

KNOW YOURSELF



NEW FEELINGS, NEW PASSIONS

For Adolescents

PREFACE

A number of people and organizations have given their input in preparing the 'Nijeke Jano' or "Know Yourself" series booklets. This booklet on New Feelings, New Passions 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, Marriage and Family Health, and Preventing Risks to Our Future. The Bangladesh Center for Communication Programs (BCCP) has prepared this booklet with financial assistance from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and in collaboration with the following organizations:

- Bangladesh Center for Communication Programs (BCCP)
- Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC)
- BCC Unit, Directorate of Family Planning
- Family Health Research Project (ICDDR, B)
- Focus on Young Adults
- NGO Service Delivery Program (NSDP)
- Marie Stopes Clinic Society
- Social Marketing Company (SMC)
- UNFPA
- UNICEF
- USAID

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.

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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 need 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 these 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 and asked them how much they knew and what they wanted to know about reproductive health. We learned that many of you are informed on some issues but are curious to know a great deal more. We also found that many of you feel uncomfortable asking your parents, family elders or service providers about reproductive health. You search for answers from friends, books, movies and magazines, but these sources often give inaccurate information. In order to respond to your need for correct information, we collected questions from adolescents and compiled this booklet of questions and answers about reproductive health.

In this booklet, we answer your questions about the new feelings that you experience during adolescence. Read this book carefully so that you have all the facts about relationships, feelings, family and planning for your future.

PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL CHANGES



During adolescence your body and mind undergo many changes. These changes take place because of the presence of hormones. Hormones are chemicals that are produced in the brain and other parts of the body that enable you to eventually reproduce (have babies). Some of you may experience these changes early, some a little later. How fast you grow and how big you grow are based on characteristics you inherited from your parents as well as what you eat and drink.

Girls

When you are between 10-12 years you will grow taller; hair will grow under your arms and around your genitals; you will develop breasts and begin to menstruate. These are all signs that you are growing up. All these changes happen to every girl, but not at the same time.

Menstruation usually starts between age 10 and 13 and will continue until you are over 40 years old. During the first few years of menstruation you might feel some discomfort or cramping in your lower abdomen but with time this pain should disappear. You can become pregnant anytime after you begin to menstruate, but it is not until you are at least 20 years of age that you are physically and emotionally ready to have a child.

Boys

Changes in your body begin to take place anywhere from 13 to 14 years of age. You become taller; your genitals grow; your shoulders broaden and you become muscular; hair grows on your body and face; and your voice grows deeper.

During this time you might experience a "wet dream" which is an emission of semen containing sperm during your sleep. These events are all a normal part of growing up and indicate your body's ability to reproduce.



Both Boys and Girls

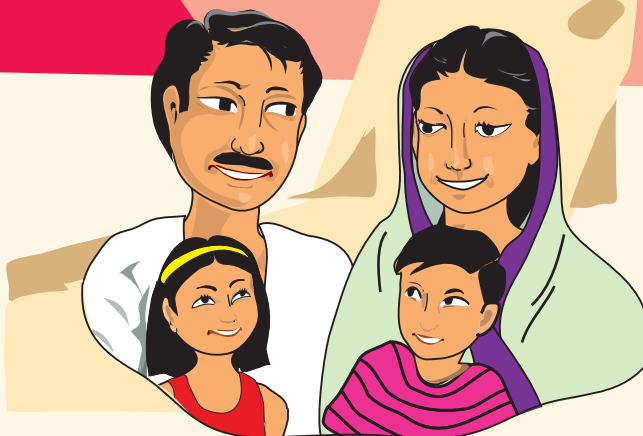
During this time it is very important to bathe frequently and carefully wash the underarm and genital area. Your facial skin may also become oily and you might develop pimples or acne.

During adolescence emotional changes also take place. Because of hormone surges in your body, you might feel happy at one moment and then sad at the next. You may want to be alone sometimes and surrounded by friends at other times. Members of the opposite sex may suddenly be very attractive to you. You might take more interest in the way you look or dress. This is a time when you, yourself, might not understand your own feelings. You may be indecisive about everything. Like your body, your mind is growing.

Adolescence is the age of curiosity. This is a time when you want to know about your own body and about the relationship between a man and a woman. This is also a time you need to be very careful; your intense emotions may lead you into risky situations. It is during this time of life that you most need to look to your parents and guardians or service providers for advice. You want to be an adult and be independent, but you need the guidance of your elders to help you along this path. They are your supporters and know you better than anyone else. You should ask for their help if you have any problems or questions.

Remember, these changes are only temporary. Once you get older you will understand your own needs and preferences and will feel more normal.

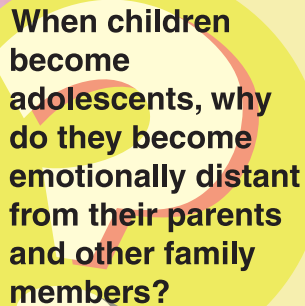
FAMILIAL RELATIONSHIP



At birth a child is both physically and mentally dependent on others. The child starts life with the love and care of parents and other family members. Everyone needs to be cared for when they are very young and most children are lucky and grow up with the love of a family. The bond that exists within a family is a close and sweet relationship.

When you grow up and become an adolescent, your parents may become extra caring and attentive. They see that you are undergoing many changes and recognize that you need guidance. They know that adolescence is the time for building the foundation for your future. During your adolescence they may, at times, be strict with you but only because they care about you. You may think, "I am grown up now. I understand everything. Why do my parents have to give me so much advice?" Remember your parents care about you and have more real life experiences than you. You should listen to their advice.

In your family, in addition to yourself and your parents, you may have brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, grandparents and other relations. Open and friendly relationships among all family members will increase the peace and happiness in your family. In an extended family, misunderstandings sometimes take place; it becomes a lot easier to solve them if everyone discusses things openly right away.

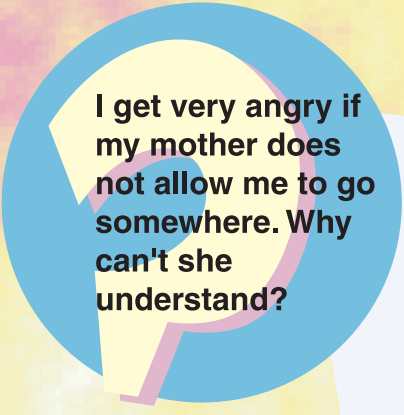


When children become adolescents, why do they become emotionally distant from their parents and other family members?

As you go through the physical and emotional changes of adolescence, your parents will probably become even more concerned about your welfare. They want to provide you with guidance during this time so you can successfully make the transition into eventual adulthood.


You may want to become more independent and make more of your own decisions. Your parents want to ensure that you have the emotional grounding you need to deal with this new time in life. Just as your parents are trying to pull you closer to give you instruction, you might find yourself pulling away. You want to be treated more like an adult, yet your parents seem to be treating you like even more of a child!

This situation can lead to misunderstandings and distance between you and your parents. It is important to continue to discuss your problems openly. If you can share your thoughts or problems with the adults in your family, it will be easier for you to solve any problems. Remember they care about you and want the best for you!




I get very angry if my mother does not allow me to go somewhere. Why can't she understand?

During adolescence you might want to be more independent; doing what you want, when you want, with whomever you want. Your parents are concerned that your new feelings and passions combined with inexperience in life may cause you to do something that you would later regret. Your parents will give you advice and impose certain restrictions so that you do not make any mistakes you may regret and can build a happy life. If you listen to your parents and discuss everything openly with them, then there will be fewer problems.



Why do parents have to worry about their daughters?


Parents worry about all of their children, but are particularly cautious regarding their daughters. If a daughter gets involved in a risky situation, her future may be compromised and the parents will feel responsible. Families can sometimes be very restrictive regarding their daughters, but they do so in the best interest of their child.



Why do my parents behave differently towards my brother? Is a son loved more than a daughter?

Parents love their sons and daughters equally but may show their love in different ways. Parents want to prepare their children for the roles they believe their children will occupy in society. They may therefore treat their sons and daughters differently. If you feel uncomfortable about how you are being treated by your parents, talk to them. Remember they are doing everything in your best interest to ensure you have a successful future.

Why does my mother scold me if I do something wrong?



Your mother might scold you because she wants you to remember not to make a mistake that could compromise your future. You will not like being scolded and may misunderstand why you are being corrected.

Because of the hormones in your body during adolescence, you may also be more emotional than usual. Talk to your mother about your feelings.

If I go outside to play my father tells me to come back before evening. In the past he was not so strict. Why he is so strict now?



There is a specific time and age for everything in life. This is the age when you build the foundation for your life. Your father is concerned that if you stay out late in the evening you may become involved in risky situations you may not be emotionally able to handle. He wants to be sure that you have a positive future.

This is the time to study hard; a good education is very important, more important than social engagements or sports. Use the evenings to study and build a strong foundation for your life. Your parents love you and want the best for you.



How should parents treat their adolescent boys and girls?



Parents should provide their adolescents with loving guidance. If parents are too permissive and don't provide you with the guidance you need during your adolescence, you might not be ready to make the important decisions you will need to make as an adult. On the other hand, if parents are too strict or controlling you might rebel.

In order for you to make important decisions for your future, you need to have some practice making smaller decisions now. Your parents need to decide which decisions they will make and which ones they will allow you to make. Trust and respect that they will guide you with your best interests in mind.

OUTSIDE ENVIRONMENT

As you get older, you often have to go outside the household for many reasons. During these times, you may get to know different types of people. These relationships may be very different from those you are used to. Exercise caution with these new relationships as you may be dealing with people who do not share the same values as you and your family.

One boy is showing interest to talk with me. I feel scared. Why do I feel this way?

This is a time in life when boys and girls are interested in getting to know each other. Some of you might be nervous or scared to talk to someone of the opposite sex, whereas others of you might be interested and excited. All these feelings are natural. During adolescence parents are particularly concerned that you do not form intimate attachments to someone of the opposite sex because of possible unpleasant consequences. If a relationship with a friend of the opposite sex turns undesirable, take immediate steps to get out of the relationship quickly. Remember adolescence is the time to build your future.

Why do boys tease girls? Is it only fun or something else?

When boys and girls become adolescents, hormones cause changes to take place in their bodies. They feel attracted to people of the opposite sex. Some boys might deal with this new feeling of attraction by teasing girls, rather than by treating them with respect. As boys grow older and are better able to handle these new feelings, they usually stop teasing girls. In the meantime, girls should ignore such teasing.



When I return from school, some bad boys make obscene gestures at me. What can I do?

The best tactic to stop boys from teasing you is to ignore them while they are doing it. Do not show fear. Maintain your dignity and ignore them. Eventually they will get discouraged. If the boys do continue, immediately inform your parents. Avoid meeting people who might bother you by taking alternate routes. Travel to and from places, such as school, with a group of people, rather than alone.

Is it wrong to tease girls? Do girls tease boys?

Sometimes boys and men tease girls on the road, in front of school or in busses. It is wrong to tease girls. Girls never like such behavior as it makes them feel bad and uncomfortable. Girls also sometimes tease boys. Neither boys nor girls should tease each other but should treat the other with respect.

I want to go out with my friends but why do my parents always tell me to study?

Parents worry about your welfare and wish the best for you. Parents can ensure your brighter future through education. Parents are concerned that they cannot keep watch on you when you are out with your friends and worry that something bad will happen to you. They remind you to study so that you do not waste your precious time by getting into trouble.

An educated relation of a friend of mine touched my friend's body. Why did he do it, being an educated man?

Some people may try to touch young girls or boys in inappropriate ways. Such a situation is unpleasant and is a form of sexual harassment. Any kind of behavior, words, or bodily touch, if found uncomfortable - is called sexual harassment. Sexual harassment can take place anywhere - such as on the roads, in a bus, at a workplace or at home. Even a close relation who is educated or looks gentle may do such things. Those who do such acts often threaten their victims so that they do not tell others. If this ever happens to you, avoid the person who is harassing you and tell your parents or an older person you trust right away. You have done nothing wrong and the person who is bothering you needs to be stopped. Sexual harassment is a crime.

ATTRACTION

As you grow up, certain physical and emotional changes take place. Girls become more attractive as they begin to look like women. Boys begin to develop muscles and look more mature. At this age you begin to feel attracted to one another. These feelings of attraction are normal, but you need to be cautious that your passions don't lead you into risky situations.

Why do boys and girls want to look attractive at this age?

As you grow up, you will probably become more conscious about how you look and want to draw attention to yourself. You may want to make yourself look attractive to others. You may start wearing nice outfits and paying more attention to your hairstyle, among other things. Trying to draw the attention of others or making yourself look more attractive is not unusual.

Why do boys look at girls?

When a girl turns 12 or 13, changes take place in her body that make her look like a grown woman, even though she is still very young. During this time boys might be very interested in looking at girls. Girls might want to attract more attention to themselves by dressing up, but need to be aware that they will draw not only admiring glances, but may attract unwanted attention. Girls should ignore unwanted remarks or inform a trustworthy adult if the remarks occur repeatedly.

I think a lot about a boy. I even see him in dreams. I have never felt this way before. Why do I feel like this now?



When you find yourself thinking about someone all the time, it can indicate that you have a strong liking for that person. An experience of strong emotion is normal at this age. This emotion may eventually develop into love when you become an adult and learn more about the person. At this age, even if you really like someone, it is better not to get involved in relationships. It is wiser to pay attention to your studies and wait until you are older.

Why do boys and girls begin to like each other so strongly during puberty?

The hormones that influence you during adolescence cause you to have new, strong feelings for members of the opposite sex. As you go through these physical changes, you might feel very attracted to someone in particular and may desire that person's company. Although you are not ready for a relationship these feelings are a natural part of growing up. Talk to a trustworthy adult about your new strong feelings.

Can a person fall in love at first sight? What is love?



You may develop a strong liking for someone at first sight. But, it takes time for real love to develop. Love has many dimensions. For example, there is love for parents, friends, music, religion, cricket, and country. There is also romantic love. Romantic love also has many faces. During adolescence, when you are making decisions about what you like and what you dislike, you may experience a kind of short-lived romantic love called infatuation. In infatuation, you have strong emotions at first, but change your mind after a few days or weeks and may not quite remember why you felt so strongly about that particular person. More mature romantic love is when two people understand each other, accept the good and the bad in each other and want to be together for life. Mature romantic love is serious because it means a lifetime commitment to a relationship.

How can I tell someone that I do not have any special feelings for him/her?

If someone falls in love with you but you do not feel attracted towards that person, it is important to make it clear that you don't want to start a relationship. Everyone has his or her own likes and dislikes. It is normal if you don't feel attracted to another person. It is better to tell the truth. Telling them that you don't want a relationship may cause the other person some pain for a while, but after a few days or weeks, things will become normal again. If you cannot handle the situation, seek the help of someone with more experience.

FRIENDSHIP AND LOVE

You will develop acquaintances and friends during adolescence. Some of the friendships you develop during adolescence will remain with you for life. You will decide what kinds of relationships you will have with others based on how you feel about them. Casual introductions can develop into lasting friendships. In some cases, friendships can develop into a deeper relationships. This deep liking may develop into love in the long term.



Boys become friends with boys. Is it bad if a boy becomes a friend of a girl?

There is nothing wrong if boys and girls become friends. But in our society friendships between boys and girls are considered unusual. If a boy and a girl want to be friends they must be particularly careful that the relationship is one of pure friendship, without any physical attachment.

If my childhood friend later wants to be my special friend and I do not reciprocate, what should I do?

Sometimes a childhood friend may offer love. If you are not interested in a deeper relationship but want to remain friends, talk openly with your friend about this matter. It may take you more than one discussion to communicate your feelings.



Why do boys and girls touch each other when they fall in love?

Love is a state of mind when two people feel a strong attachment towards each other. Because of such strong feelings a boy and a girl may want to be closer to each other, and at such times they may want to touch each other. Although these feelings are natural, acting upon them is not considered appropriate. Try to avoid situations in which you may place yourself at risk. Adolescence is the time to build your future.

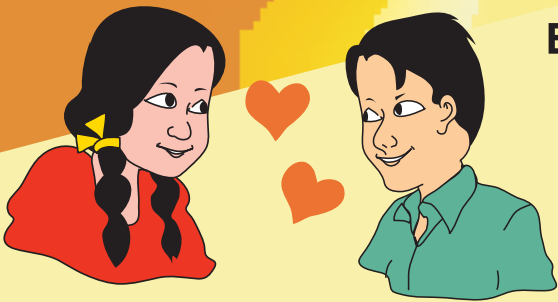
What if I find myself in a position when I feel I can't avoid a physical relationship?

A girl should avoid a physical relationship until she is married. Unfortunately, girls in our society sometimes get into difficult situations. The first thing you should do is to try to get out of the situation and get help from a trusted adult. If you can't get out of the situation, you must protect yourself from pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections by using a condom.

If a girl gets pregnant unintentionally what should she do?

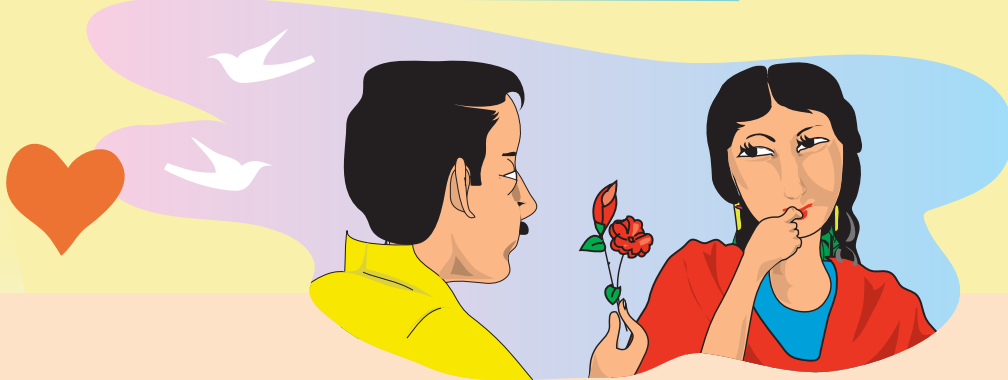
It is best to avoid such situations by not engaging in sex before marriage. However, if a girl should become pregnant, then she needs to contact a trusted adult, health center nearby, or an experienced doctor for immediate advice. It is better if she tells her own parents, but if she feels she cannot, she should look for proper help elsewhere.

EXPRESSION OF FEELINGS



After developing affection for someone you may want to express how you feel about him or her. This feeling may be expressed in several ways, for example, through letters, talking, meeting together or getting closer. It is normal to express feelings towards someone else in a relationship, but the expression of feelings has to be acceptable to both parties. Furthermore, expressions of feelings should be kept between the parties involved and not the subject of idle gossip.

How shall I know if I am beginning to like a girl?



You may come across many girls and get to know them. You may like some of them and wonder which girl you like best. The one whose face and whose smile you remember most often, the one you feel anxious to meet, is the girl you possibly like the most. You may express your liking for her by presenting a gift, saying a few words or writing a letter. But, it is important for you to find out if the girl feels the same way about you. It may happen that she likes you, too. On the other hand, you may like her but she may not feel the same way about you. It would be wrong to impose your feelings on her. If the feelings are not reciprocated, the relationship should end.

Is it wrong if someone of the opposite sex embraces me?

When boys and girls develop a special relationship, embracing may lead to a physical relationship. It is better to avoid embracing so you don't place yourself in a risky situation. Your body is your asset. You have to be alert and maintain its sanctity. Both boys and girls should take caution regarding such matters.



At this age boys have strong sexual urges and as a result may do something wrong. Many boys think that if they can get married then there will be less chance of wrongdoing. Parents usually disagree and say that it is better to marry at a more mature age. Isn't it better to marry than to do something wrong?

When a boy reaches puberty, he undergoes physical and mental changes. He may feel strong sexual urges. This is normal but he needs to learn to control his physical desires. Marriage is not the solution. Marriage is not only for meeting sexual desires. Marriage entails emotional and financial responsibilities. Early marriage leads to early conception which is bad for both the mother and the child.

Sexual urges can be controlled. Stay busy with other things, for example, playing sports, reading books, debating, reading newspapers, doing handicrafts, etc.

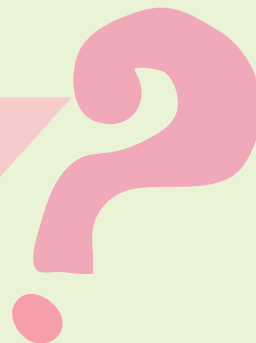


In a love affair why do girls get all the blame? Why doesn't anyone say anything to boys?

During puberty, adolescents have both physical and emotional changes. During this time, you may have your first experience with feelings of attraction towards members of the opposite sex. Both boys and girls play an equal role in the development of a relationship. There is nothing wrong with having feelings for another person but adolescents should show physical restraint. Girls, especially, need to be careful. Families love their daughters and sisters and are especially protective of them. When a girl gets in trouble, the family may be harsh with her because they feel that they have failed in their duty to protect her. They worry that such a relationship can bring shame to the family. Boys and girls should be treated equally in this situation because both are equally involved, although in Bangladesh, as in many societies, this is not always the case.



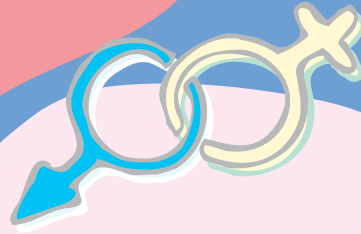
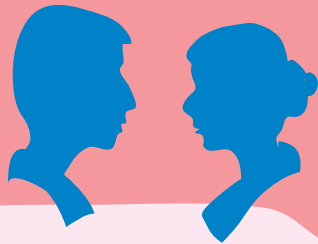
If my boy friend asks me to go to his empty house, shall I go?



Use your own judgment, but if you find it too hard to make this decision by yourself talk to an adult you trust. If a boy asks you to go to his house because it is empty, then it is wiser not to go with him. Think about the possible consequences. If he only wants to talk with you, then why can he not have a talk with you elsewhere?

If you must accompany him to the house, you might want to ask another friend along to avoid putting yourself in a risky situation. If the boy likes you he will understand that you have done so to keep your honor. He will respect your decision. On the other hand, if he keeps insisting, then you will have to consider whether he really cares for you. You might decide it is better not to continue a relationship like this. Remember that mutual respect and understanding are most important in a relationship.

PHYSICAL RELATIONSHIPS



A sexual relationship between a man and a woman is a normal affair within the boundaries of marriage. A sexual relationship outside of marriage is considered unacceptable and those who pursue such a relationship can suffer tremendous emotional hardship.

What is virginity?



Boys or girls who have never had sexual intercourse are known as virgins.

What is the virginity hymen?

A hymen is a round sheath covering the vaginal entrance of a female. This sheath is temporary and gets torn as a result of having sexual intercourse, running, doing exercise or by accident.

Do all females bleed during first intercourse? If a female does not bleed does this mean she has had sexual intercourse before?



Females who have their hymen torn during the first sexual intercourse may experience some bleeding. However, there is no connection between bleeding and being a virgin. The hymen can get torn for many other reasons, that is, from running, jumping, accidents or during a medical checkup. Many girls are even born without it. As such, if a girl does not bleed during first intercourse, it should not be concluded that she is not a virgin.

Should people have sexual intercourse during menstruation?

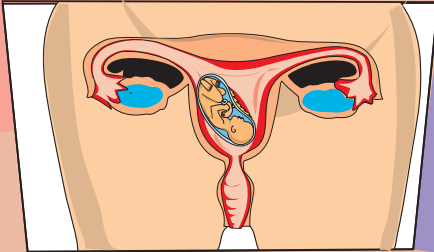


During menstruation, especially the first two days, there is excessive bleeding. A couple might decide they do not want to have sexual intercourse during this time.

Can a girl get pregnant if she is not married? We always see women with 1 or 2 children soon after marriage. How does one get a child?

A girl gets pregnant by having sexual relations. When the male sperm enters the uterus and meets with the female ovum, a baby is created. Any time a girl has sexual relations, she is at risk of pregnancy, whether or not she is married.

How does a child come out of the womb of its mother?



In a normal birth, a child comes out of the vaginal passage of the mother. During childbirth, a mother feels pain in the abdomen and the vaginal passage expands to allow the child to come out. If a complication occurs during delivery, a doctor can bring the child out through an operation on the abdomen of the mother.

Can one conceive after only one sexual contact?

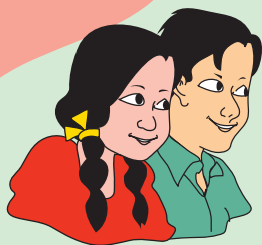
A girl may conceive after having sexual intercourse only once. If a male sperm meets with a female ovum the girl may get pregnant. If the sperm does not meet with the ovum she will not become pregnant. Therefore, it is not the number of times someone has sexual intercourse that determines pregnancy will occur, but whether the sperm and ovum meet.

Some people use condoms or oral pills before marriage. Is it right to do so?



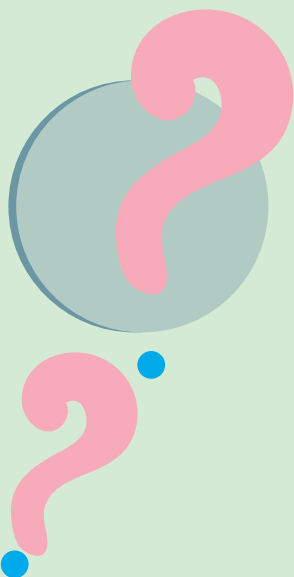
A sexual relationship that occurs before marriage is not acceptable in our society. It is therefore not appropriate to use condoms or pills before marriage. Once someone is married it is important to have only one sex partner. Oral pills are used if someone wants to avoid unwanted pregnancy. Condoms are also used if someone wants to avoid getting a sexually transmitted infection or unwanted pregnancy.

Is it bad to establish physical relationship with more than one partner?



It is always better to have one trusted partner for a physical relationship. Having more than one partner is both emotionally and physically dangerous. If you suspect your partner has relationships with more than one person you should be very careful. If one partner has an STI like syphilis, gonorrhea or HIV/AIDS then it will be transmitted to the other partner and cause illness. This may even cause death to the infected person. If you are unsure about your partner always use a condom for protection.

**What is impotency?
What happens
in cases of impotency?**



If the male penis does not have a strong erection during sexual intercourse it is called impotency or sexual incapability. Some men may be born impotent. There are two types of impotency, permanent and temporary. Some men may be permanently impotent. Other men may be temporarily impotent for psychological reasons such as ignorance about sexual matters, fear, worry, frustration, work pressure, etc. A person may also become temporarily impotent because of drug addiction or diabetes.

Sometimes girls may also feel sexually incapable or frigid. There may be many reasons for this, both physical and psychological (such as a misunderstanding or a communication gap). If anybody faces such problems, he/she should contact an experienced doctor for proper treatment.

OTHER WAYS OF EXPRESSING FEELINGS

There are many ways of expressing sexual feelings. Adolescent boys and girls naturally become curious about sex and may want to learn more about sexual matters. There is not enough information regarding this subject in bookshops or libraries, which is why some of you may decide to buy sex magazines. Unfortunately, these magazines sometimes contain information that is wrong. For correct information about these matters talk to your parents, a trusted adult or a health worker.

Why do boys use their hands? Why do boys masturbate? Do girls also masturbate like boys?



When you are growing up, you may be curious about your own body. This is a normal urge that is stimulated by hormones. Some people masturbate (manipulate their sex organs with their hands or fingers), to feel sexual pleasure. If a person has built up a great deal of sexual frustration, then masturbation is a way to relieve the pressure. Masturbation is not an abnormal behavior. Both boys and girls may do it.

Is too much masturbation bad for your health?

As masturbation is a normal behavior, it is not harmful to your health. It does not cause impotency or body weakness. A man can not run out of semen. However, it is important to remember that excess of anything is often not good.

What is homosexuality and how do boys and girls get involved in such practice?



When two boys or two girls develop a sexual relationship between themselves, it is called homosexuality. There may be many reasons for homosexual behavior including the environment or situation or being coerced by an adult or peer. If you have any further questions about homosexuality talk to a trusted adult.

FUTURE PLANNING

During adolescence many decisions have to be made, some are minor and some are major. For example, decisions you make may include what clothes to wear, which friends to have, what subject to study and, perhaps, who to marry. In order to fulfill your dreams, you will need to think carefully about each decision. You will probably need the help of older trusted adults to make the major decisions in your life. Even adults consult other adults when they are making major decisions.

Why is future planning essential?

To achieve a successful future, it is important to plan for it. You can do this by setting achievable goals for yourself as well as a time line. Then make the effort and work towards these goals.

Think about setting goals for yourself for both your professional and personal life. Decide what you would like to study, what type of profession you would like, as well as whether and when you want to have a family.

How do I know that my ideas and life plan are right for me?

It is up to you to decide what you want to do in the future. Your parents may, however, want to guide you during this time in your life. Rely on your parents, other family members or friends for advice. They know and love you and want the very best for you.

It may take time for you to come up with a future plan or career. Ask your parents to arrange for you to meet with adults who are already engaged in your chosen career so you can have a realistic idea of what lies ahead in the future. Discuss this topic in depth with members of your family so you feel comfortable, ready and excited for your future.

I want to delay my marriage but I don't think my parents think this is appropriate for a girl.

Tell your parents your thoughts right away. If you do not tell anyone about what is inside your mind, no one will know what you are thinking. If you are worried about their reaction, talk first to an adult you trust.



If you are studying, tell your parents you want to complete your academic work. You might also want to mention that before you get married you want to be fully prepared for the emotional and financial responsibilities of family life. You might want to tell your parents about what you have learned; that early marriage can be harmful. Tell them that if you marry when you are more physically and emotionally mature, you will be able to take care of your family and your children. You will be better able to provide for them emotionally and financially.

Why do boys marry at a later age?

In our society a boy has to take responsibility for the family. After marriage a husband is considered to be responsible for his wife. It takes some time for a boy to get settled in life and that is why he marries late.

If a girl also takes the time needed for education and marries an equally well-educated boy later in life, the couple can be assured of a positive future.

What qualities should a life partner have?

Each person must decide about what he or she likes, dislikes or needs. Think about what you want from your life partner and discuss this with your family. Select a life partner who will help, understand and respect you, as well as make you happy.



Why do we have to marry the person parents select?

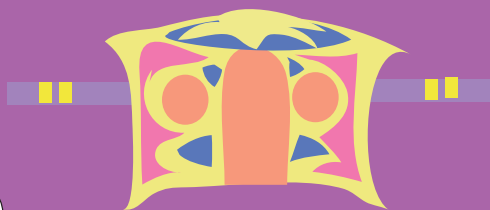
Marriage is a sacred bond, not only between a boy and girl but also between their two families. Although there is no rule that one must marry according to the parents' wishes, many parents select marriage partners for their children. Parents want to ensure their children's future success and happiness and feel they can do this by selecting their children's marriage partners. If you decide to choose your own marriage partner, be sure to discuss this carefully with your parents. Listen to them and communicate with them openly.

Is it good to marry someone my parents select, or should I marry someone I love?

Our society does not readily accept love marriages. Often those who marry for love do not have the full support of both families. If two people like each other and want to get married they should discuss the matter openly with the parents and elders of both families. It is always better to marry with the consent and support of the parents. Since your parents have more experience and want the best for you, they will provide you with good advice. In cases where the bride or groom selected by your parents is not acceptable, tell your parents right away.

Is it unwise if a boy or a girl marries before getting settled in life?

Whether you are a boy or girl, it is better to marry after you complete your education and get settled in life. Your entire family will be ensured of a more stable economic future. If you do not pursue an education, prepare for your future with vocational training. If you marry when you are mature and self-reliant you will have fewer problems in the future. Remember, marriage means taking responsibility of one's own family.



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 health 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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