

A Healthy Me



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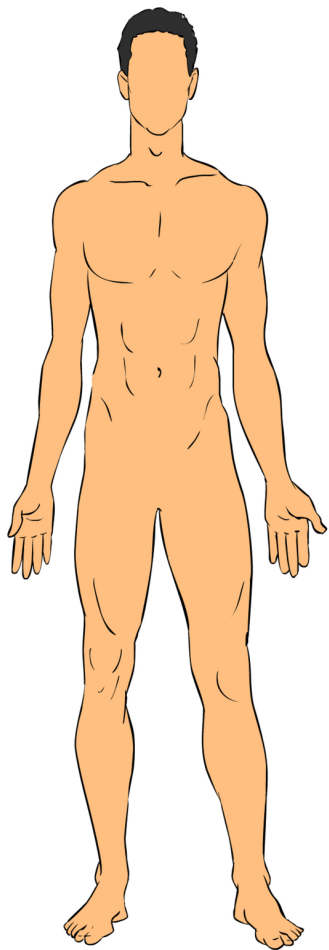


Introduction

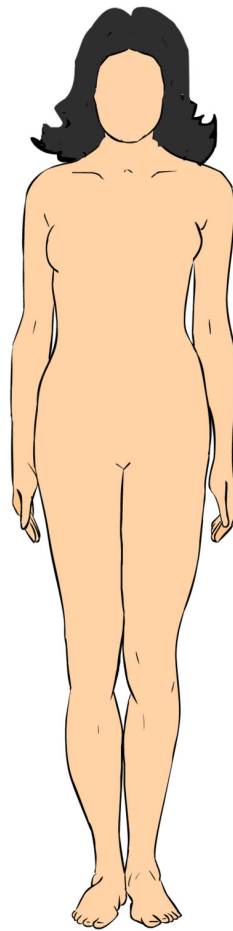
Adolescence is a period of both physical and mental development. These are also the formative years of experimentation and risk taking, giving in to peer- pressure and making uninformed decisions on crucial issues, especially related to their bodies and social behavior. At the same time with changing socio-cultural norms adolescents are more exposed to sexual and reproductive health-related risks, including HIV but lack the decision making on important sexual and reproductive health-related matters.

Through an understanding of their bodies, young girls and boys can take better care of them and lead happier, healthier lives. In this Unit we are going to know about different body parts and learn about the physical and emotional issues related to one's health and health care.





BOYS
AND
GIRLS
ARE EQUAL
BUT
DIFFERENT



Activity 1

Divide the participants into 2 groups according to their genders

(Male Leader/trainer talks to the male counter parts and Female to the female counter parts).

For Girls

My period story (15minutes)

- ▶ Peer educator/leader divides the class into small groups (5-6girls in one group)
- ▶ Peer leader shares her story of her first periods
 - How did she find out that she got her first period?
 - How did she and her family react to it?
 - What customs were followed?
 - Was there a function at home for this occasion?
 - What rules /restrictions were imposed on her after this?
 - Did anybody speak to her or inform her about this before she got her periods?
- ▶ Let the group discuss their stories with each other and one person from each group can share it with the entire class
- ▶ But, "What are periods?"
"What happens inside a girl's body when a girl gets periods?"
"Are periods necessary and healthy?"
- ▶ Peer leader should explain the following in order to understand everything about Menstruation



Activity 2

What Goes Inside ME? (30 minutes)

The purpose of this activity is to explain how Menstruation takes place and the need of it for a girl.

Each month many different organs in our bodies work together to carry out the intricate process of menstruation. The organs involved are:

Uterus: It is situated in the lower abdomen. It is also called the womb.

Ovary: A small almond shaped gland. There are 2 ovaries in our body, one on each side of the uterus. Each of these ovaries contains thousands of egg cells which can not be seen by a naked eye.

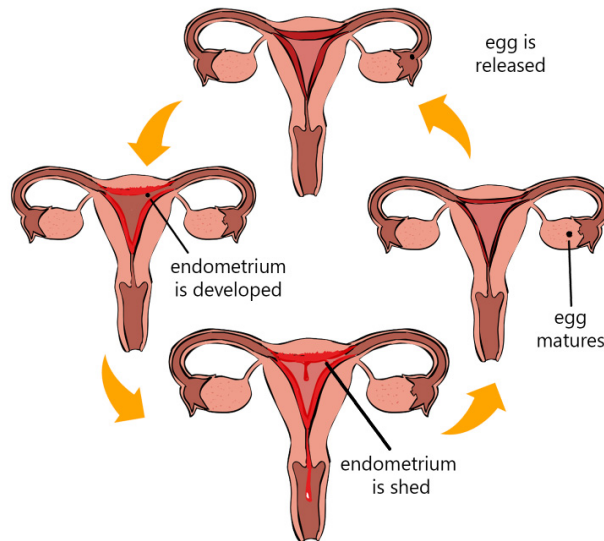
Fallopian Tubes: Tube like structures connecting the uterus and the ovaries. The egg cells travel through these tubes from the ovary into the uterus.

Egg cells: They are important as these are the cells that eventually become babies, when they combine with the Sperm Cell.

Showing the flash cards which depict the process of menstruation, peer leader/trainer explains how menstrual cycle occurs and why it is necessary for adolescent health and further for child bearing in an adult.



Menstrual Cycle



- ▶ When a girl becomes 9-12 years of age, the Pituitary gland (a pea shaped gland at the base of the brain) starts to secrete a new kind of Hormone every month.
- ▶ This hormone causes one of the ovaries to release the egg cell/ovum. The Ovum or eggs begin to mature.
- ▶ Every month one ovum or egg matures in one of the two ovaries. The ripe egg is released into one of the fallopian tubes from the ovary, and this is called Ovulation.
- ▶ The egg moves along the fallopian tubes towards the uterus.
- ▶ Around the same time, the walls of the uterus get thickened with blood vessels and prepare for receiving and nurturing the egg.
- ▶ If fertilization, i.e. the meeting of the female egg and male sperm does not take place, the thickened lining in the uterus breaks down along with some blood through the vaginal opening. This is called Menstrual Discharge.
- ▶ This discharge lasts for about 4-5 days in some girls. This process is repeated every month and is called Menstrual cycle.
- ▶ During the first few years it is normal for the menstrual cycle to be irregular.

The onset of menstruation indicates that a girl is physically capable of reproduction. However, she is not physiologically and psychologically ready to carry out the reproductive function until the age of 18.

Every girl's body and monthly cycle are different. Some girls may not get their periods during a month because they may not have enough iron in their blood. When you do not get your period, your body is sending a message to pay attention to your health. Be sure to eat healthy diet during periods and get lots of sleep. If the irregularity in periods continues for many cycles, you should go to doctor.

For Girls: Menstrual Hygiene:

Menstrual hygiene tips every girl and woman should know

Most of the girls go through the periods very secretly and don't really find out if the practices are hygienic or not. At times, girls may wear the same napkin for a whole day. Women and girls in villages and smaller towns still use reusable unhygienic cloths during their periods. And since periods are considered unclean, they are not even allowed to use detergent for washing the soiled cloth in some households.

Here are some tips to maintain hygiene during periods.

1. Change regularly:

Menstrual blood – once it has left the body – gets contaminated with the body's innate organisms. This rule applies for even those days when one doesn't have much bleeding, since the pad is still damp and will have organisms

from the vagina and sweat from your genitals. When these organisms remain in a warm and moist place for a long time they tend to multiply and can lead to conditions like **urinary tract infections, vaginal infections** and skin rashes.

Pad may be changed once it is soaked or as per the need (once in 6-8 hours)



2. Don't use soaps or vaginal hygiene products

The vagina has its own cleaning mechanism that works in a very fine balance of good and bad bacteria. Washing it with soap can kill the good bacteria making way for infections.

3. Use the right washing technique:

Always wash or clean the area in a motion that is from the vagina to the anus (from front to back). Luke warm water can be used for cleaning the vaginal area. Never wash in the opposite direction. Washing in the opposite direction can cause bacteria from the anus to lodge in the vagina and urethral opening, leading to infections. More importantly, it is imperative that one washes her hands well after discarding the used napkin since one is likely to touch the used portion of the pad while discarding it.

4. Discard the used sanitary product properly

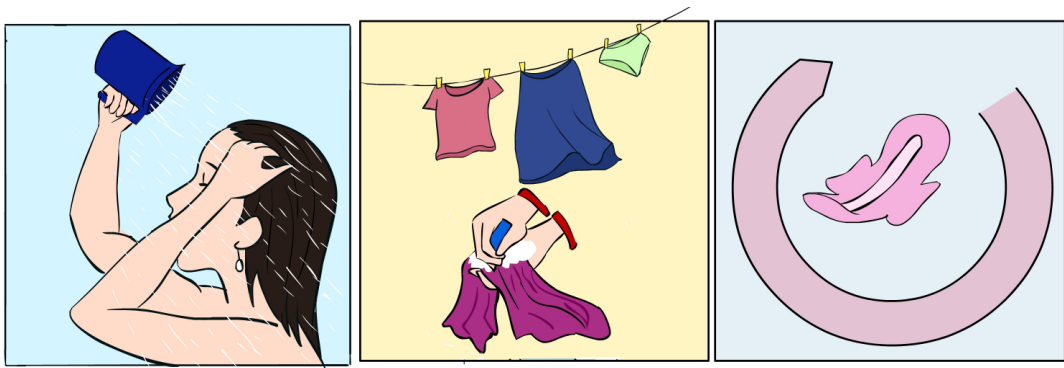
It is essential to discard used napkins properly because they are capable of spreading infections and smell very foul. Wrap the napkin well in old newspaper and roll it tightly, prior to discarding ensuring that the smell and infection is contained.

In case of using a cloth napkin, the napkin has to be washed properly and dried in the sunlight before reusing it. (But the best option is always to use a fresh one everytime)



5. Have a bath regularly

In some cultures, it is believed that a woman should not bathe during her periods. This myth was based on the fact that in the olden days women had to bathe in the open or in common water bodies like a river or lake, which would then become contaminated. But now-a-days with bathrooms in every house, having a bath is the best thing to do during periods. Bathing not only cleanses the body but also gives a chance to clean one's private parts. It also helps relieve menstrual cramps, backaches, helps improve mood and makes one feel less bloated.



Dealing with Pain during Periods:

1. Take a brisk walk for 10-20 minutes
2. Stretching and yoga can help (Yoga-Child pose, Cobra pose and Butterfly pose) reduce the pain



3. Apply a Warm Heating Pad to the lower abdomen
4. Drink lots of water and eat iron rich food and food rich in Vitamin-C

Dealing with Vaginal Discharge/White Discharge:

The Healthy Vagina - The vagina serves as a passageway between the outside of the body and the inner reproductive organs. The environment of the vagina is acidic, which discourages infections from occurring. This acidic environment is created by normally-occurring bacteria. A healthy vagina produces secretions to cleanse and adjust itself, similar to how saliva cleanses and regulates the environment of the mouth. These vaginal secretions are normal vaginal discharge. Any disturbance with the delicate balance of vaginal secretions can lead to infections.

Normal Vaginal Discharge - All women have some vaginal discharge. Normal discharge may appear clear, cloudy white, and/or yellowish when dry on clothing. It may also contain white flecks and at times may be thin and stringy. Changes in normal discharge can occur for many reasons, including menstrual cycle, emotional stress, nutritional status, pregnancy, usage of medications - including birth control pills, and sexual arousal.

Effects of the Menstrual Cycle - The menstrual cycle affects the vaginal environment. One may notice increased wetness and clear discharge around mid-cycle. The pH balance of the vagina fluctuates during the cycle and is the least acidic on the days just prior to and during menstruation. Infections, therefore, are most common at this time.

Signs of Abnormal Discharge - Any changes in color or amount of discharge may be a sign of a vaginal infection. Vaginal infections are very common; most women will experience some form of a vaginal infection in their lifetime. If one experiences any of the symptoms below, this may be a sign of vaginal infection:

- ▶ Discharge accompanied by itching, rash or soreness
- ▶ Persistent, increased discharge
- ▶ Burning on skin during urination
- ▶ White, clumpy discharge (somewhat like cottage cheese)
- ▶ Grey/white or yellow/green discharge with a foul odor



Prevention and treatment guidelines for vaginal infections:

Consult an ANM or Doctor when abnormal signs of discharge are found along with following points

- ▶ Stay healthy; eat well, get enough sleep, drink enough fluids.
- ▶ Keep vaginal area clean and dry.
- ▶ Wear cotton underwear.
- ▶ Wipe from front to back after urination or bowel movement.
- ▶ Use medication as long as directed.
- ▶ Avoid sexual intercourse until treatment is completed and are symptom free.
- ▶ Don't scratch infected or inflamed areas; it can cause further irritation.
- ▶ If using medication inside the vagina, don't use it during the menstrual period.
- ▶ During an infection, use pads and avoid cloth if menstruation occurs.



Activity -3

Tracking my periods (15 minutes)

Group –Discussion

Peer leader shares a story about her friend/sister.

"Ananya (12-year-old) got her first period last month on the 17th of January. She was not worried because her peer leader/friend had already told her about periods. She shared this information with her mother and her mother gave her a sanitary napkin to use and educated her on how to wear it.

In February, Ananya went about her normal activities, but started to have a funny feeling in the stomach. She experienced some pain, but she forgot that she is going to get her periods. While she was at her school, Ananya got her periods on the 14thFebruary. Her dress got soiled and she felt embarrassed."

After sharing this story, peer leader can ask for some of the similar experiences that the group might have faced.

She should then ask them the following questions

1. Is it important to know, when one is going to get her next periods?
2. What can we do when we know?
3. How can we track our periods?

She can then tell them how one can track her periods if they are regular. To predict the next period, we need to know 2 things- **The Date when our last period started and The Length of the menstrual cycle.**



The length of the menstrual cycle is the number of days counted from the last day of one period to and including the day before the first day of the next period. This can be tracked using a calendar.

- ▶ *The peer leader can distribute 3-4 loose calendar sheets randomly to some of the girls whose periods are regular and ask them to track their next period using the above formula.*
- ▶ *The leader would need 15-18 sheets of calendar if she decides to make 4-5 girls from the group to track their periods as each girl would need three calendar sheets for this activity*

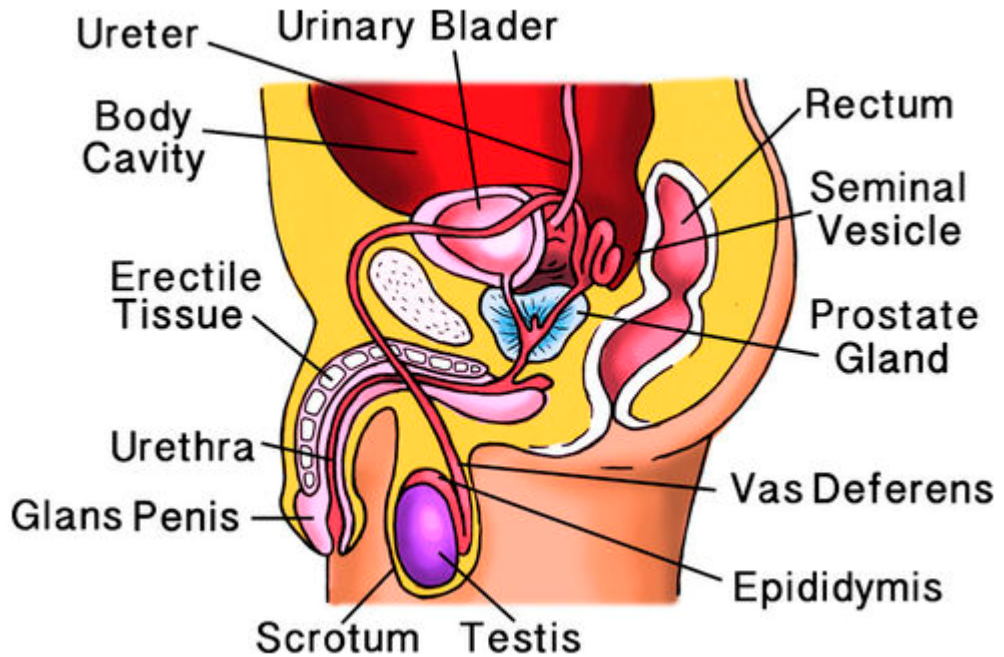


The above activity helps the girls to track their periods and help maintain a healthy life cycle. This works for adolescents who are healthy and have their periods regularly. After the first periods it may take a year or two for the period cycle to regularize in some girls and hence tracking periods on a monthly basis may not be possible.

For Boys

Peer Leader should initiate the discussion

Unlike the female, most of the sex organs of males are situated externally.



Penis: The male organ for sexual intercourse.

Scrotum: The pouch located behind the penis which contains the testicles, provides protection to the testicles, controls temperature necessary for sperm production and survival.

Testis: Two round glands which descend into the scrotum, they produce and store sperms starting in puberty. They also produce the male sex hormone testosterone.

Erections:

Once a boy reaches his teenage years, erections occur much more frequently due to puberty. Blood rushes into the penis and makes it hard and thick. This is called Erection. The penis can regularly get erected during sleep in men or boys and often wake-up with an erection.



Wet Dreams:

The testis begins to produce sperm, which together with secretions become semen. Sometimes the semen may be expelled during sleep. This is called a wet dream or night emission. This is normal in all the boys.

Masturbation:

Masturbation is touching one's own body, including sex organs, for sexual pleasure. Masturbation is a common and safe way to get sexual pleasure. Masturbation is very common. People may start masturbating at any time in their lives. Many children begin masturbating as they grow and explore their changing bodies. They often discover early that it feels good to touch their genitals. Children usually begin masturbating long before puberty. Young children do not have sexual fantasies while masturbating, but during adolescence it becomes much more sexual.

It is important for the teenagers to learn that masturbating is normal, not harmful, and will not hurt. Masturbation is also one of the best ways to learn about one's own sexuality and adolescents should know to seek privacy when masturbating.

Masturbation and Shame

Many people feel ashamed or guilty about masturbating. People who receive negative messages about masturbation when they are young often carry feelings of shame into adulthood. Approximately 50 percent of women and 50 percent of men who masturbate feel guilty about masturbating; talking to a trusted friend, sexuality educator, counsellor, and/or priest may help.

There are many myths about masturbation. There is no health risk associated with masturbation. It does not lead to mental illness or instability, stunted growth and does NOT cause infertility. It is only a means to enhance one's physical, mental and sexual health and the health of one's sexual relationships.

Foreskin retraction

During puberty, if not before, the tip and opening of a boy's foreskin becomes wider, progressively allowing for retraction down the shaft of the penis and behind the glands, which ultimately should be possible without pain or difficulty. The membrane that bonds the inner surface of the foreskin with the glands disintegrates and releases the foreskin to separate from the glands. The foreskin then gradually becomes retractable.

Boys should be educated about the role of hygiene, including retracting the foreskin while urinating and rinsing under it and around the glands while bathing each day.



Personal Hygiene

Good hygiene habits in childhood are a great foundation for good hygiene in the teenage years. It is important that both parents and teachers have open, honest communication with his/her child, it'll make it easier to talk about personal hygiene issues that come up in adolescence.

Being clean and presentable is also important, to boost the confidence of teenagers. If child's body and breath smell OK, his /her clothes are clean, and are on top of his/her basic personal hygiene; it can help them to mingle with other people easily.

This awareness of the reproductive organs in the body forms a basis to understand personal hygiene in boys and girls respectively.

Body Odour

When children reach puberty, sweat glands in their armpits and genital area develop. Skin bacteria grow on the sweat this gland produces, which is why teenagers – and adults – sometimes smell 'sweaty'. Bacteria grow on sweat in other parts of the body too, which can lead to body odour.

If the young boy washes body and



changes clothes regularly, especially after physical exercise, it'll help to reduce the bacteria and avoid body odor. Changing underwear and other clothes worn next to the skin is especially important. These clothes collect all sorts of stuff that bacteria love to grow, including dead skin cells, sweat and body fluids. That's why they get smelly.

Smelly feet

Foot odour means dealing with two issues: Sweat and Bacteria. We always have bacteria on our skin and to keep this odor producing bacteria at bay, washing feet at regular intervals and if possible with an anti-bacterial soap or liquid are the easiest solution. Keeping the feet dry by limiting the time that one wears shoes or socks which don't allow the air to circulate is one way of avoiding to sweat.

Dental hygiene

Good dental and mouth hygiene is important and hence brushing teeth twice a day is advised. Few simple habits like brushing teeth, flossing, avoiding untimely intake of food and regular visits to a dentist can prevent many avoidable dental issues.

For complete oral health avoid intake of too many aerated/soft drinks (damage teeth and stomach lining), smoking, excessive drinking, chewing tobacco, and gutka.

In addition to the above, boys will need advice about shaving (how to do it and when to start), looking after their genitals, and about body secretions.

The above points can be done in a group by sharing each other's personal practices in maintaining a hygienic life and the peer leader supplementing the missing and necessary information from the above.



SEXUAL REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH



SEXUAL REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

It is very essential for a teenager to know and understand his or her reproductive system. This knowledge helps them to be aware of the functionality of these organs when they become adults. After this awareness it is also recommended that growing children know about the health aspects that are surrounded around the reproductive system.

Abstinence and /or indulgence in sexual activities are the decisions to be taken when one turns into an adult and is planning for a commitment.

The following discussion on Sexual reproductive health is to inform the adolescents the health aspects involved around it.



Activity-1 (30 minutes)

This exercise helps the participants to differentiate between Sexually transmitted diseases and Reproductive tract diseases.

RTI and STI

- ▶ Facilitator explains the symptoms, treatment and prevention of RTIs, STIs and HIV/AIDS with the help of pictures.
- ▶ He/She also explains the difference between RTI and STI.
- ▶ H/she makes an attempt to understand the previous knowledge of participants about the transmission of HIV infection and AIDS and supplements the discussion with additional information.

What are RTIs and STIs?

Reproductive tract infections (RTIs) are the infections of the reproductive tract.

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are the infections transmitted during a sexual act or an intercourse.

The community should be informed about the following important facts.

What do you understand by Reproductive Tract Infections?

Reproductive Tract Infections (RTIs) including sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV/AIDS are being increasingly recognized as a serious public health problem. RTIs, cause suffering for both to men and women, but their consequences are more serious and widespread among women. Adolescents too are vulnerable to RTIs due to their ignorance of risk factors, and inadequate accessibility to services.

Symptoms of RTIs and STIs

Persons usually complain of having more than one symptom. These include vaginal discharge, urethral discharge, genital ulcer, backache, and lower abdominal pain. All the infections can be treated only after the doctor examines the person and after some laboratory tests have been conducted on them.

In case of unprotected sex, get yourself tested and you need not wait for the symptoms to appear.



Common symptoms in Men are:



Discharge from penis (green, yellow, pus-like)

Pain or burning during urination

Swollen and painful glands/lymph nodes in the groin;
blisters and open sores, on the genital area

Itching or tingling sensation in genital area

Sores in the mouth

Heaviness and discomfort in testicles.

There are no symptoms for HIV infection. It can be screened for and confirmed through a test.

Symptoms in women are:

Irregular bleeding

Constant lower abdominal/pelvic pain

Abnormal vaginal discharge (white, yellow, frothy, bubbly,
curd like, pus-like and odorous)

Swelling and/or itching of the vagina

Burning sensation during urination

Sores on genitals parts

Painful or difficult intercourse



Fungal Infection, occur in the inner parts of the thighs and on the private organs. They are dark in color, highly itchy, burning, and start as a small patch and spread over in due course of time. They are treatable with anti-fungal creams and medication under doctor's guidance.



Transmission

Apart from being serious diseases on their own, the presence of vaginal ulcers can increase the risk of an HIV infection and transmission. Women can transmit STI to their children during pregnancy and childbirth, leading to the infection or death of the infants. Babies can acquire serious eye or lung infections from mothers infected with STI or RTI.

Effects

All the major STIs and RTIs are associated with premature delivery and low birth-weight babies. Some RTIs and STIs can cause damage to the reproductive tract and the organs, leading to tubal pregnancy (pregnancy in the fallopian tube instead of in the uterus) and infertility.

Prevention

- a) Men and women should maintain genital hygiene and women especially during menstruation.
- b) Women and their families should seek abortions at registered hospitals where the procedure is performed by trained doctors only.
- c) Couples should avoid unsafe sex by using condoms.
- d) When suffering from any of the above mentioned symptoms, couples should seek treatment from a qualified health provider.
- e) In case of STIs, both partners should undergo treatment from a qualified health provider.

Action Plan: In any case if any of the above symptoms are seen, discuss with an ANM and if required visit the nearest PHC



Activity- 2 (45 minutes)

Let's know about AIDS

- ▶ Peer Leader conducts this as a group discussion
- ▶ Peer leaders asks the group to share any information they know about HIV and Aids
- ▶ The leader should then share the following information and make the group understand that the healthy and safe way to a happy living is Abstinence from sex with multiple partners and to have protected sex with one married partner.

Definitions and Meanings of HIV/AIDS

HIV is an abbreviation for Human immunodeficiency virus.

H= human

Meaning: The virus lives only in human beings.

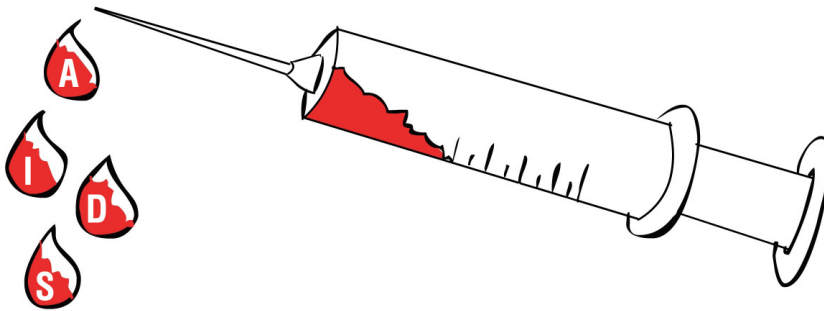
I= Immunodeficiency

Meaning: The virus attacks and progressively destroys the body's defense system.

V= Virus

A virus by the name of HIV causes AIDS.

HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus.



This is a virus that attacks and progressively destroys the immune system of the body. The purpose of the immune system is to naturally defend the body and permit the body to resist and overcome all kinds of infections.

It is not possible to identify HIV infected persons by just looking at them. People who carry HIV in their bodies can look perfectly healthy for many years and continue to live healthy and active lives without showing signs of the disease to the casual observer.

What is the difference between HIV and AIDS?

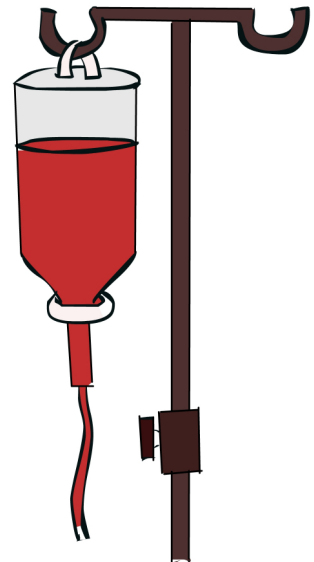
HIV	AIDS
Human Immunodeficiency virus causes Aids. HIV attacks the body's immune system that helps the body to fight off infections and other diseases. Over a period, HIV gradually destroys the ability of the body, making the person more susceptible to different infections like TB, diarrhea etc.	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome is the stage where HIV infection has brought the immunity of the body to a very low level, where the person is susceptible to different fatal infections.

Modes of HIV Transmission and prevention

A. Blood Related Transmissions

This happens when there has been exchange of blood with an HIV infected person. This happens through:

- Receiving infected blood through blood transfusion, hence blood should be taken only from licensed blood banks.
- Encourage Blood Donation between family members (after testing)
- Sharing of sharp body piercing instruments e.g. syringes, needles, razor blades, etc



Prevention of Blood-related transmission

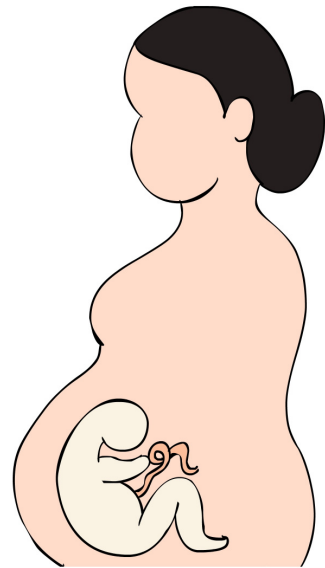
- Ensure that body cuts are cleaned and covered by bandage or plaster
- Use properly sterilized equipment
- Ensure that blood for transfusion is taken from licensed Blood Banks

B. Vertical Transmissions (PMTCT)

This refers to the transmission of HIV from the mother to child (less than 1%). This can happen in three ways - during pregnancy, at the time of delivery and after birth

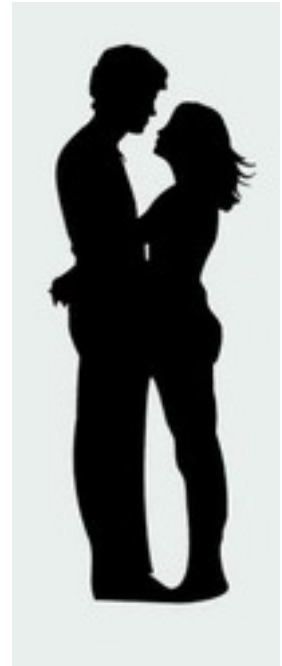
Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission

- Counseling men, women and couples whenever possible, on the consequences of pregnancy when there is HIV infection
- Seeking proper education and provision of family planning services
- Educating birth attendants about HIV/AIDS, especially on how to prevent its Transmission
- Ensuring the proper preparation and use of equipment needed to facilitate labour and the delivery of baby
- All pregnant women must seek ANC care and HIV testing from the ANM
- All HIV positive pregnant women should take treatment at the PHC/CHC
- All HIV positive women should deliver at the hospital
- If treatment is taken, baby may be HIV free



C. Sexual Transmission of HIV.

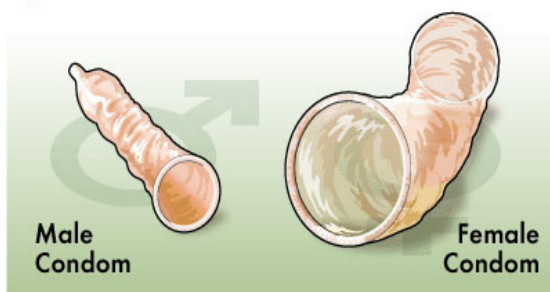
Sexual transmission of HIV accounts for the majority of infections. Infection occurs when an infected person engages in unprotected sexual intercourse with an uninfected person. Sexual transmission occurs through the various forms of sexual intercourse, but under normal circumstances, kissing should not pose a risk; however, there are situations where it can be risky. This could happen when there are sores in the mouth.



Prevention of Sexual Transmission of HIV

Abstinence, (means not engaging in sexual intercourse) is the 100% effective method in preventing both pregnancy and infections like STIs, RTIs and HIV/AIDS.

When abstinence is not adhered to, Barrier Contraception (condoms) is the next option.



Condoms: This is mostly used by teenage boys and men. It is useful in reducing the risk of sexually transmitted diseases. Even this method is not fool proof. There are Male condoms and Female condoms and they prevent the sperms entering the vagina, hence prevents fertilization.

Used condoms should never be flushed in the toilets as they clog the drainage pipes. The best way to dispose is to wrap them in a tissue paper or old piece of paper and throw it in dustbin.



Unsafe/unplanned Sex could lead to Teen Pregnancies and Teen Abortions

Teenage Pregnancies/Abortion:

The last decade has witnessed a constant rise in sexual activity among adolescents in India. The main reason is child marriage and also the lack of proper sex education in schools which leads teenagers to have unprotected sex. Problems like early marriage, illiteracy and high infant mortality rates are basically the reasons that cause pregnancies in young girls between 14 to 19 years.

There are many factors which lead to teen pregnancy:

1. **Lack of proper sex education:** There is no proper sex education in schools or at home
2. **Poverty:** Teens don't even get the chance to get educated
3. **Child marriages:** Young girls are married off and they get pregnant at a tender age of 15 or 16
4. **Nuclear families:** Lack of guidance from elders of the family
5. **Peer pressure:** Teens hear their friends doing it without getting pregnant and they want to try it too otherwise their friends will call them cowards of not having the courage to take risks
6. **Exposure to media:** There is no filtration of the obscene contents. They see the heroes and heroines do it and so they want to do it too
7. **Drinking and smoking:** Abuse of drugs make them loose conscious of what's right and wrong
8. **Lack of supportive parents and family:** A child deprived of love will look for pleasure and happiness elsewhere
9. **Exposure to sexual violence:** Sexual abuse at home. Unhealthy environment at home
10. **Stressful lifestyle:** A depressive lifestyle can always lead an individual to look out for something which in which they will find momentary pleasure



Risk Factors and Complications of Teen Pregnancies

- ▶ **Potential Complications for the Teenage Mother:** *In teenage pregnancies there is increased risk of death of mother and child. They may undergo premature delivery. Baby may be born small and have low birth weight which will eventually lead to death of the baby*
 - Death rate at child birth is shocking. The feeble teenage bodies cannot take the pressure
 - Suffer from premature labor
 - They are highly prone to get Anemia, placental problems
 - They might undergo depression
- ▶ **Potential Complications for the Baby:** *Baby is born before 9 months and be still born.*
 - Born under-weight
 - Pre-mature babies
 - As they are born pre-mature and under-weight they stand the chance of dying within the first month itself
 - It might also lead to mental retardation or other disabilities

Child bearing is not an easy thing. It takes a toll both mentally as well as physically. There is a reason people decide a certain age for pregnancy. The body is not physically ready before 20 years of age to take the burden of pregnancy and child birth. Teen mothers lack all of this knowledge.

It is important to take the right decision at the right time to avoid such pregnancies. By doing this you will not only save your life but also your baby's.

In case of unwanted pregnancy, please do not go to an unqualified practitioner. You may avail abortion services at the nearest PHC, through ANM or ASHA worker. Abortions carried out by unqualified persons may lead to RTIs, bleeding injury to the uterus or death.



Prevention of Teen Pregnancies/Unwanted Pregnancies

The use of contraception by teens is cost effective regardless of the method used. The following are the most commonly used:

- 1. Condoms:** This can be used by both men and women (Male condom, Female condom). It acts as a barrier to prevent pregnancies and also transmission of infectious diseases including HIV.
- 2. Oral Contraception:** This is most commonly used, but the success rate of prevention is poor. They are a combination of hormones that can be taken every day to prevent ovulation in women.
- 3. Emergency contraception:** Plan B pills (emergency contraceptive pills) are high doses of hormones that must be taken within 72 hours of unprotected intercourse or forced intercourse. They cannot be used on a regular basis.

Used condoms should never be flushed in the toilets, as they clog the drainage pipes. The best way to dispose is to wrap it in a paper and throw it in a bin.

The above information does not promote sexual indulgence. This is only for awareness and to highlight the risk involved in unprotected, forced and impulsive sexual acts.



A HEALTHY MOTHER HEALTHY FAMILY



Introduction

To Know about The Right Age of Marriage and First Pregnancy, Spacing between pregnancies is as important as maintaining a healthy Sexual Reproductive Health.

Puberty and Adolescent stage is related to the changes a body goes through. This is also a stage of sexual organ development in both boys and girls. These sexual organ development leads to the rise of sexual desires in individuals, irrespective of male or female gender.

In a country like ours, sexual character development is considered as the dawn of "Manhood" in boys and "Womanhood" in girls. Most of the adolescents in this age lack proper guidance and support from their parents and are left to fend for their own ways to deal with it. One easy way a community finds a solution for the adolescents is to push them into early marriages and thus increase their responsibilities and confusions alike.

Early marriage, leading to early pregnancies, and there after consecutive deliveries are not only a concern for the mother and child but also for the alarming increase in the population of the country.

Healthy timing and spacing of pregnancy helps women and families make informed decisions about delaying, spacing, or limiting their pregnancies to achieve the healthiest outcomes for the whole family. It is also essential to know the Right Age for Marriage and then the Right age to conceive.

Prohibition of Child Marriage Act states that a girl in India can't marry before the age of **18**, and a boy before **21**.

Child marriage is a major social concern and a violation of child rights, whether it happens to a girl or a boy, as it denies basic rights to health, nutrition, education, freedom from violence, abuse and deprives the child of her/his childhood. Marriage has a strong physical, emotional, intellectual and psychological impact.



Biological Effects of early marriage (Effects related through birth and physical body):

- ▶ Early Pregnancy is one of the most dangerous causes and consequences of Child Marriage. Girls who become pregnant at a young age face higher risks of maternal mortality and morbidity (sickness).
- ▶ Pregnancy during the first few years after puberty increases the risk of morbidity and mortality of mother and child
- ▶ Babies born to adolescent mothers are more likely to be still-born, pre-mature, underweight and at increased risk of dying in infancy due to the mother's young age. Infant deaths are 50% higher among babies born to mothers under 20 than among those born to women in their 20s.

These consequences are largely due to girl's physical immaturity where the pelvis and birth canal are not fully developed. Complications in labor are worse where emergency delivery services are rare as is the case in many societies where child marriage is prevalent.

First Pregnancy and Spacing:

Whether one is thinking about getting pregnant for the first time or one already has children, it's important to think about Pregnancy spacing. Knowing whether to or not to have children in the next few years can help the partners prepare for conception or choose appropriate contraception. After first child is born, family planning takes on new meaning. Having another child will change the family's lives. **It's important to consider the timing of pregnancies.**



What are the risks of spacing pregnancies too close together?

Pregnancy within 18 months of giving birth is associated with an increased risk of:

- Low birth weight
- Small size for gestational age
- Pre-term birth

Closely spaced pregnancies don't give a mother enough time to recover from the physical stress of one pregnancy before moving on to the next. For example, pregnancy and breast-feeding can deplete one's stores of essential nutrients, such as iron and foliate. If an adolescent becomes pregnant before replacing those stores, it could affect her health or her baby's health. Inflammation of the genital tract that develops during pregnancy and doesn't completely heal before the next pregnancy could also play a role.

A minimum of 3 years gap between pregnancies is recommended. Right age of marriage and spacing of child births will reduce health risks of both mother and child

In addition to reducing health risks, HTSP (Healthy timing and spacing) can improve quality of life. Children whose births are spaced at healthy intervals are more likely to be well nourished and well educated—and nourished, educated children are more likely to grow into economically successful adults.



**A healthy
mother is a
symbol of a
healthy family**



Health Services

The **Constitution of India** makes **health in India** the responsibility of state governments, rather than the central federal government. It makes every state responsible for "raising the level of **nutrition** and the **standard of living** of its people and the improvement of **public health** as among its primary duties". The National Health Policy was endorsed by the **Parliament of India** in 1983 and updated in 2002.

Public Health providers in India are as follows



There are Government colleges and Hospitals which are controlled by the State Government



District Hospitals and General Hospitals in respective districts



Taluka Hospitals serve the respective Talukas



Community Health Centers available in the respective urban areas



Primary Health Centers and Sub-Centers are the first point of contact between villagers and public health care system



1. AFHCs (Adolescent Friendly Health Clinics)

Adolescent Friendly Health Clinics (AFHCs), counselling and curative services are provided at primary, secondary and tertiary levels of care on fixed days and fixed time with due referral linkages. Commodities such as Iron & Folic Acid tablets and non-clinical contraceptives are also made available in the clinics for the adolescents.

Counselling services for adolescent on important health areas such as nutrition, puberty, RTI/STI prevention and contraception and delaying marriage and child bearing are being provided through recruitment and training of dedicated counsellors.

Commodities available at AFHC

- ▶ Weekly Iron & Folic Acid Supplementation & Albendazole
- ▶ Sanitary napkins
- ▶ Contraceptives
- ▶ Medicines



Information (IEC & IPC) at AFHC

- ▶ Counselling on nutrition, menstrual disorders, personal hygiene, menstrual hygiene, use of sanitary napkins, use of contraceptives, sexual concerns, depression, sexual abuse, gender violence, substance misuse and promoting healthy behavior to prevent non communicable diseases
- ▶ Posters/booklets/pamphlets, wall writing and visuals

Curative Services available at AFHC

- ▶ Treatment of severe malnutrition
- ▶ Treatment of common RTI/STI problems
- ▶ Treatment of menstrual disorders
- ▶ Treatment for sexual concerns of males and female

- ▶ Mental health service/management of depression
- ▶ Treatment of non-communicable diseases and other common ailments
- ▶ Management of injuries related to accidents and violence
- ▶ Management of substance misuse
- ▶ Treatment of non-communicable diseases like hypertension, stroke, cardiovascular diseases and diabetes

Other important services

- ▶ To delay first pregnancy, decrease teenage pregnancies and meet contraceptive needs of adolescents is an important mandate of the Adolescent Health Programme.
- ▶ Counselling on contraception and provision for emergency contraceptives and reversible contraceptives to prevent unwanted pregnancy and to delay teenage pregnancy will be provided at the AFHC.
- ▶ Pregnant adolescents are guided for early antenatal registration and ensure institutional delivery in order to prevent antenatal and postnatal complications.
- ▶ Outreach activities on Village Health and Nutrition day and health education sessions in school and community on appropriate age of marriage and adverse health consequences of teenage pregnancy are also organized.
- ▶ Reduction in maternal deaths among adolescent girls- AFHCs provide management of anaemia through iron supplementation and nutritional counselling.
- ▶ Through appropriate health facility referrals, early and safe abortion services are provided to adolescents.
- ▶ Reduction in incidence of sexually transmitted diseases and proportion of HIV positive cases in adolescents- Trained Medical officers at AFHC provide early treatment of common Reproductive tract infections / sexually transmitted infections.



- ▶ The health functionaries will ensure confidentiality, treatment compliance, partner management and follow-up.
- ▶ Linkage and referral to ICTC facilities is established to prevent HIV infections.
- ▶ Management of menstrual disorders, addressing sexual concerns of adolescence is ensured at appropriate level of facility.

2. Menstrual Hygiene Scheme

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has introduced a scheme for promotion of menstrual hygiene among adolescent girls in the age group of 10-19 year in rural areas.

Objectives of the scheme:

- ▶ To increase awareness among adolescent girls on Menstrual Hygiene
- ▶ To increase access to and use of high quality sanitary napkins to adolescent girls in rural areas.
- ▶ To ensure safe disposal of Sanitary Napkins in an environmentally friendly manner.

Under the scheme a pack of 6 sanitary napkins is provided under the NRHM's brand 'Freedays'.(These napkins are sold to the adolescents girls at Rs. 6 for a pack of 6 napkins in the village by the Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA).

Adolescents in need of any medical help can reach their nearest health service centers through Asha workers, Anganwadi workers or the ANMs. Apart from these, there are many NGOs, Community service providers and private health care centers that can help the youngsters in time of medical need.



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Notes





Improving the Lives of Adolescents