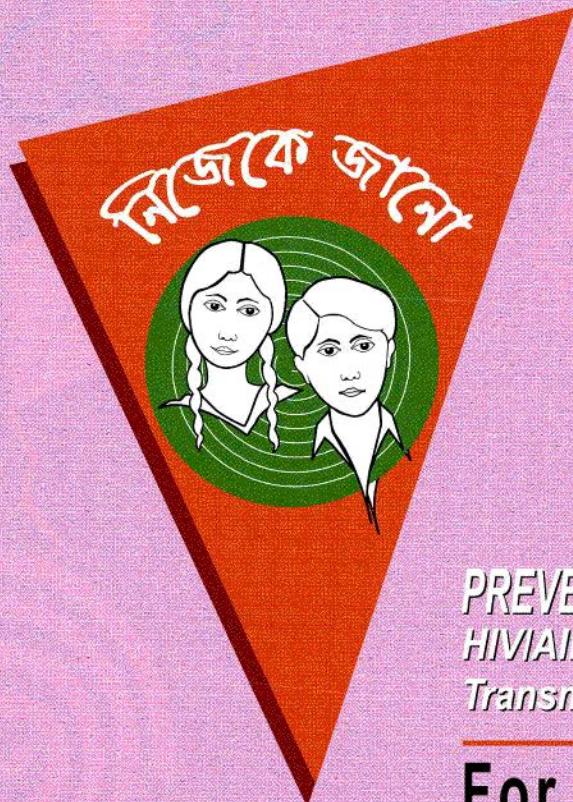
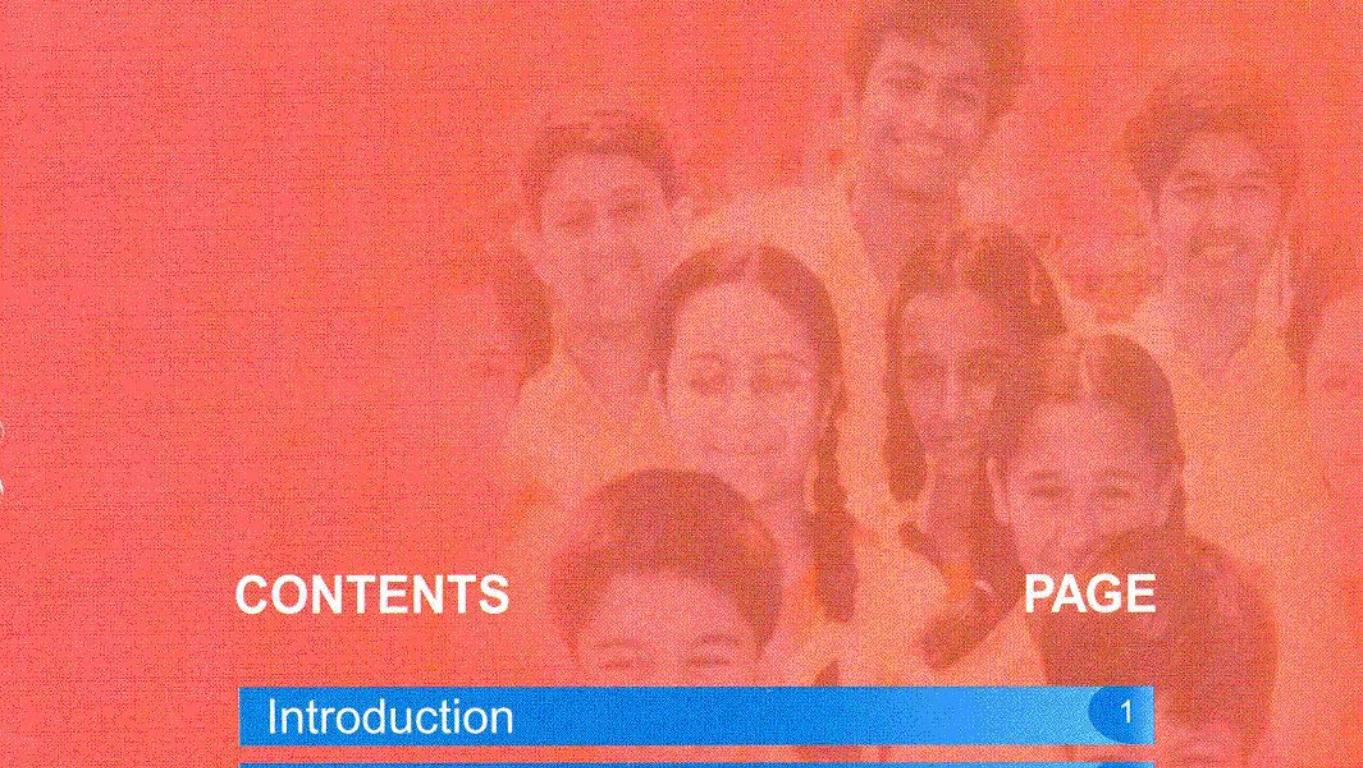


KNOW YOURSELF



PREVENTING RISKS TO OUR FUTURE
*HIV/AIDS and other Sexually
Transmitted Infections (STIs)*

For Adolescents



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FORWARD

A number of people and organizations have given their input in preparing the ***Nijeke Jano*** or "Know Yourself" series booklets. This booklet on HIV/AIDS and other STIs is one of four adolescent reproductive health booklets prepared on the basis of information compiled by the Family Health Research Project of ICDDR,B. The other booklets are on *Puberty, New Feelings, New Passions, and Marriage and Family Health*. The Bangladesh Center for Communication Programs prepared this booklet with financial assistance from United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and in collaboration with the following organizations:

- Family Health Research Project, ICDDR,B
- NGO Service Delivery Program (NSDP)
- UNFPA, UNICEF and UNAIDS
- Focus on Young Adults
- Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC)
- BCC Unit, Directorate of Family Planning

A specialist committee with representatives from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, educational institutes and various other non-government organizations met to review the content. The English version was produced with technical assistance from the Johns Hopkins University/Center for Communication Programs (JHU/CCP). The English version is a direct translation of the Bangla version, but contains a few technical aspects not included in the Bangla version due to cultural sensitivities. We express our gratitude to all who have made valuable contributions in writing, preparing and reviewing this booklet.



INTRODUCTION

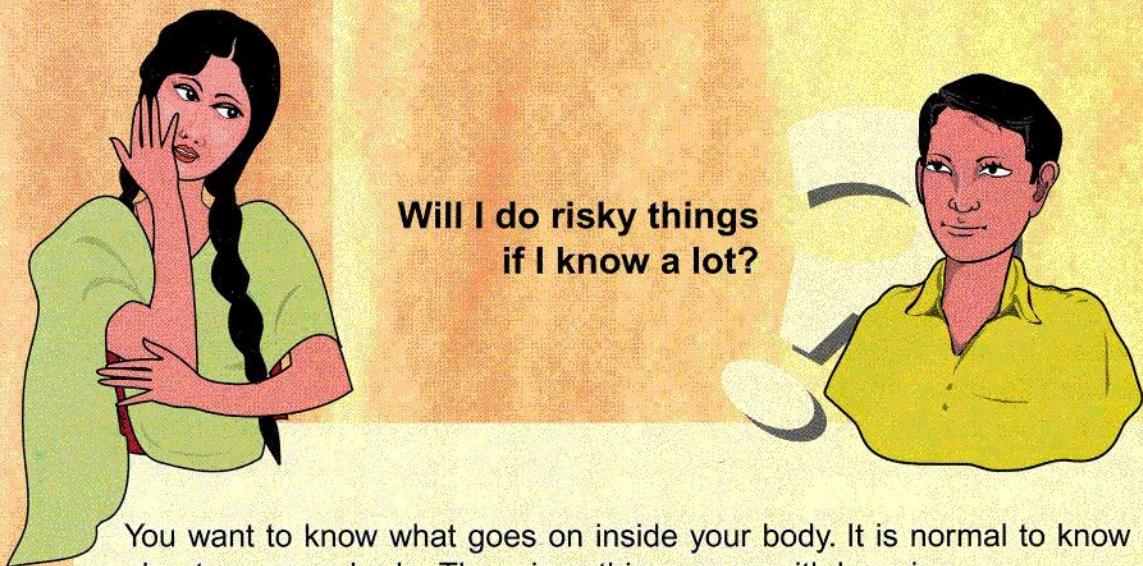
You experience various changes at different stages of your life. You also have different informational needs during these stages. During childhood, you depend on your parents and teachers to tell you everything you need to know and they make most decisions for you. During adolescence, the years between 10 and 19, you learn more about life. You begin to have questions and want to have more information on a whole range of topics, especially reproductive health issues. You need this information because you are beginning to make decisions on reproductive health issues for yourself.

In order to help you make good decisions during adolescence, we had to find out what information you were lacking. We talked with many boys and girls from all parts of Bangladesh to ask them how much they knew and what they wanted to know. We learned that many adolescents were informed on some issues but were curious to know a great deal more.

Through these discussions, we found that many of you feel uncomfortable asking your parents, family elders or service providers reproductive health questions. Many of you search for answers to your questions from friends, books, movies and magazines, but these sources may give you inaccurate information. In order to respond to your need for correct information, we collected questions from adolescents in Bangladesh and compiled this booklet of questions and answers about reproductive health.

In this booklet, we answer your questions regarding Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), including HIV/AIDS. Read this book carefully so that you have all the facts, know what is safe behavior and what is risky behavior. Most importantly, you should learn how to protect yourself from these diseases.

WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO KNOW



**Will I do risky things
if I know a lot?**

You want to know what goes on inside your body. It is normal to know about your own body. There is nothing wrong with knowing.

Some people think it is not right for young people to know about certain things such as physical relationships and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). They believe that such knowledge induces young people to engage in unhealthy sexual practices. However, it has been proven that comprehensive knowledge about a particular subject helps people make decisions regarding what is right (safe) and what is not right (risky), based on what could be the outcome of their behaviors.

This booklet answers questions about HIV/AIDS and other STIs. In order to understand these issues, it is important to know about your reproductive health system.

You already know that both a man and a woman are needed to conceive and create a child. The male and female body parts that are involved in the process of conception, pregnancy and giving birth to a child are called the "reproductive system".



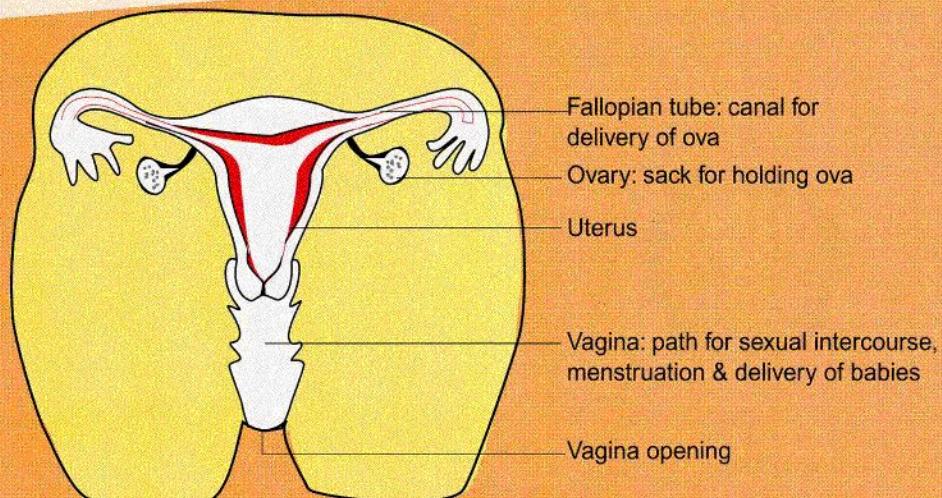
YOUR BODY

Female Reproductive System

There are many parts of the female reproductive system. Some can be seen from outside. However, there are other parts inside the body which you cannot see from outside. For example, inside a girl's lower abdomen there are two sacks for ova (eggs). These two sacks are called "ovaries". When a girl grows up, an ovum (one egg) matures each month inside one of the ovaries.

The uterus is in the lower abdomen between the two ovaries. Menstrual blood is formed in the uterus and it is here that the baby grows inside the mother. There are canals called "fallopian tubes" which connect the ovaries with the uterus. After an ovum matures, it travels through a fallopian tube to the uterus.

The entrance to the uterus is called the "vagina". It is the opening to the outside of the body. The vagina has several functions. For example, every month menstrual blood comes out through the vagina. Intimate sexual contact occurs here with the male penis that delivers sperm. During childbirth, a baby is delivered from the mother's uterus and comes out through the vagina.





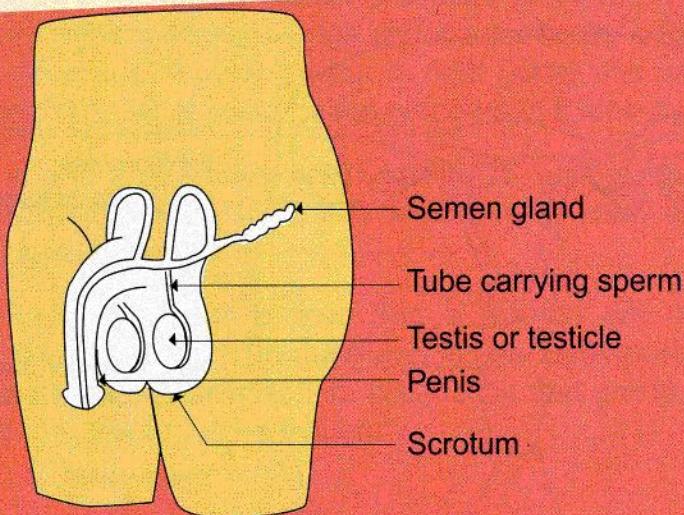
Male Reproductive System

There are many parts of the male reproductive system. Among these, some parts can be seen from outside and some parts are inside the body and cannot be seen from outside.

At the bottom of a boy's abdomen between his legs there is a hanging sack which is known as the "scrotum". There are two round testicles or testes hanging inside this sack. The penis hangs in front of the scrotum. When a boy reaches puberty, around 13 to 14 years, sperm forms in the testicles. Normally, sperm production continues for the rest of a male's life.

In a boy's lower abdomen, semen glands produce a thick, slippery fluid known as "semen". When sperm is formed inside the testicles, it travels through a tube that carries it to mix with semen. When a boy reaches puberty, this semen containing sperm comes out through the penis if he is sexually aroused. At this time, if his sperm meets with a female's ovum after sexual intercourse, the woman may become pregnant.

The penis is used for both urination and sexual intercourse. Though semen and urine come out through the same passage, they don't come out together. Under normal circumstances, the penis is small, soft and flexible but it becomes firm and erect when sexually aroused. The shape and size of the penis are not the same for everyone and this is normal.





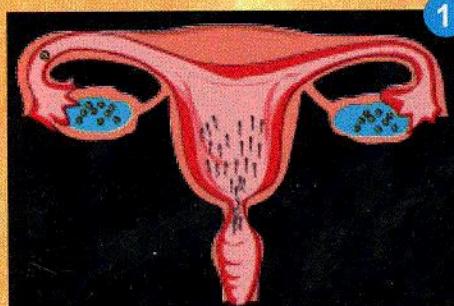
How does a woman become pregnant ?



Within the scrotum are testicles. These testicles produce millions of sperm that pass through the penis when it is erect. The sperm are ejaculated through the penis during the height of sexual stimulation.

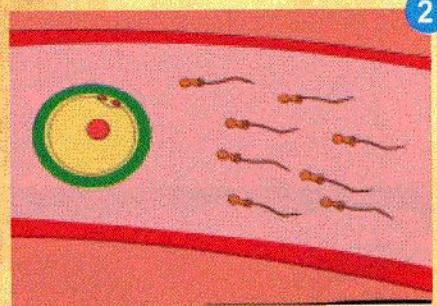
For a woman to conceive and become pregnant, sperm must travel from the vagina to the uterus and then into one of the fallopian tubes where they meet with an ovum. The successful union of a sperm and ovum becomes an embryo which travels down the fallopian tube and attaches itself to the uterus wall where it develops into a fetus and then eventually a full-size baby.

Stages of Conception



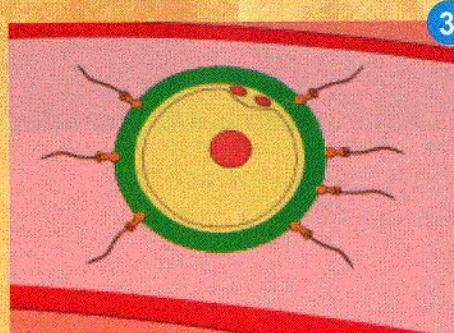
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1. Millions of sperm from the male enter the female's vagina while an ovum is in the fallopian tube.



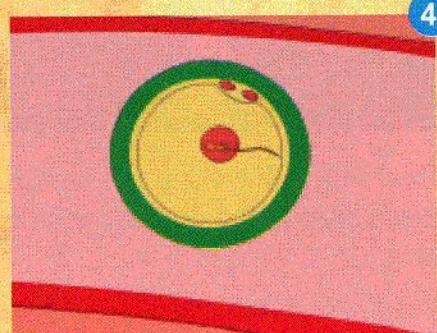
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2. Sperm travel in the fallopian tube towards the ovum.



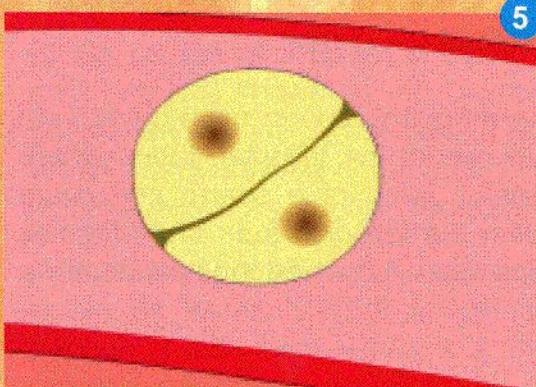
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3. Sperm approach the ovum.



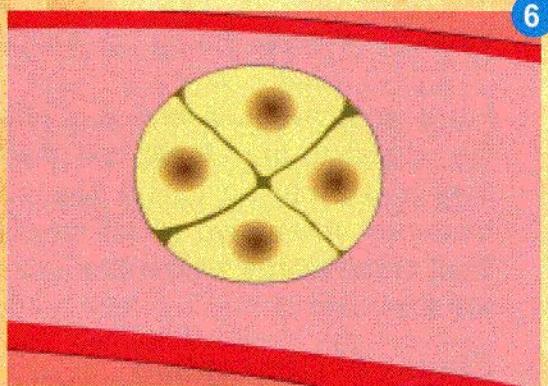
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4. One sperm fertilizes the ovum.



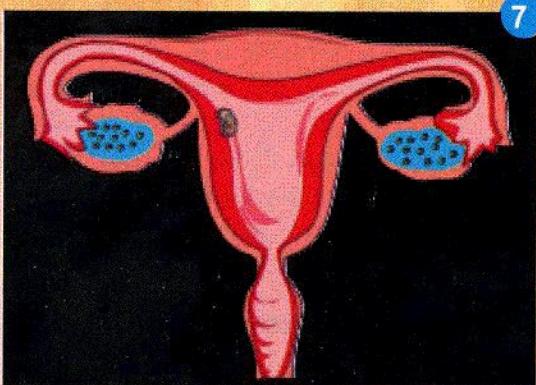
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5. Cells in the fertilized ovum divide.



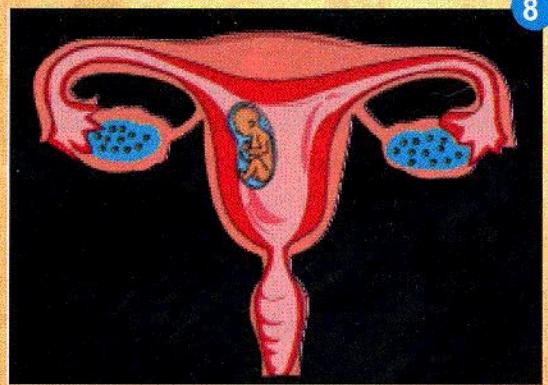
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6. Cells re-divide and the ovum becomes an embryo.



7

7. The embryo travels to the uterus and embeds itself in the wall to become a fetus.



8

8. The fetus grows inside the uterus to become a baby.

What does "having sex" mean?



When using the words "having sex", people are usually referring to "sexual intercourse" which is intimate sexual contact between the sexual organs of a male and a female. The words "having sex" can also refer to "oral sex" which is contact between the mouth and sexual organs of a male or female, or "anal sex" which is contact between the male sex organ and the anus of a man or a woman. Pregnancy is not possible through oral or anal sex but diseases can be transmitted from an infected person to an uninfected person through such sexual contact.

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS

What are STIs and how are they transmitted ?

Can there be any disease in the sexual organs ?

Diseases that transmit through intimate sexual contact are called Sexually Transmitted Infections or STIs. Some common STIs are gonorrhea, syphilis, chlamydia, genital herpes and warts, hepatitis-B, hepatitis-C and HIV/AIDS. STIs may cause infections in different parts of the body. Although HIV/AIDS is an STI, it can be transmitted in other ways. (See pages 15 to 23).

How are STIs transmitted ?

STIs are transmitted through unprotected intimate sexual contact with an infected person. Intimate sexual contact can be sex between the genitals of a man and a woman, mouth to genital or anal sex. Some STIs can be transmitted in ways other than sexual activities, such as when the blood of an infected person is given to an uninfected person or if someone uses a syringe and needle that is contaminated with the blood of an infected person. However, STIs are not transmitted through normal contact such as shaking someone's hand or hugging.

I don't engage in intimate sexual contact. Is there any possibility of getting infected with these diseases?

Some STIs can also be transmitted in ways other than unprotected intimate sexual contact with an infected person. One particularly risky behavior is taking injections or injecting drugs with the same syringe and needle as an infected person.

What causes vaginal discharge? What should we do when such things happen ?

I don't know why liquid runs. My neighbor says there's no cure for this disease. Is it true ?

Is treatment required when there is excessive white discharge ?

When a girl reaches the age of 12 or 13, a kind of white or light yellow discharge may come out of her vagina. This kind of discharge is normal and not an STI. The volume of discharge may vary from girl to girl. Normal discharge may be dry and sticky or thin and watery.

But when there is some kind of infection in the vagina, the discharge looks different. It may look foamy, watery or thick and yellowish with a bad smell. Sometimes there may be fever, abdominal pain, itching or a burning sensation in the vagina. If these symptoms occur, consult a doctor or health worker for advice and treatment.

Infection of the reproductive organs may be due to various reasons such as: if clean cloths are not used during menstruation; if cleanliness is not maintained during delivery of a child; if a woman has sexual relations with an infected person; or if medical instruments are not disinfected properly before use.

Many people do not have a clear idea about STIs.

What are the signs of STIs? Where is treatment available?

Both males and females can become infected with STIs. In most cases, STIs can be prevented by using condoms. The signs and symptoms for a man infected by STIs are pain or a burning sensation during urination, oozing of pus or abnormal discharge from the penis; sore or rash around the genitals and anus including itching, boils and swelling of testes, among others.

The signs and symptoms for a woman infected by STIs are abnormal discharge from the vagina, discomfort during intercourse, pain or burning sensation during urination, blisters around the vagina, boils or swelling of the opening of the uterus or pain in the lower abdomen, among others.

However, many STIs cause few or no symptoms in women and men and go untreated. As a result, the person may not realize that he/she has an STI. Many people are also not aware of the symptoms of STIs and do not know that they have an STI. Women are at serious risk for complications from STIs and should take extra care to protect themselves.

Signs or Symptoms of some STIs

Signs/Symptoms	Male/Female	Disease
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drops of pus from the penis Pain or burning sensation during urination 	Male	Gonorrhea and/or Chlamydia
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oozing of yellowish pus from the vagina Unusual vaginal bleeding Pain in lower abdomen or pain during intercourse Painful and difficult urination But sometimes there is no sign 	Female	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initially a painless sore that appears on penis, vagina or anus and goes away without treatment, but the disease keeps spreading in the body Swelling of glands in various parts of the body Weeks or months later, the person may have a sore throat, skin rashes or mild fever Without treatment, syphilis causes heart disease, paralysis, brain damage and even death 	Male and Female	Syphilis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vaginal burning and itching Foamy green-yellow fluid with bad smell Pain or burning when urinating 	Female	Trichomoniasis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Watery, white fluid from penis Pain or burning when urinating 	Male	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One or more painful small blisters on vagina, penis or around the anus Blisters bur open and become scabs. Sores can last for 3 weeks or more with first infection and then disappear New blisters appear from time to time because the virus stays in the body 	Male and Female	Herpes Genitalia

Source: Based on CDC reference and Contraceptive Technology Handbook

If any of the above symptoms appear, go to a doctor or health worker as soon as possible. Even if there are no signs but you suspect something, then also consult a doctor. If detected early and properly treated most STIs can be cured.

Treatment of STIs

One of my cousins once complained of sores and pus in his penis. He bought some medicine from a roadside vendor but he was not cured. Where can one get proper treatment for these diseases ?

I bought medicine from a vendor in the bazaar, but it did not work. Where should I go for proper treatment ?

If you have signs or symptoms of STIs, or suspect that you might have an STI, then you must go to a qualified doctor or health worker without delay. Many people go to quacks or roadside vendors who promise cures in order to sell their potions. However, instead of curing the disease, these medicines can cause serious complications. If you think you have an STI or had intimate sexual contact with someone whom you think might have an STI, go to a doctor or health service provider without delay.

If you are infected with an STI, your partner should also visit a doctor. An infected person and his/her partner should follow the advice of the doctor and complete the full course of recommended medication, even if the symptoms disappear. If you are infected or suspect you have an STI, use a condom every time you have sex with your partner to protect him or her. Discuss all issues openly with a doctor or health service provider and ask any questions you may have. There should be no reason to be shy on these important matters. Remember that the doctor will not know why you are visiting or even know you are sexually active unless you tell him or her.

Can a person become sterile if he/she has an STI?



Some STIs may cause:

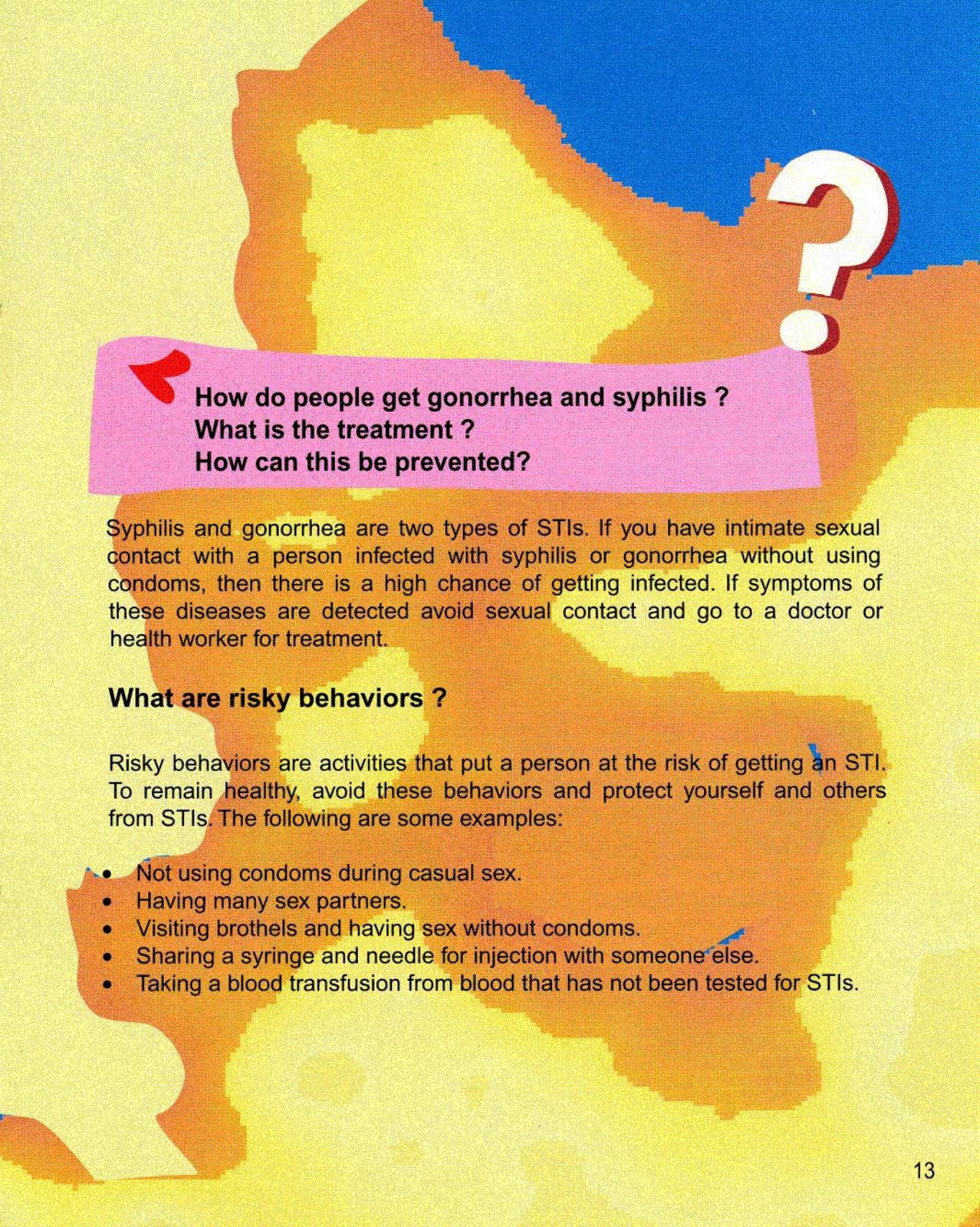
- sterility (inability to conceive a child)
- a fetus in the womb to die
- a baby to be born with blindness
- a baby to be born with physical deformity
- cancer in the uterus opening
- constant pain
- increased risk of HIV/AIDS infection
- heart failure
- brain damage
- death

Various types of complications may develop if STIs are not treated properly and quickly. A cure may become difficult if you wait.

How do STIs occur?

Is it possible to have STIs after having sex only once?

STIs transmit from an infected person to an uninfected person through intimate sexual contact, including sex between the genital organs of a man and a woman, mouth to genital sex or anal sex without using a condom. If intimate sexual contact takes place without using condoms with an infected person, the partner may get infected even through one sexual contact.



How do people get gonorrhea and syphilis ? What is the treatment ? How can this be prevented?

Syphilis and gonorrhea are two types of STIs. If you have intimate sexual contact with a person infected with syphilis or gonorrhea without using condoms, then there is a high chance of getting infected. If symptoms of these diseases are detected avoid sexual contact and go to a doctor or health worker for treatment.

What are risky behaviors ?

Risky behaviors are activities that put a person at the risk of getting an STI. To remain healthy, avoid these behaviors and protect yourself and others from STIs. The following are some examples:

- Not using condoms during casual sex.
- Having many sex partners.
- Visiting brothels and having sex without condoms.
- Sharing a syringe and needle for injection with someone else.
- Taking a blood transfusion from blood that has not been tested for STIs.

Ways to prevent STIs:

- Delay your first sexual experience.
- Abstain from having intimate sexual contact until you are married or in a mature relationship with a trusted partner who has been tested.
- Limit sexual activities to only one trusted partner.
- Use a condom properly during every intimate sexual contact where there is risk of infection.
- Take injections with a sterilized or disposable syringe and needle.
- Take blood transfusions that have been tested to be free of STIs.

Is it correct that you get STIs only if you visit sex workers? How does this happen ?

Many think that sex workers are the only people from whom you can get STIs. However, STIs are not only transmitted in brothels. You can get an STI through intercourse with any infected person if you don't use a condom. As sex workers have sex with many people, their chance of getting infected or infecting others is greater. But in reality, any infected person can transmit STIs.

For instance, if a man gets infected with an STI after visiting a sex worker and then goes home and has unprotected sex with his wife, then he will likely infect his wife with the STI. Therefore, it is our duty to protect ourselves and our families by avoiding such behavior --- or by using condoms.

HIV/AIDS

How does one get HIV/AIDS?

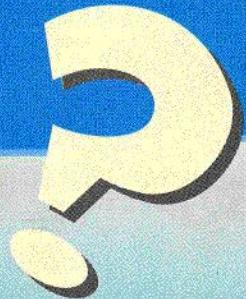
What is the name of the virus that causes it?

The name of the virus that causes HIV/AIDS is:

H = Human

I = Immuno-deficiency

V = Virus



AIDS stands for:

A = Acquired

I = Immune

D = Deficiency

S = Syndrome

The virus that causes AIDS is called "HIV". This disease has two stages. When a person is first infected, HIV enters special white blood cells in the blood and begins to make billions of copies of itself. Healthy white blood cells are part of the immune system which is needed to fight infections and HIV destroys these blood cells. The second stage, called "AIDS", starts when the body's immune system or resistance power to various disease is quite damaged. When a person has AIDS, different types of diseases attack the body. No cure for AIDS has been found, to date.

How long does it take for the disease to progress from HIV to AIDS ? How can this disease be diagnosed?

There is no fixed time period for how long it takes from the time HIV enters a body until the immune system is damaged and the person enters the AIDS stage. It may vary from 5 to 10 years. The transition time from HIV to AIDS depends on many factors including the infected person's overall health, nutrition, and mental health.

I have heard of HIV/AIDS. What is this?

People laughed when I asked them. I guess it is something bad.

What is AIDS? How does it occur? Is there any treatment for AIDS?



AIDS is caused by HIV. HIV is found in the blood, semen and vaginal fluid of an infected person. This disease is mostly transmitted through intimate sexual contact with an infected person. But the virus may also be transmitted through using an infected syringe and needle or from an infected mother to her child.

There are no symptoms or problems in the body immediately after exposure to HIV. It cannot be ascertained by looking at a person whether he/she is carrying HIV or not. Only a blood test can identify HIV's presence in the body.

To date, no preventive vaccine for the disease has been discovered. There are drugs that retard the progression of HIV to AIDS, but these drugs are very expensive and not available for most people in Bangladesh.

I asked two of my cousin sisters,
how does someone get AIDS?

HIV is transmitted in the following ways

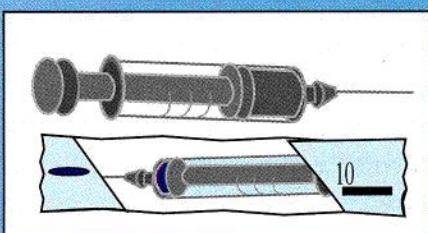
- If you have intimate sexual contact with an infected person - either vaginal, anal or oral - the HIV virus can be transmitted from the infected person's body to his/her partner.



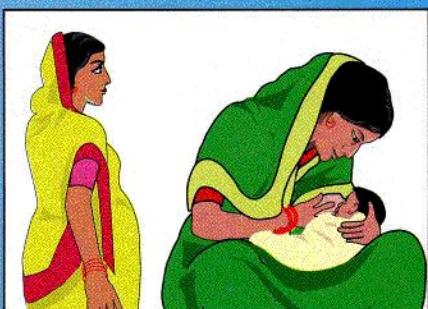
- If blood of an HIV-infected person is given to another person.



- If a syringe and needle used by an HIV infected person is used immediately by another without thoroughly disinfecting it before use.



- From an infected mother to a child there is an overall 30 to 40% chance of transmission when the child is in the womb, during delivery or through breast feeding.



Can you tell if someone has HIV/AIDS from looking at them?

It cannot be detected by looking at a person whether they are carrying HIV in their body or not. He/she may look healthy and normal like any other person. Only through a special blood test can it be determined whether he/she is a carrier of the virus or not. Therefore, even if a person looks healthy and strong, he/she may have HIV and if you have intimate sexual contact with him/her without a condom, then the virus can be transmitted to you.

During the HIV stage, the carrier of the virus will not realize that he/she has been infected as there is no discomfort or illness. He/she will also not realize if the virus is entering the body of a sexual partner through intimate sexual contact. Similarly, when an infected person has intimate sexual contact with other people, he/she will transmit the virus to them unknowingly. In this way HIV is spreading throughout the world in an epidemic form.



How many people in the world have HIV/AIDS?

Worldwide there are almost 40 million people living with the disease. Approximately half of them became infected between the ages of 15 and 24. Globally, every day over 7,000 more young people become infected – about five per minute. Although many young people have HIV/AIDS in the world, the epidemic among youth remains largely invisible, both to themselves and to society as a whole. Young people often carry HIV for years without knowing that they are infected. As a consequence, the epidemic spreads before people realize there is a problem.

I have heard that if a couple has frequent intimate sexual contact then they may get HIV/AIDS. Is this correct ?



If one of the partners had intimate sexual contact with an HIV infected person in the past, then that partner may be infected with HIV and could pass the infection to their current partner. The spread of HIV depends on whether one sexual partner has HIV, together with the frequency of sexual contact. If neither partner has the virus and if they have intimate sexual contact with each other only, then there is no possibility of them infecting each other with HIV.



I have heard that if many men have intimate sexual contact with one woman, and if a healthy man then has intimate sexual contact with her, the man will get HIV/AIDS. Is this right?

If a person has many partners, then their chance of getting an STI, including HIV/AIDS, increases. If many men have intimate sexual contact with one woman, and if one of the men has HIV in his body, the virus may enter the body of the woman and then may be transmitted to other men. As HIV-infected people can look healthy, it is not possible to say whether they are carrying the virus or not. That is why you should protect yourself from HIV/AIDS. Abstain from having sexual contact if you are unsure about the other person, be faithful to your partner or use condoms.

Does a rat bite cause HIV/AIDS ?



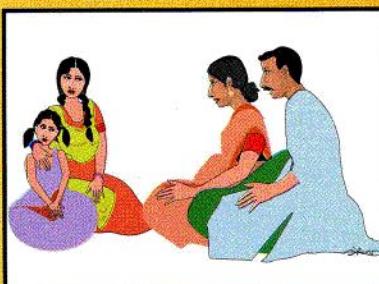
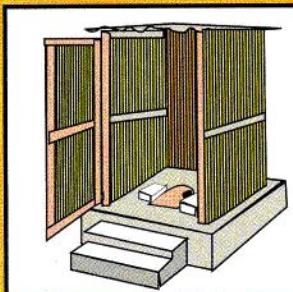
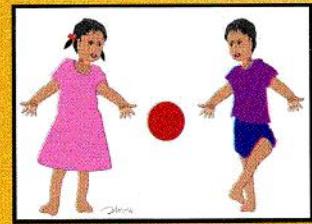
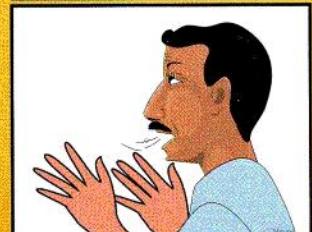
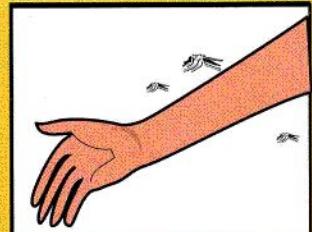
Rat or insect bites do not cause HIV/AIDS.

Should we be worried if there is someone with HIV/AIDS in our neighborhood ?

There are many inaccurate rumors about HIV/AIDS. Some say if there is a person living with HIV/AIDS in the neighborhood, the neighbors have reason to be afraid. They fear that they will get HIV/AIDS from the infected person. Sometimes they behave brutally toward such people. There is no reason to be cruel to someone who is sick with HIV/AIDS. You can touch, hug, eat from the same plate, and share a home with them without getting or spreading the disease. If you understand how HIV spreads, you will be able to treat sick people with care while protecting yourself. You will not fear, but you will instead be comfortable and behave normally around people infected with HIV/AIDS.

How HIV does NOT spread from an infected person:

- Living in the same room.
- Eating or playing together.
- Sharing the same bed.
- Using the same clothes or towel.
- Sharing the same dinner plates, utensils or cups.
- Studying together.
- Through the bites of mosquitoes or other insects.
- Through body touches such as shaking hands, hugging or kissing. (But it is better to avoid deep kissing with a great deal of saliva.)
- Through sneezing, coughing, spitting or breathing.
- Using the same toilet, latrine or bathroom.
- Swimming together.



Symptoms and Treatment of HIV/AIDS

What happens when one has HIV/AIDS ?

HIV spreads through the body and slowly destroys the capability of the body to fight diseases. After some years, the disease progresses to the AIDS stage and diseases such as diarrhea, TB, pneumonia, and some forms of skin cancer attack the body. The person loses weight and becomes very weak. It cannot be said for sure which diseases the person may get. This can vary from person to person.

Has a medicine for HIV/AIDS been discovered ? Is there any treatment of HIV/AIDS?

In some countries medicines and treatment regimens have been introduced. The treatment, which only slows down the progression of HIV to the AIDS stage, is expensive. These drugs have to be taken daily for as long as the patient lives and there are side effects. When other diseases attack the weakened body, doctors try to reduce the suffering by giving relevant medicine for those particular diseases. This may prolong the life of the patient. But, as the body's natural resistance power is destroyed, there is little chance of a full cure from these infections. AIDS patients usually die in 5 to 8 years from the time they contact the disease.

I have heard that if one has intimate sexual contact with those who are suffering from killer diseases, then he/she will get HIV/AIDS. Are TB, cholera and typhoid incurable diseases?

TB, cholera or typhoid can be fully cured with proper treatment. HIV/AIDS is considered an incurable disease because there is no cure or vaccine, at present. Another difference is that HIV/AIDS spreads mostly through intimate sexual contact whereas, TB, cholera and typhoid do not. However, a person with HIV/AIDS is more inclined to get TB, cholera or typhoid because their ability to fight infection is low.

Our duty towards people living with HIV/AIDS

What should we do when someone has HIV/AIDS?

If you find out that someone has HIV/AIDS, you should act normally towards that person. You know how HIV is transmitted and how it is not transmitted. It is not transmitted through most normal daily activities. When the infection progresses to AIDS, then the infected person will likely get sick from other diseases. If you have any questions, then consult a health worker or doctor.

If HIV is detected in the blood of someone you know, then you should not hate or fear that person or keep him or her away from you. It is your duty to show him or her sympathy, take care and extend a helping hand to the person living with HIV/AIDS.

What should I do if I get HIV/AIDS?

If you have tested positive for HIV, then seek counseling from a doctor, health or social worker that you trust. In such a situation, try to remain calm and maintain your health. It is natural that you will be anxious and worried, so it is important that you find someone to talk to. If you become mentally weak and live an unhealthy lifestyle, then the disease may progress more quickly. If HIV is found in the blood, then to delay the onset of AIDS and to protect yourself and others:

- Maintain personal cleanliness and hygiene.
- Eat nutritious and vitamin-enriched food.
- Use your own toothbrush and razor and do not lend it to others.
- Do regular work, take lots of rest and exercise daily.
- Use condoms during intimate sexual contact.
- In the case of women, if you want to have a child or breastfeed a child, take the advice from a qualified doctor or health worker.
- Avoid worries, and try to live a normal life. A positive attitude will help delay the progression of the disease from HIV to AIDS.

SOME MORE THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW

Can intimate sexual contact between boys cause some disease?



Does homosexual sex cause health problems?

Intimate sexual contact between males (anal sex) without using a condom, is risky if infection status is not known. From such relationships, STIs, including HIV/AIDS, may occur. Anal sex between male and female can also spread diseases, including HIV, if one person is infected.

Is there an alternative to condoms that would prevent HIV/AIDS and other STIs ?



Is there any method other than condoms that would prevent disease ?

There are two main ways that can prevent diseases if a condom is not used.

The first way is to abstain from sexual activities until you are sure about your partner or you both get tested.

The second one is to keep sexual relationships limited between two people and stay faithful to one another. If either partner in a sexual relationship has a sexual relationship with another person, then there is a greater possibility of getting HIV.

If the above two conditions cannot be met, then you must use condoms to protect yourself from HIV/AIDS and other STIs. There is no other proven way to prevent disease transmission during intimate sexual contact.

We had a friend who used to masturbate. Is it bad ?

Does masturbation damage health ?

Does masturbation cause STIs like syphilis ?

Is excessive masturbation bad for health ?

Masturbation does not cause any harm to the body. There is no way to get syphilis from masturbating. There are rumors that masturbation weakens the body and causes sexual impotency. Some believe that masturbation is immoral and they suffer from guilt. In actual fact, masturbation is a way to relieve sexual stress but should be done in moderation. Excessive masturbation may affect normal work or studies.

Is it right to establish sexual relationships before marriage?

Our society does not accept sexual relationships before marriage. If the relationship becomes known to others, then it is a matter of great shame for the whole family. But under certain conditions such relationships may develop. Some young boys and girls think that since they are going to marry soon, there is no harm in developing such relationships. However, it is advisable to wait for a number of reasons. A sexual relationship before marriage may lead to unwanted pregnancy. The greater number of sexual partners a boy or girl has, the greater chance of transmission of HIV/AIDS and other STIs. Therefore, sexual relationships before marriage may create problems for young people and their families. However, if a sexual relationship develops, it is essential to use condoms.

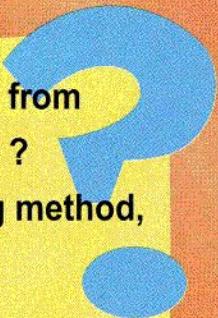
ADVANTAGES OF USING CONDOMS



We have heard on the radio that one may stay safe from various STIs by using condoms. How it is possible ?

I know that condoms are used as a family planning method, but does it protect from HIV/AIDS ?

How do condoms protect us from diseases ?



A condom is made of very thin rubber or similar materials. Condoms work as a barrier so that the penis does not come into direct contact with the vagina. As mentioned earlier in this booklet, HIV/AIDS and other STIs transmit through blood, sperm and vaginal fluids. If there is a barrier and these fluids cannot pass between partners, then they are protected. STIs, including HIV, cannot enter the other partner's body through a condom. Therefore, condoms perform two functions. They:

- Prevent pregnancy
- Prevent transmission of STIs, including HIV

Proper condom use does not necessarily reduce pleasure during intimate sexual contact. In fact, it may prolong the time before orgasm and increase pleasure.

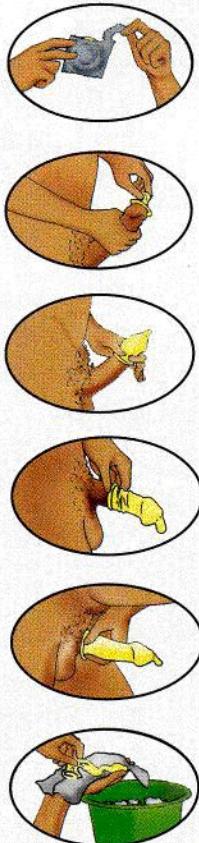
CORRECT METHOD OF USING CONDOMS

A new condom has to be used during each sexual encounter. The packet must not be opened before using the condom. The condom should be taken out carefully from the packet so that it does not tear. The condom has to be put on the erect penis just before sexual intercourse. Before wearing it, pinch the tip of the condom (during ejaculation the semen deposits into this empty part of the condom) and then unroll it slowly over the erect penis up to the base. The condom must cover the entire length of the penis.

After ejaculation, press the base of the condom and roll it down while the penis is still in the erect condition. Tie a knot in the used condom, wrap it up with a paper and then destroy it or put it in the garbage, out of the reach of children.

- There is lubricating substance in some types of condoms. If more is required, use a water-soluble substance like glycerin. Oil-based lubricants, like vaseline, can cause condoms to burst, making them ineffective.
- Condoms must be used for all kinds of sexual activity.
- Never use condoms after their expiry date, which is usually mentioned on the packet.

Before using condoms for the first time, it is better to be taught how to use them properly by a knowledgeable person.



INFORMATION AND SERVICE CENTERS

Where can we go for more information
and health services ?

After reading this booklet, if you have more questions, then find someone you trust who you think will have correct information. This person may be in your family, a trusted older friend, health worker or doctor.

If you want health service or advice regarding the issues mentioned in this booklet, you may contact the following places:

- NGO clinics
- Government health centers
- Smiling Sun clinics
- BRAC health clinics
- Marie Stopes clinics
- SMC Shurakhy private clinics
- SMC's Tele Jiggasha

Find the kind of person at the service facility with whom you feel comfortable to talk and ask questions.

If you need health care service, you will need to go to the facility and ask for help. Remember that the health worker will not know your questions unless you ask them. If at first you come across someone who does not help you, look for someone else and keep trying.

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