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Let's
Talk
Pregnancy at
the right tim

Acknowledgements

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Contents

Acronyms

AIDS	Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
ART	Antiretroviral treatment
ARV	Antiretroviral drug
BEAM	Basic Education Assistance Model
ESA	Eastern and Southern Africa
EUP	Early and Unintended Pregnancy
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
MoHCC	Ministry of Health and Child Care
MoPSE	Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education
PEP	Post-Exposure Prophylaxis
PrEP	Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis
ROSA	Regional Office for Southern Africa
SAfAIDS	Southern Africa HIV and AIDS Dissemination Services
SAT	SRHR Africa Trust
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
VMMC	Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision
ZIMPHIA	Zimbabwe Population-based HIV Impact Assessment

Visit the campaign website for more information

www.LetsTalkEUP.com

#LetsTalkEUP

Who is this booklet for?

This booklet is for young people like you!

It is aimed at helping you better understand important issues in your life related to early and unintended pregnancy (EUP) – including puberty, contraception, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and relationships – and addresses frequently asked questions, fears, myths, and misconceptions.

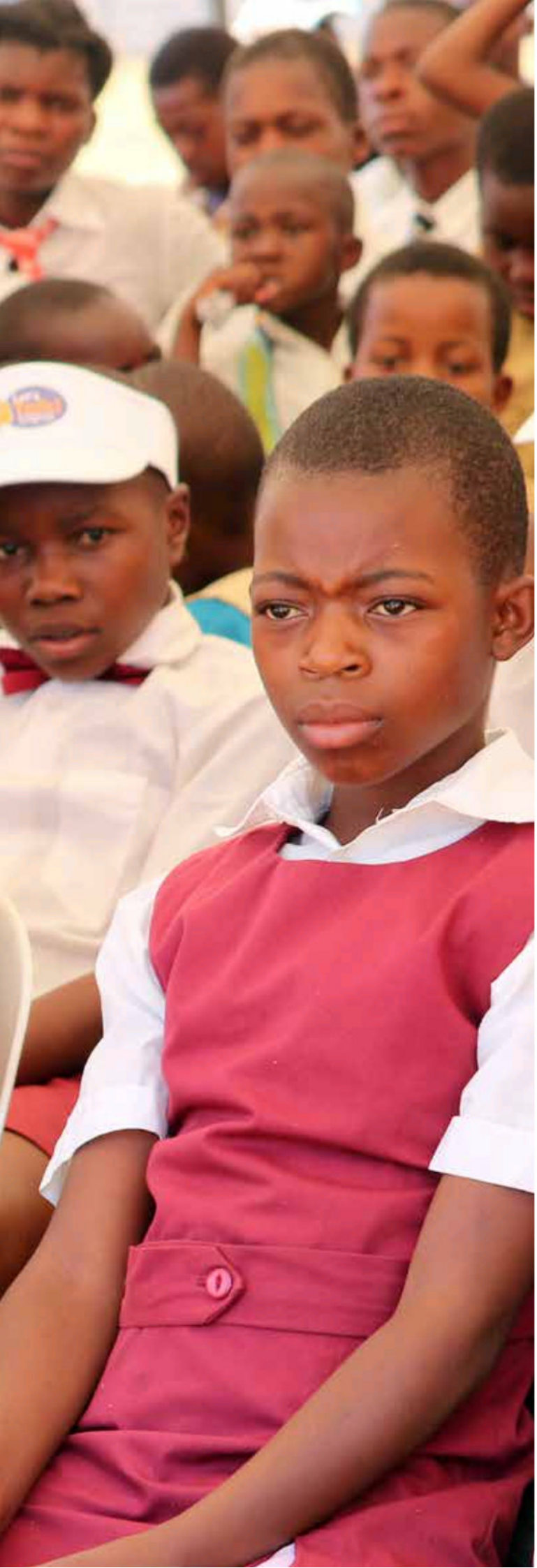
EUP affects adolescents (10-19years old) across the globe. Since it can have far-reaching consequences, not just for the pregnant girl, it is important to learn about how to prevent it.

Adolescents who fall pregnant, especially while still at school, often need to make difficult decisions and could be faced with long-term negative health, social, economic, and educational outcomes. For example, they may be socially excluded and stigmatized, forced to drop out of school – which in turn limits earning potential later – and be at increased risk of pregnancy-related complications, such as difficulty during childbirth and mental health issues.

The evidence for reducing teenage pregnancy is clear. Building the knowledge, skills, resilience, and aspirations of young people, and providing easy access to welcoming services, helps them to delay sex until they are ready to enjoy healthy, consensual relationships and practice safe sex to avoid not just pregnancy, but HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) as well.

The information in this booklet will equip adolescents with the knowledge and skills they need to make these healthy decisions.

The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) has an obligation to ensure learners who are pregnant can fulfil their right to continue their education. The booklet therefore also highlights some of the rules and policies to empower adolescents on the correct procedures for dealing with EUP.



Structure of the booklet

1. The booklet starts by exploring the journey from childhood to adulthood. In this section, the changes that happen in males and females during puberty are described.

2. Next, pregnancy in general is explained.

3. Following this, EUP specifically is detailed, including causes, consequences, and prevention. Myths and misconceptions about pregnancy are clarified, and real-life stories are told.

4. The booklet then looks at STIs; another consequence of unprotected sex.

5. Moving on, relationships between adolescents and their families, peers, and partners are discussed, highlighting communication, peer pressure, and the difference between healthy and unhealthy relationships.

6. Lastly, the booklet will answer some frequently asked questions.

We are here to learn so that we make ***informed decisions about our lives!***

Puberty

Puberty is the period when your body transforms from a child to an adult. It can be a confusing, even scary, time as you go through so many changes and new experiences, but don't worry – **we'll tell you everything you need to know**!

During puberty, it is natural to feel:

Uncomfortable

Curious

Embarrassed

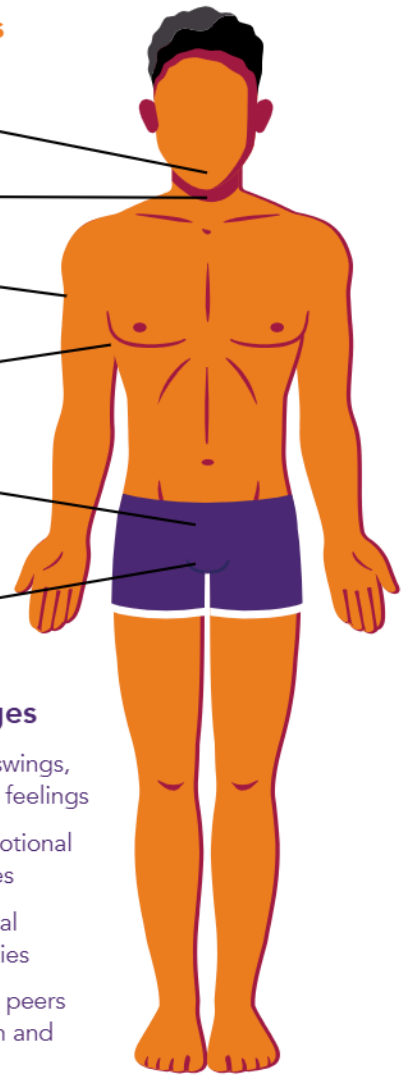
Disgust

Excited

Shy

What changes happen to boys?

Physical Changes



Emotional Changes

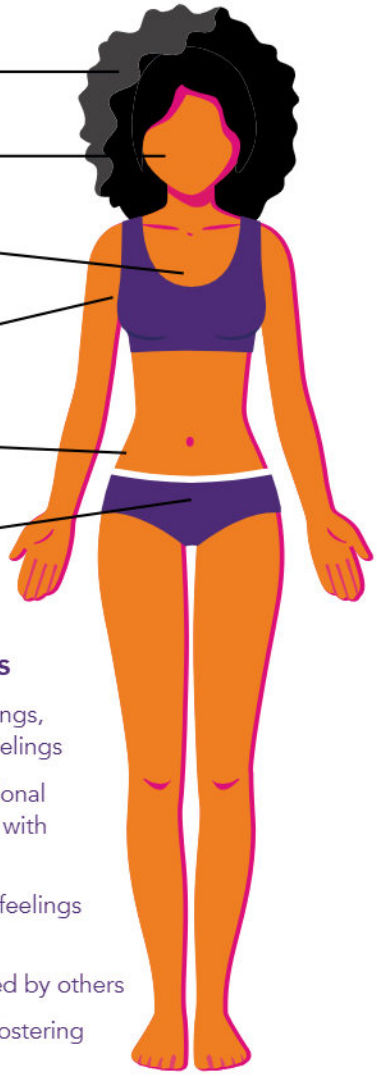
- Experiences mood swings, behaviour driven by feelings
- Confused about emotional and physical changes
- Begins to have sexual feelings and curiosities
- Seek acceptance by peers through competition and achievement

When do these changes happen?

- During puberty, your body will grow and change faster than at any other moment in your life (except for when you were a baby).
- Changes don't happen at the same time and pace for everyone. Puberty can start anywhere between the ages of 8 and 13 for girls, and 9 and 15 for boys.
- Girls and boys face different changes during adolescence.

What changes happen to girls?

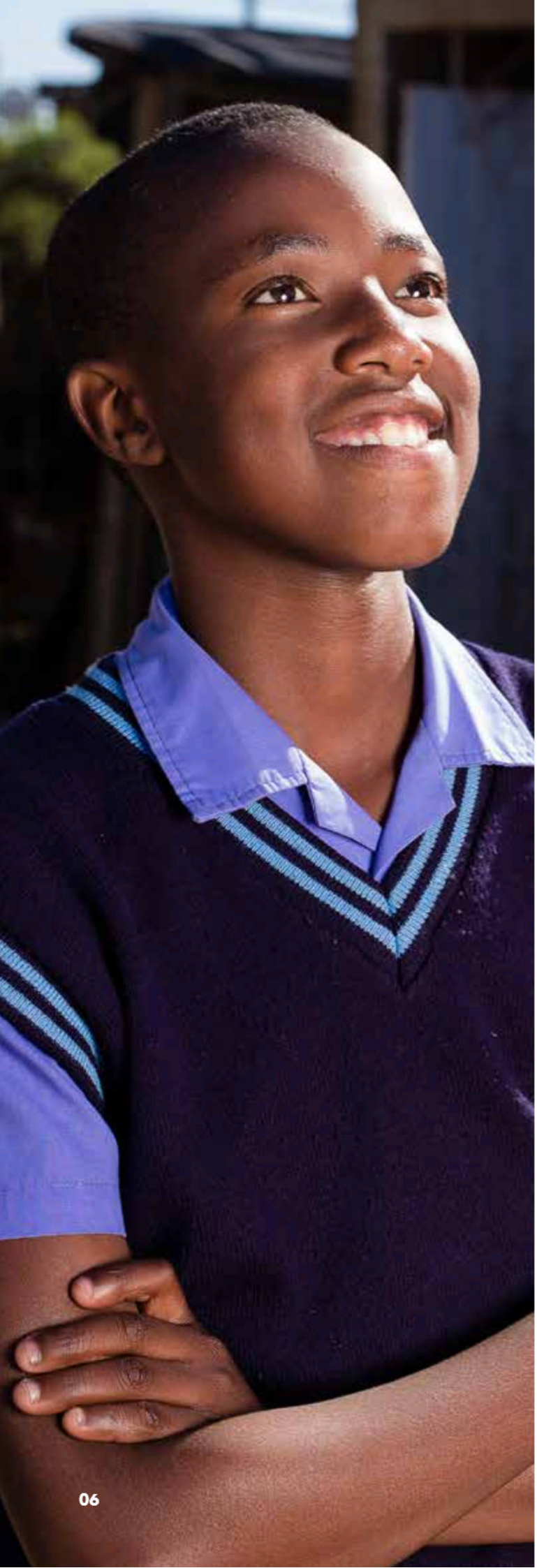
Physical Changes



Emotional Changes

- Experiences mood swings, behaviour driven by feelings
- Confused about emotional changes, preoccupied with physical appearance
- Begins to have sexual feelings and curiosities
- Self-esteem determined by others
- Seeks acceptance by fostering relationships

Something that you should know:
Our bodies are unique and we experience puberty differently. One person might go through all these changes (and more), while another may go through less. Both experiences are perfectly normal



Love and sexual feelings

As your body begins to change with puberty, you will probably notice that you develop new feelings too. This is usually the time when you start becoming sexually attracted to others. As a boy, you will get erections and have wet dreams, and as a girl, you will feel wetness in your vagina and swelling of your breasts.

Sexual arousal is a natural reaction to any of these situations:

- When you are relaxed
- When you are anxious or frightened
- When you feel attracted to someone
- For no reason at all

Being attracted to or loving someone does not mean you have to have sex with them!

There are many ways of expressing your feelings, whether sexual or not, as we will see later.

By the way, do you know what wet dreams are?

Although wet dreams are mostly associated with adolescent boys, they are actually common in both sexes. Wet dreams occur when a person orgasms involuntarily while they are sleeping because of a dream, which may or may not be erotic. The medical term for a wet dream is nocturnal emission, which refers to the semen (the fluid containing sperm) that is released during ejaculation. They are called wet dreams because this usually results in males waking up with wet clothing or bedding.

Wet dreams happen to everyone! ***They are nothing to be ashamed of!***

Menstruation

What is menstruation?

Girls are born with hundreds of thousands of tiny eggs, called ova (one is called an ovum). During puberty, their hormones tell their ovaries it is time to start releasing the ova. Usually one egg matures (develops) and is released at a time. Simultaneously, the uterus starts to grow a thick lining on the inside wall. The lining has many tiny blood vessels and is there to protect and feed an egg if it becomes fertilized by fusing with a sperm.

If an egg does not fuse with a sperm, the lining is not needed and breaks up. Mixed with some blood, *it comes out of the uterus into the vagina and then out through the vaginal opening.* This process is called menstruation, but most females just call it their period or menses.

If the egg is not fertilized, another egg will be released, usually within 28 days to allow the lining to build up again. If that egg is not fertilized, menstruation will occur again, and so the menstrual cycle continues.

Something that you should know: Although females menstruate each month, periods are usually irregular until three years after girls have started menstruating, so don't be alarmed if this happens to you!

Dealing with menstruation

Menstruation is an important change in a girl's life and means that she is now able to become pregnant. It is a natural, healthy process and there is no reason to be embarrassed about it!

Some tips on menstrual health management

- When girls have their periods, they commonly experience pain for a few days. This pain can be alleviated with medicine (pain killers), and girls should not hesitate to seek support from a woman they trust in the family or a health worker if they have any questions, or if they believe something is wrong.
- As periods involve bleeding, hygiene is important to absorb the blood coming from the vagina in a healthy way.
    - Girls can safely use pads, cotton wool, tampons, pieces of clean cloth, re-usable pads and menstrual cups. If you are using the piece of cloth or sanitary pants and reusable pads, make sure you dry them on open space where it is exposed to the sun.
    - There are also unhygienic materials used by some girls mostly due to financial challenges to manage the periods. These include cow dung, newspapers, tissues, and tree leaves. These have some health risks, including that some tissues are products of waste paper, and are not hygienic. They could also affect the reproductive organs, which could lead to reproductive health complications. Cow dung, newspapers and leaves can result in vaginal infections.
- Girls that cannot afford sanitary products are often forced to miss school during their periods. If you are in this position, please speak to your teachers for assistance with sanitary wear! The law in Zimbabwe (Education Act) encourages all schools to provide sanitary wear to learners in need within their facilities.
- Access to proper sanitation is also very important. Clean water and soap are essential and should be available in the home, at school, religious institutions, and other places you visit. At school, the toilets must have individual cubicles for privacy to allow girls to change their pads and tampons as whenever they need to. They should also be equipped with sanitary products disposal units.

Common misconceptions around menstruation

There are many false myths around menstruation. Here are the facts!

- Girls who are on their periods are NOT dirty and CAN get in contact with, or prepare food for other people.
- Girls who are on their periods CAN get pregnant.
- An irregular cycle is NOT a sign of infertility.
- If a girl does not start menstruating by the age of 14, it DOES NOT mean that she is not normal.
- Girls CAN participate in sporting activities whilst menstruating.

Something that you should know:
Just because only girls and women menstruate does not mean menstrual hygiene is a "female issue" alone. In your community, menstruation might be seen as a private and embarrassing subject, but men and boys can help change this by playing an advocacy role, for example, by insisting on access to water and sanitary facilities, and by removing the stigma around menstruation.

Pregnancy

What causes pregnancy?

Sperm + egg = baby!

Pregnancy happens when a male's sperm enters a female's body through her vagina and travels through her cervix and womb to the fallopian tubes, where it meets and fertilizes an ovum, or egg. This is called conception. Pregnancy starts when a fertilized egg inserts in the lining of the uterus.

Something that you should know:
It is possible for a girl to get pregnant without having penetrative sexual intercourse if the sperm comes into contact with her vagina.

How do I know if I am pregnant?

The safest way to know if you are pregnant is to do a pregnancy test two or three weeks after risky sex. Risky sex is where you have not used a male or female condom, or when a condom has slipped or burst because it has not been put on properly.

Here are some symptoms of pregnancy that can alert you:

- Nausea with or without vomiting
- Headaches
- Tiredness
- Faintness and dizziness
- Food aversion or craving
- Missed period
- Tender, swollen breasts

Sometimes, these symptoms just mean that you are sick or that you are going to have your period.

Only urine or blood tests can tell for sure if you are pregnant or not! To get a pregnancy test, you can visit the nearest hospital or clinic or approach non-governmental organizations working in your areas, if any. You can also buy pregnancy tests from pharmacies. If you are not sure about the results or if the result is positive, you are advised to approach your nearest health facility to receive professional advice.

Early and unintended pregnancy (EUP)

What is early and unintended pregnancy?

The term early relates to the relationship between being under age and the increased risk of negative health and social consequences for the mother and her new born. An unintended pregnancy is a pregnancy that is unplanned or unwanted at that time. Unfortunately, EUPs are common in Zimbabwe and often lead girls to drop out of or be expelled from school, resulting in long-term negative consequences. There are many things you need to know before having sex and taking the risk of a pregnancy.

This is valid for boys too!

What are the possible causes of EUP?

EUP can be driven by a range of factors, including:

CAUSE	EXPLANATION
Lack of knowledge	Access to clear and accurate information about pregnancy and STIs, including HIV, and other related subjects is important so that adolescents have the knowledge and skills to make informed and healthy decisions.
Substance abuse	Alcohol and substance abuse increase risky behaviour, because they can impair judgement and lead to unprotected sex, as well as increase vulnerability to being abused or taken advantage of.
Child marriage	Child marriage increases the chances of early pregnancy. Adolescents who marry early are less likely to use contraception to delay the first pregnancy.
Poverty	Poverty can lead adolescents to engage in relationships with older men and women who provide them with money, clothes, food and other material things in exchange for sex. Most adolescents in these situations are unable to refuse unprotected sex.
Peer pressure	Adolescent girls and boys tend to copy each other's behaviour and may indirectly influence, or directly pressurize, their peers into engaging in early sexual activity. Girls who are pressurized are more likely to get pregnant than those who do not receive pressure.
Sexual abuse	Sexual abuse, including rape, can lead to pregnancy. In most sexual abuse cases there is no use of protection, which also increases the risk of HIV and other STIs.
Improper use of Information Communication Technology (ICT)	Appropriate use of ICT can enhance adolescents' knowledge and development. However, if abused, ICT can have negative consequences. For example, downloading and sharing pornographic material can propel adolescents to want to experiment among themselves or with older people, which can lead to risky sexual situations.
Harmful social, cultural, and religious practices	There are several harmful traditional, religious, and cultural practices in our communities that can lead to adolescent preg-nancies. These include chiramu, child pledging/kuzvarira, and child marriages, among others.
Lack of access to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services	SRH services, including contraception, are inaccessible to many young people as a result of high cost, judgmental service providers, long distances, and odd opening hours for school going learners.

What are the consequences of EUP?

EUP is associated with many negative emotional, physical, educational, and social consequences for both mother and baby, including:

Physical consquences

- Physical health risks for the mother include pregnancy complications, such as obstetric fistula and uterine rapture, unsafe abortions, and maternal death.
- Physical health risks for the child include pre-term births, low birth weight, malnutrition, and child mortality.
- Emotional stress, particularly if the girl has been rejected by her partner, family and community, can lead to low self-esteem, depression, substance abuse, and even suicide.

Educational consequences

- School dropout or expulsion are common.
- Educational development can be affected by pregnancy through tiredness and lack of concentration. Pregnant adolescent girls frequently disengage with learning as they suffer from anxiety and depression which affects the learning process, and may be obliged to miss classes for medical reasons.
- Adolescent mothers risk falling behind with schoolwork due to their double responsibility as learners and mothers.
- Not completing school can lead to fewer livelihood options, and therefore limited economic independence.

Social consequences

- EUP is highly stigmatized in Zimbabwe. Pregnant girls are often shamed both at school and in their communities, and given bad names such as "mvana" and "nzenza".
- Getting pregnant early can lead to early marriage as the girl is forced to marry the father of her baby.
- Some girls are neglected and shunned by their families and are left with no place to stay and this can result in further sexual abuse and initiation into sex work.

What about abortion?

I am not that worried about getting pregnant. I can just abort! ***Can't I?***

Abortion, or termination, is when a pregnancy is ended so that it does not result in the birth of a child. **Abortion must be taken seriously**. In Zimbabwe, abortion is only allowed by law if the pregnancy poses a danger to the life of the mother or threatens to permanently impair her physical health, if the child may be born with serious physical or mental defects, or if the pregnancy was the result of rape or incest. **The process can only be done by a trained medical doctor**.

Something that you should know:
It is not only illegal, but extremely dangerous to let an untrained person give you an abortion, or try do it yourself. It can cause severe infection to your sexual organs, loss of fertility, and even death. It can also lead to arrest as it is a criminal offence.

What if I fall pregnant at school?

EUP threatens educational attainment for girls through school dropout and decreased school completion, but this does not need to be the case! Girls are encouraged to return to school after giving birth so that they can finish school and still follow their dreams for a better future.

The policy in Zimbabwe allows learners who fall pregnant while at school "to take leave from school to deliver and come back to school three months after delivery". The learner can also be allowed to come back before the three months, if she is coming to sit for examinations. School heads also have an obligation to support the pregnant girl or mother and to facilitate her re-enrolment in the same grade/form in which she was before she took leave to deliver her child. The school head can facilitate the transfer of the same learner to another school as well, provided the parents/guardians and the learner are in agreement.

Something that you should know:
If you find yourself being denied a chance to go back to school again after a pregnancy, you have the right to approach your nearest district education office, police station, healthcare worker, or non-governmental organization working in your area for further assistance, in accordance with the law.

The law in Zimbabwe (Education Act) allows adolescent learners who fall pregnant while at school **to take leave from school to deliver and come back to school three months after delivery**.

The learner can also be allowed to come back before three months, if she is coming to sit for examinations.

School heads also have an obligation to support the pregnant girl or mother and to facilitate her re-enrolment in the same grade/form in which she was before she took leave to deliver her child.

The school head can facilitate the transfer of the same learner to another school as well, provided the parents/guardians and the learner are in agreement.

Myths and misconceptions about pregnancy

I will not get pregnant if I have sex during my period.

Biologically, the menstrual period can overlap with the ovulation period and a sperm can survive for up to 72 hours in the cervix after intercourse. In other words, you are still fertile while you are menstruating and therefore can get pregnant if you engage in unprotected sex during this time.

I will not get pregnant if I have sex while standing.

Sitting or standing may discourage sperm from travelling upstream, however, there is no scientific evidence to suggest being upright will stop you from being impregnated. Engaging in sexual activity in any position can result in pregnancy.

I will not get pregnant if I shower immediately after sex.

Once the sperm is inside your body, no amount of washing yourself will stop it from entering the cervix and reaching the ovum. Nor will showering prevent HIV or other STIs, which is another common myth.

Real life stories from adolescents who experienced EUP

These are true stories from young people who got pregnant early, and tips on how they could have avoided this.

A story of poverty: Chipo

"I had a boyfriend and he started providing my family with financial support. My family accepted this financial support and even demanded more. I was left with no choice but to sleep with him. My intention was not to get pregnant but to express my gratitude for helping my family."

What could Chipo have done?

Poverty is the main factor contributing to transactional sex, where young girls have sex in exchange for resources. In such situations, these girls rarely have the power and skills to negotiate for safer sex with their partners, who are often older. This not only exposes them to unwanted pregnancies, but to HIV and other and STIs as well. In the case of Chipo, it is important encouraged to have relations with boys of the same age. In addition, there are several ways of expressing love and feelings to your partner without sexual intercourse. For example, holding hands and hugging in public spaces.

A story of forced sex: Thando

"My boyfriend invited me to his house when he was alone. We were chatting until late. He asked me for sex and I told him I was not ready. When I told him that I wanted to go home, he locked the doors and refused to let me out unless I had sex with him. I was forced to have sex with him so that I could leave because I was afraid that my mother would chase me from home if I got there late."

What could Thando have done?

Meeting in private places can increase the risk of having sex (willingly or by force), which could result in pregnant. Thando should have asked her boyfriend to meet in a public space or in the company of others to avoid this situation. In addition, Thando should have told a trusted friend or an adult about her whereabouts. Cases of kidnapping, human trafficking or murder often happen that way. Thando should also have reported to someone close to her or to a police station or health service provider that she was raped. Having sex without the other person's consent or approval is considered rape – even if you are in a relationship – and comes with criminal charges and far reaching consequences.

Something that you should know:
Consenting to sex beforehand, doesn't mean that you are obliged to have sex later; "no" means "no", whenever it is pronounced.

A story of peer pressure: Tatenda

"My friends had been discussing their sexual experiences for a long time and I was always left out in these discussions. They then started leaving me behind, as I did not have any experiences to share. I felt pressured to have sex so that I could have something in common with my friends. However, my friends had never talked about protection so when I had sex, I had no idea that I needed to protect myself from EUP or STIs, and as a result I fell pregnant."

What could Tatenda have done?

It is normal for young people to be influenced by their friends. Friends are important to young people as they grow up. It also important, however, to identify which practices are healthy and which ones are not. In Tatenda's case, her friends having sex early was not a practice she should have followed or been pressurized into. Although not easy, she should have been strong enough to tell her friends that she was not yet ready, or sought out information on sex before she engaged in it in order to protect herself from pregnancy and STIs, including HIV. Your friends should accept you the way you are, otherwise they are not good friends and don't deserve to be around you!

A story of pornography: Linda

"My boyfriend visited me when I was alone at home. We started watching pornography from his phone. We both started feeling the desire to do the same and we ended up having unprotected sex. I never thought that I would get pregnant from only one sexual encounter."

What could Linda have done?

Pornography paints an unrealistic picture of sexuality and relationships that can create an expectation for real-life experiences that will never be fulfilled. You cannot learn the truth about sex from pornography. Pornography is not meant to educate, but to sell and make money. They will show you whatever they think will make you come back and buy more. Pornography gets you to think that sex is something you can have anytime, anywhere, with anyone, with no consequences, such as pregnancy and STIs. It portrays a shallow perspective that relationships are built on sex, with no commitment, caring, and mutual trust. This is not how relationships should be – and are – in real life. Avoid watching pornographic videos as they can influence you to have sex. Linda should have met her boyfriend in a public place or in the company of others to avoid this situation from happening.

A story of incorrect condom use: Tadiwa

"My girlfriend and I always used a condom when we had sex. However, on one occasion, the condom burst and we were all confused what the problem was. This is how my girlfriend ended up getting pregnant."

What could Tadiwa have done?

Condoms are the only type of birth control that can help prevent both pregnancy and STIs, but they must be used correctly and consistently, and stored properly as well. Condoms may tear during sex if they are not put on correctly, for example, not leaving enough space at the tip of the condom. They also can tear if the condom comes into contact with a person's nails, rings, piercings, teeth, or other sharp edges. If a condom breaks, it is important to get tested for pregnancy, HIV, and other STIs.

A new condom should be used with each act of sex, and should be used from beginning to end. You can get condoms for free at clinics or from village health workers, community-based distributors, and behaviour change facilitators. It is also possible to buy condoms at rural stores, bars, and bottle stores. Tadiwa could have advised his girlfriend to take emergency oral contraceptive pills to avoid pregnancy. Emergency oral contraceptive pills also known as morning after pills can be used by girls following unprotected sex or concerns about condom failure to prevent unplanned pregnancy. They should be taken within 72 hours after the sexual encounter.

Myths about condom use:

MYTH	FACT
Condoms reduce comfort and sexual pleasure	People who use condoms rate their sexual experiences as just as pleasurable as people who do not. Condoms also give you peace of mind because they are so effective that you do not have to worry about falling pregnant or contracting an STI after a sexual encounter.
Two condoms are better than one	Using one condom consistently and correctly during each act of sex is the best way to reduce your risk of pregnancy and STIs. In fact, putting on more than one condom at once may make them less effective because the friction from doubling up can cause either one or both to tear.
Condoms are a boy's responsibility	Your health will always be your responsibility. Everyone deserves a sex life that is pleasurable as well as safe, so whether you are a boy or a girl, never feel ashamed to ask your partner to use a condom!

A story of a spiked drink: Nontokozo

"In some urban settings adolescents organize 'vuzu', or pool parties, where they take turns to sleep with each other under the influence of drugs. I had no idea what happened at these parties when I was invited and I was only drinking soft drinks. I left my drink unattended when I visited the toilets, and when I got back, I realized that my drink had been spiked after taking just a few sips. I do not remember anything that happened after that and do not know who is responsible for my pregnancy."

What could Nontokozo have done?

Nontokozo should have inquired more about the party before attending so that she was aware of what happens at such events. Increasingly even parties that are organised with good intent end up being turned into dirty parties because of drug and substance abuse. Nontokozo should also not have left her drink unattended. It is better to avoid social gatherings where there is no adult supervision. You should always make sure that you are with trustworthy friends and let your family know where you are.

Prevention of EUP

Abstinence

Abstinence is the safest, most effective way to prevent pregnancy. In fact, abstinence is the only 100% effective way to avoid pregnancy and STIs because there is no sexual contact that is involved. Abstinence can also help adolescents to focus on things that are most important in their lives, like education, sports, family obligations, and having fun with friends! Adolescents who delay having sex in their teens cannot get pregnant or contract HIV or other STIs.

What is good about abstinence?

- **It's free:** It costs nothing
- **It's based on your own plan for your life**
- **It's flexible:** You can wait as long as you want to
- **It's healthy:** You will not get an STI, including HIV, or fall pregnant

Something that you should know: Contraception is the responsibility of both the female and the male who have decided to have sex, not the female alone!

"I really want to do well in school so I work hard in my classes. Abstaining has really helped me to remain focused and I am confident that I will realize my dreams in the near future"

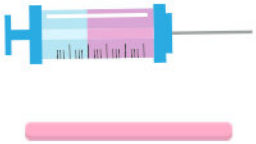
18-year-old Ruvarashe.

Contraceptives

Adolescents are encouraged to abstain from sex, however, if you do decide to engage in sex, it is important to consult a health worker for appropriate contraceptive methods to prevent pregnancy and STIs.

There are many different contraceptive methods available:

TYPE	USE	HIV PREVENTION	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Male condom 	Use a new condom each time you have sex. Use polyurethane condom if allergic to latex.	Yes	Low-cost, reliable. One of the ONLY contraceptives that protects against both pregnancy and STIs, including HIV.	Not 100% safe if not used correctly and consistently.
Female Condom 	"Polyurethane" sheath worn inside the woman during sex.	Yes	Same as male condom. Also gives women the control to protect themselves against pregnancy and STIs!	Not 100% safe if not used correctly and consistently.
The pill 	The contraceptive pill taken by women that prevents egg being fertilized by sperm.	No	If taken properly, the pill can be up to 99.5% effective against pregnancy.	No protection from STIs, including HIV. Therefore, it is important to still practice safe sex by using a condom.
Emergency contraceptive pill	Work best the sooner you take after unprotected sex. Two high doses of birth control pills taken within three days of unprotected sex.	No	It is safe and effective way of preventing pregnancy if used within three days.	No protection from STIs, including HIV. Women under 17 years need a prescription for some brands
Intrauterine device (IUD) 	Special type of plastic or copper device that is placed in the woman's uterus to prevent pregnancy.	No	IUDs are an effective way of preventing pregnancy.	Pain and increased risk of infection in the fallopian tubes. IUDs provide no protection from HIV and other STIs and are not recommended for women under 25 who have not had children.

Injections and implants 	Chemical substances injected/ implanted into a woman's body to prevent pregnancy	No	Effective means of contraception.	No protection from HIV and other STIs, can cause a delay in the return of periods and fertility once you stop using them
Tubal ligation or "tube tie" 	Fallopian tubes are cut and sealed, preventing eggs reaching the uterus.	No	Permanent form of contraception (99% effective).	No protection from HIV and other STIs, and have a low success rate if they want to be reversed.
Withdrawal 	Man withdraws his penis and ejaculates outside the vagina.	No		Reduces sexual pleasure for both partners, is unreliable, messy, high risk of pregnancy and STIs, including HIV.
Rhythm method 	Women calculates days when they are most likely to get pregnant and abstains from sex on those days.	No	Costs nothing and is easily accessible.	Unreliable, high risk of pregnancy and STIs, including HIV.

Myths about contraceptives:

MYTH	FACT
You only need to use contraceptives on the second sexual encounter as you cannot fall pregnant or impregnate someone on the first encounter.	You can fall pregnant or impregnate someone during the first sexual encounter as long as the sperm and egg meet.
Contraceptives have side effects that are life threatening.	It is true that contraceptives have side effects, but they are not life threatening. It is important to note that every medication has side effects. As adolescents, you are encouraged to consult your healthcare worker when you notice side effects.
Using contraception, like the pill, will cause you to become infertile.	Contraceptives only delay pregnancy. When a couple is ready to have children, they can simply stop using contraceptives.
Contraceptives are ineffective in preventing pregnancy or STIs.	Contraceptives are effective in preventing pregnancy, particularly when used as prescribed by the doctor, nurse or healthcare worker. However, other than condoms and abstinence or "non-penetrative sex", they **do not** protect you from HIV and other STIs.
Only married couples should use contraceptives.	Contraceptives should be used by people in a sexual relationship who wish to delay pregnancy and prevent STIs, regardless of whether they are married or not.
A partner who suggests using contraceptives shows that he/she is having sex with other people.	A partner who suggests using contraceptives in a relationship is showing that they are responsible and concerned about their health and that of their partner.
An unmarried person using contraception shows that he/she is promiscuous.	Using contraceptives shows that you are being careful and responsible so that you do not contract HIV and other STIs or fall pregnant.

Something that you should know:
It is very important to note that emergency contraceptive pills are not supposed to be taken as ordinary contraceptives on a routine basis, but **only used in emergency cases of unprotected sex**. Regular use of emergency contraceptive can have harmful consequences on your health, including affecting fertility.

Sexually transmitted infections

An STI is an infection (bacteria, virus, or parasite) that is passed from one person to another through unprotected sexual contact. Sexual contact can be oral, vaginal, or anal.

What are the common STIs?

STI	WHAT IS IT?
Gonorrhoea	This is the most common STI caused by bacteria, and affects both men and women. In males, the disease usually causes pain or a burning sensation when passing urine and is accompanied by a thick discharge from the penis. Gonorrhoea in women may not be recognized easily as symptoms may not be obvious.
Chlamydia	This is a bacterial infection of the tissues lining the urethra, throat, rectum, and the opening of the uterus. If not treated it has the same symptoms as gonorrhoea.
Syphilis	The initial symptom only consists of a soft, small painless sore in the genital area, penis or vagina. It is caused by germs and transmitted during sexual intercourse with an infected person. It develops in stages: 1. A small and painless sore in the genital area or vagina is seen. 2. Fever and pain occur in the bones and muscles. 3. Syphilis will continue to have effects for as long as 20 years after its initial contraction.
Chancroid (genital sore)	This disease causes shallow, painful sores or ulcers around the genital area and inside the vagina.
Genital herpes	Herpes is a viral disease that causes pain or itching and swollen blisters or sores on the penis, vulva, vagina, pubic area, or at the entrance of the anus.
Genital warts	Genital warts usually appear as small, hard, painless bumps in the vaginal area, around the penis, or around the anus. If untreated, they may grow and develop a fleshy cauliflower-like appearance. A person who has genital warts should have a check up with a trained health professional every year.
Candidiasis	This is an infection caused by a fungus. It is characterized by thick, whitish discharge resembling curdled milk. It is extremely itchy and may be associated with swelling of the labia in females. Men can be carriers without showing any symptoms. It is therefore important to treat both partners even though the male partner may have no symptoms. It might also be a result of other health issues and not only an STI.

How to prevent STIs?

The most effective way for you to make sure that you do not get infected with, or transmit, an STI is to practice abstinence. The second most effective way is to use a condom during all sexual contact and not have sexual contact if you have a rash or infected areas on the skin.

Something that you should know:
Most STIs do not show symptoms, but the infection is still harming the body and can still be passed on to another person if it is not treated. If you are sexually active and have been practicing unprotected sex, you are encouraged to visit your doctor for an STI test.

How are STIs diagnosed and treated?

Most STIs can be cured with medicines. A doctor or nurse can check whether a person has an STI. A person who has sexual intercourse of any kind should get tested for an STI. This is especially important to do if they are about to have sex with a new partner.

You are encouraged to visit the doctor/nurse with your partner as well, and to reach out to former partners if you find out you have an STI: maybe they have it too and must be treated!

***Most STIs do not show symptoms**, but the infection is still harming the body and can still be passed on to another person if it is not treated.*

HIV and AIDS

The human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is an STI. Although there are several modes of transmission, it is commonly passed on through sexual intercourse. It is important to note that a person who already has another STI has a higher risk of becoming infected with HIV because the open wounds and sores associated with STIs allow easier entry of the virus into the body, however, even the healthiest person is vulnerable to infection!

1,3 million
people living with
HIV

14.6 %
HIV
prevalence

34,000
new
HIV
infections

HIV prevalence rate for girls is two times **(5.7%)** higher than for boys **(3.2%)** aged 15-24

Source: *Ministry of Health and Child Care (2018) HIV Estimates Report.*

What are the stages of HIV?

Once in the body, the virus enters human blood cells that fight against infections – called CD4 cells or T cells – multiplies, and slowly destroys the immune system of the body.

If left untreated, HIV infection advances in three main stages:

1. Acute HIV infection

One to four weeks after the virus enters your body, you may develop flu-like symptoms for a week or two. Not everyone will experience these symptoms though, so this is not an indicator that you have or have not contracted HIV! If you have had a risky sexual encounter, it is very important to get tested. During this time, you are also the most infectious because the levels of the virus in your blood are very high at this stage, and therefore you have a higher chance of passing the virus on to someone else.

2. Chronic/asymptomatic HIV infection

After the initial stage of infection, you will start to feel better, and in fact probably have no other symptoms for as long 10 to 15 years. But this does not mean the virus is not active! During this time, it will slowly be growing in your body and destroying your immune system if left untreated. You can still pass the virus on while in the asymptomatic stage.

3. Symptomatic HIV infection/AIDS

By this stage, your immune system is severely damaged and less likely to be able to fight off infections (called opportunistic infections) and illnesses. Once the infection has progressed to this stage and you have AIDS-defining symptoms or a CD4 count of less than 200 cells/mm3, you will be diagnosed with acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). At this stage, you have a very high viral load and are once again infectious, so you could easily pass on the virus to others. Without antiretroviral treatment (ART), you may succumb to AIDS-related death within three years.

It is very important to bear in mind that if you are diagnosed with HIV, you will not necessarily go through all these stages. The earlier you are diagnosed and put on ART, the better your health outcomes will be and the less chance you will have of passing on the virus to others! There is no cure for HIV, but sticking to your treatment for the long term will mean your risk of transmitting the virus can eventually go down to zero and you can live a long, healthy, and normal life!

Something that you should know:
HIV and AIDS are **not the same**! HIV is a virus that infects cells of the immune system. AIDS is a condition – not a disease – that applies to the most advanced stages of HIV, and refers to a set of symptoms resulting from HIV infection.

How is HIV spread?

HIV is only spread through certain body fluids from a person who has HIV:

- Blood
- Semen
- Pre-seminal fluids
- Rectal fluids
- Vaginal fluids
- Breast milk

HIV transmission is only possible if these fluids come in contact with a mucous membrane, damaged tissue, or are directly injected into the bloodstream (from a needle or syringe). Mucous membranes are found inside the rectum, the vagina, the opening of the penis, and the mouth. HIV can also spread from a woman with HIV to her child during pregnancy, childbirth, or through breastfeeding. This is called mother-to-child transmission of HIV.

Something that you should know:

You **cannot** contract HIV through:

- Mosquitoes bites
- Casual contact with a person who has HIV by hugging, sharing food, or shaking hands
- Sharing bathrooms or eating utensils with someone who has HIV

People living with HIV are human beings just like you!

How can I reduce the risk of getting HIV?

Abstinence

The absence of sexual contact is the best way to protect yourself from contracting HIV and other STIs.

Get tested and know your partner's HIV status

Talk to your partner about HIV testing and counselling before indulging is sexual activities. Voluntary HIV counselling can be accessed from all health care facilities.

Be faithful to one uninfected partner

The more partners you have, the more likely you are to have a partner with an STI or poorly controlled HIV. Both of these factors can increase the risk of HIV transmission.

Avoid risky sexual behaviours

If you decide to engage in sexual activities, always use condoms correctly and consistently. You should also avoid having multiple sexual partners at the same time.

Talk to your health care provider about PrEP

Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is the use of specific antiretroviral drugs (ARVs) taken daily to prevent HIV. It is used by people who do not have HIV but who are at high risk of becoming infected, including adolescents and young people.

Get PEP from your nearest health facility in emergencies

Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) is a series of pills you can start taking very soon after you've been exposed to HIV that lowers your chances of getting it. It is only for use in emergency situations, for example, if you have been exposed to HIV through cuts by infected objects or sexual abuse/rape .

VMMC

Voluntary medical male circumcision (VMMC) reduces HIV transmission from HIV infected females to males by 60%. However, it is still recommended that you use other prevention methods, such as correct and consistent use of condoms and remaining faithful to one sexual partner.

Get tested and treated for STIs

Insist that your partners are tested and treated too. Having an STI can increase your risk of becoming infected with HIV or spreading it to others.

Important information about PEP

PEP is intended for **emergency situations only**! It cannot be taken routinely, even by people who are continuously exposed to HIV.

PEP must be started within 72 hours (three days) after possible exposure to HIV. **The sooner you start PEP after a possible HIV exposure, the better.**

If you are prescribed PEP, you will take HIV medicines every day for 28 days.

Relationships

Family relationships

There are different kinds of families that exist around the world. These include two parents, single parents, child-headed, guardian-headed, and extended families. Family plays an important role in teaching you how to care for yourself and they also teach you about norms values and beliefs. As an adolescent it is important for you to be able to communicate with your family regarding love, pregnancy and STIs.

Parent-child communication

Most parents and guardians are not comfortable talking to their children about puberty, dating, and relationships. Adolescents and young people generally rely on their friends and sources like the internet, movies, videos, and magazines for information about puberty and sexual relationships. But these information sources are often inaccurate, confusing, misleading, or false.

Getting the basic facts about sex, pregnancy, and childbirth from parents, guardians, community, as well as teachers will help you to make informed decisions that help to protect you from EUPs and STIs, including HIV.

How should I get communication with my parents started?

Getting started is the hardest part. Here are some suggestions:

- "I heard someone say……. (whatever it is you want to talk about). Do you think that's true?"
- "Some of the kids at school are doing …... (whatever it is you want to talk about). Can I talk to you about that?"
- "What was dating like when you were my age?"
- "How did you know that dad /mom /your partner was the right person for you?"
- "Our teacher told us about…… (whatever it is you want to talk about). I have questions that I'd rather ask you about – is that OK?"

When a newspaper article or radio or television programme on the issue appears, you could also use this opportunity to start the conversation with your parents/guardians – or show them this booklet (or any other material from your community or school) and ask if you can talk more about it.

Why should I talk to my parents/guardians about pregnancy and STIs?

It is hard to talk to adults about pregnancy and STIs, especially your parents or guardians! It can be uncomfortable, embarrassing, or even scary, but it is important to do so.

There are many good reasons to talk to your parents or guardians about pregnancy and STIs:

- Your parents or guardians are more likely to give you accurate, truthful information.
- They care about you and want the best for you – including making sure you stay safe.
- When you have an open relationship with your parents and guardians you will have a deeper understanding of each other, making it easier to talk about other, more serious, issues and concerns. You might even be surprised by them!

Something that you should know:
It is better not to start the discussion when your parent or guardian is busy, distracted, or stressed. Rather, choose a relaxed time and place – somewhere comfortable, where you will not be interrupted. You could suggest doing something fun together – going for a walk, cooking together, or doing some other activity you like to do together – or just sit in a private place at home where you can talk easily.

Peer relationships

When you become an adolescent, you start spending more time with your friends and enjoying it more than other activities. You confide more in your friends because you feel that your feelings are more understood and accepted by them. Less time is spent with parents and other family members.

For girls, close, intimate, self-disclosing conversations with friends help to explore identities and define one's sense of self. Conversations within these important friendships also assist adolescents in exploring their sexuality and how they feel about it. The friendships of adolescent boys tend to be less intimate than those of girls. Boys are more prone to form an alliance with a group of friends who validate each other's worth through actions and deeds rather than interpersonal disclosure.

While these peer relationships are important always remember:

- Do not be pressured into doing something you are not yet ready for.
- If your friends pressure you to have sexual intercourse before you are ready, then you may need to change your friends!
- Surround yourself with friends that influence you to do good things.
- You do not have to prove anything to your friends. If they ask you to prove anything, then again, you may need to change them!

Here are some examples of how to resist peer pressure:

- Remain a virgin, even if your friends say it is backwards or "uncool" to do so. Abstinence is the most effective way to ensure you stay safe and healthy.
- Maintain your own beliefs about when to become sexually active.
- Refuse alcohol or drugs, even if others are involved in them.
- Decide to remain faithful to one partner, no matter what others say.
- Maintain your religious identity, even if peers are disowning their faiths.

Male-female relationships

Your behaviour and attitudes will tend to follow how others around you act, and how they would like you to behave. These influences and expectations are different for males and females and affect their sexual and love behaviours and partnerships. The important thing to remember is that relationships can either be healthy or unhealthy, a**nd it is up to you to do the right thing**!

What is a healthy relationship?

- Healthy romantic relationships are characterized by open communication, high levels of trust, and partners who are relatively close in age.
- Healthy relationships help adolescents to improve their sense of identity and develop interactive skills, as well as providing emotional support.
- Partners respect each other, share true feelings of love, spend time getting to know each other, and know when to say NO (and listen when their partner says NO!)

Something that you should know:
Safe sex is facilitated by open and honest communication. You should feel free to tell your partner that you want to be safe and use contraception. It is important to be able to negotiate safe sex with your partner to avoid EUP and STIs, including HIV.

What is an unhealthy relationship?

Unhealthy relationships pose risks that may have a long-lasting impact. Young people are particularly vulnerable to becoming involved in relationships that include:

- **Abuse:** When someone you are seeing romantically harms you in some way, whether it is physically, sexually, emotionally, or all three. It can happen on a first date, or after some time.

- **Risky sexual activity:** Any sexual contact that puts you at risk of pregnancy and STIs, including HIV, such as sex with multiple partners or sex without a condom. Some relationships, particularly with an older partner, make you vulnerable as you may not be able to negotiate for safe sex.

Something that you should know: Research shows that adolescents that have experienced physical dating abuse are more likely to become victims of violence in relationships as an adult.

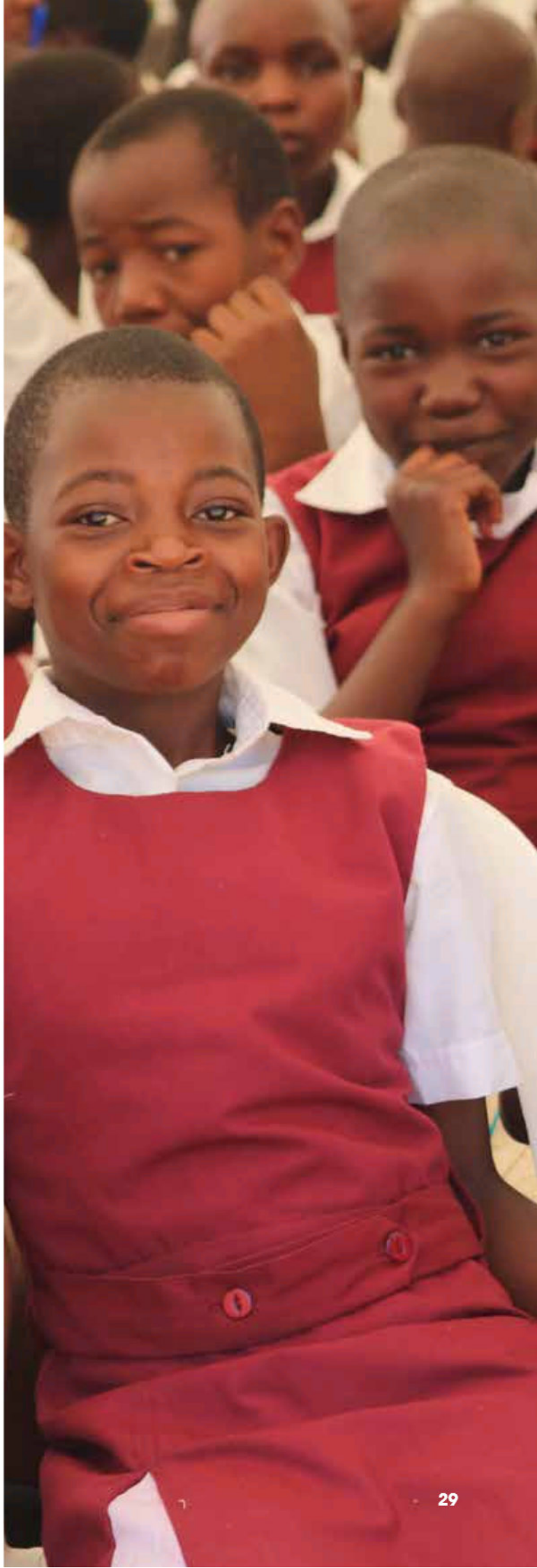
What should you do if you are in an unhealthy relationship?

If you find yourself in an unhealthy relationship and you cannot talk to your partner or trust him/her, get out of the relationship as soon as possible. **The more you wait, the more difficult it is to leave!**

You should also seek support from adults you trust or available support services, including:

- In your school: Guidance and counselling teachers.
- In your community: Village health workers,, non-governmental organizations, nearest police station.
- In a clinic: Nurses and doctors.
- In your family: A member of family you trust and feel comfortable with.

Something that you should know: Never be ashamed of any violence that happens to you! It is NOT your fault and must not stop you asking for help. Asking for help is a sign of confidence, not weakness!



Frequently asked questions

How can I tell my partner I am not ready for sex?

Adolescents should know that if a person says NO, their decision must be respected. Saying no to sex can be expressed in different ways:

If you say/do the following:	It means:
"Stop"	**NO!**
Turn away	**NO!**
"I don't want to"	**NO!**
"Leave me alone"	**NO!**
"I am not ready"	**NO!**
Pushing you away	**NO!**
"I don't feel like it"	**NO!**
Screams	**NO!**
Cries	**NO!**
"I don't want to do it anymore"	**NO!**
"I changed my mind"	**NO!**

Does sex cement a relationship?

No. A relationship cannot be cemented by sex, and may even have the opposite effect! An adolescent should not feel pressured to have sex with their partner when they are not ready.

What happens when I have sex with my partner?

It is important to note that having unprotected sex can lead to EUP and STIs, including HIV. EUP can lead to school dropout and poverty. Here is an example of Chipo: "When I fell pregnant, I was forced to drop out from school. My boyfriend refused to take responsibility for my child. My parents also refused to send me back to school after giving birth. They complained that I am wasting their resources; they will rather focus on educating my siblings who are focusing in school."

Is sex a way to get someone to marry you?

NO. People do not get married to have sex. There are other responsibilities in marriage that do not involve sex, such as caring for and supporting each other and building a common future. Sex also comes with responsibilities, which have nothing to do with marriage. For example, having sex in adolescence will expose you to unintended pregnancies, HIV and other STIs, and complications during child birth because the body may not be mature enough to deliver a baby.

Why do parents forbid us from having sex?

Parents generally care about their children and want the best for them. This includes guaranteeing that their children stay safe and healthy. They forbid adolescents to have sex to protect them from unintended pregnancies, HIV and other STIs, and unhealthy relationships. Abstinence is the best way to prevent both unintended pregnancies and HIV and other STIs.

In summary...

Growing up can be confusing...
But it doesn't have to stay this way!

When you seek support and answers from the right person, whether it is your parents/guardians or a professional (such as school counsellors, social workers, and health care workers), you will get the information you need to better know yourself and have healthy relationships. Of course, this booklet will also help you!

Your health is very precious...
You must take care of it!

Taking care of your health is taking care of your future! This means you should avoid unhealthy relationships and behaviours, especially those leading to EUPs and STIs, including HIV.

Your friends are important...
But so is your family!

It's normal to spend more time with your friends and to value your relationships with them, but your family are important too! They care very much about you and want you to stay healthy and safe – that is why they sometimes try to change your attitudes or forbid you from doing things that might put you in a dangerous situation.

Children and adolescents have rights...
And responsibilities too!

Boys and girls have a right to access accurate information and adequate sexual and reproductive health services. Girls particularly must be provided with proper sanitation and sanitary products for their menstruation and be able to return to school after pregnancy. Growing up comes with increasing responsibilities too – you all have a responsibility to listen to and respect your parents, guardians, caregivers, and peers!

United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
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Education Sector

Let's Talk! Pregnancy at the right time

UNESCO is a United Nations' specialized agency for education. It provides global and regional leadership in education, strengthens national education systems, and responds to contemporary global challenges through education, with a special focus on Africa and gender equality.

UNESCO's mission in the area of health education

- Promoting healthy lifestyles among girls, boys, young women, and young men through skills-based education in formal educational settings, non-formal educational activities, and informal education.
- Ensuring that all children benefit from good quality comprehensive sexuality education that includes information on HIV prevention.
- Ensuring that all children and young people have access to safe, inclusive, health-promoting learning environments.

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