many children are not drinking enough water due to lack of awareness. Drinking enough water keeps the students fresh and healthy and also prevents urinary track infection and constipation. Teachers should create awareness among the students about importance of drinking water," the circular added.

However, teachers and doctors asked the state government to make sure there's availability of safe drinking water and clean toilets in schools. School education minister K A Sengottaiyan had recently announced that all schools in Tamil Nadu will have water breaks.

Dr Janani Shankar, senior consultant, Kanchi Kamakoti Child Trust Hospital, said if children are not drinking enough water they would develop urinary infection and constipation among other issues. "Water intake is always good and it would keep children healthy and active. Usually, school children don't drink water unless they are told to do so. Other fear if they drink too much water they have to use the toilet. School toilets are not always clean and so, they don't want to use," she added.

She said the schools need to allow the children to use toilets even during class hours. "They allow the children to use the toilet only during intervals, when the toilets are crowded. So, some children may not able to use the toilet. Schools should ensure availability of drinking water and clean toilets," said Janani Shankar.

A Peter Raja, president of Tamil Nadu High School and Higher Secondary Schools Headmasters' Association, said many schools do not have access to safe drinking water. "One of the major complaints about government schools is that running water is not available in toilets. If we ensure clean toilets with water facilities, school children will drink more water," he said.

The Puducherry government on Monday directed the heads of the schools in the Union territory to ring 'water bell' thrice during class hours to remind the students to drink water.