

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH SENSITIZATION

Every person at one point has to make life-changing decisions about their sexual and reproductive health. This sensitization aims to equip the reader with the knowledge required to make those decisions responsibly and therefore avoid being vulnerable to coercion, sexually transmitted infections and unintended pregnancy.

Before making the decision to be sexually active, one should note:

- There's a risk of sexually transmitted infections including HIV/AIDS and unintended pregnancy
- Sexual intercourse should be a consensual act: no partner should be coerced or forced into engaging in any sexual behavior.

Safe Sex Hygiene Practices:

1. Wash up/ clean yourself before and after sex, especially the genital region with running water. This will protect you and your partner from infection like urinary tract infection.
2. Do not douche. Try not to clean inside the vagina with soap or any prepackaged fluids as this can predispose one to infection
3. Avoid use of scented soaps, powders, scented tampons, scented pads, scented creams, sprays/perfume around the genital region.
4. Empty your urinary bladder before and after sex. This helps in flushing out microbes.
5. For women, always wipe from the front to the back. This prevents infection from being dragged from the perineal region to the vulva.
6. Drink plenty of water (above 8 glasses per day). This help in washing out/ rinsing the urinary tract.
7. Always wear loose fitting clean clothes. Cotton underwear is highly recommended as it is breathable and absorbs moisture. Avoid wearing underwear when going to bed, wear loose fitting shorts or pajamas instead.
8. Wash your hands before touching your/ your partner's genitals

9. Ensure you get treatment for any sort of genital/urinary infection to avoid passing to partner.
10. If you are sexually active and with a new partner, it is always wise to go get screened/tested for sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS.

If you and your partner have the following symptoms, seek medical attention:

1. Sores or bumps on the genitals or in the oral area
2. Painful or burning urination
3. Abnormal discharge from the penis
4. Unusual or odorous vaginal discharge
5. Unusual vaginal bleeding
6. Vaginal bleeding after sex
7. Pain during sex
8. Sores, swollen lymph nodes, particularly in the groin but sometimes more widespread
9. Lower abdominal pain
10. Fever
11. Rash over the trunk and groin region
12. Genital warts
13. Increased frequency in passing urine

How can you protect yourself?

1. Seek comprehensive sexuality education from a professional health provider before making any life changing decisions
2. Observe the hygiene practices above
3. Ensure correct use of a male/female condom to prevent sexually transmitted infections (incl HIV) and unintended pregnancy
4. Any suspicious symptoms should be reported to a professional health provider as soon as possible

5. If diagnosed with a sexually transmitted infection, ensure to adhere to treatment as advised by a health provider: effect necessary lifestyle changes and complete dose of medication given.
6. Avoid having multiple sexual partners at a time as this increases the risk for sexually transmitted infections
7. Get vaccinated against Hepatitis B. Girls/Women are also advised to receive vaccination against Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) which is known to cause Cervical Cancer. Consult a professional health provider to know if you qualify for the vaccination.
8. Consult a professional health provider for advice on whether you qualify for HIV Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) for prevention of HIV infection.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV)

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) refers to harmful acts directed at an individual based on their gender. GBV is a serious violation of human rights and a life-threatening health and protection issue.

GBV can happen to anyone, any gender and anywhere.

GBV can include sexual, physical, mental and economic harm inflicted in public or in private. It also includes threats of violence, coercion and manipulation. This can take many forms such as:

- Intimate partner violence
- Sexual violence, including rape
- Sexual harassment
- Psychological violence
- Child marriage
- Female genital mutilation

What to do if you undergo any form of GBV:

- Promptly report to a health facility for medical management: including prevention of sexually transmitted infections, HIV and unintended pregnancy
- Be open to receiving psychological counselling: do not blame yourself for the incident.
- Report the incidence to relevant authorities at the workplace, school and police