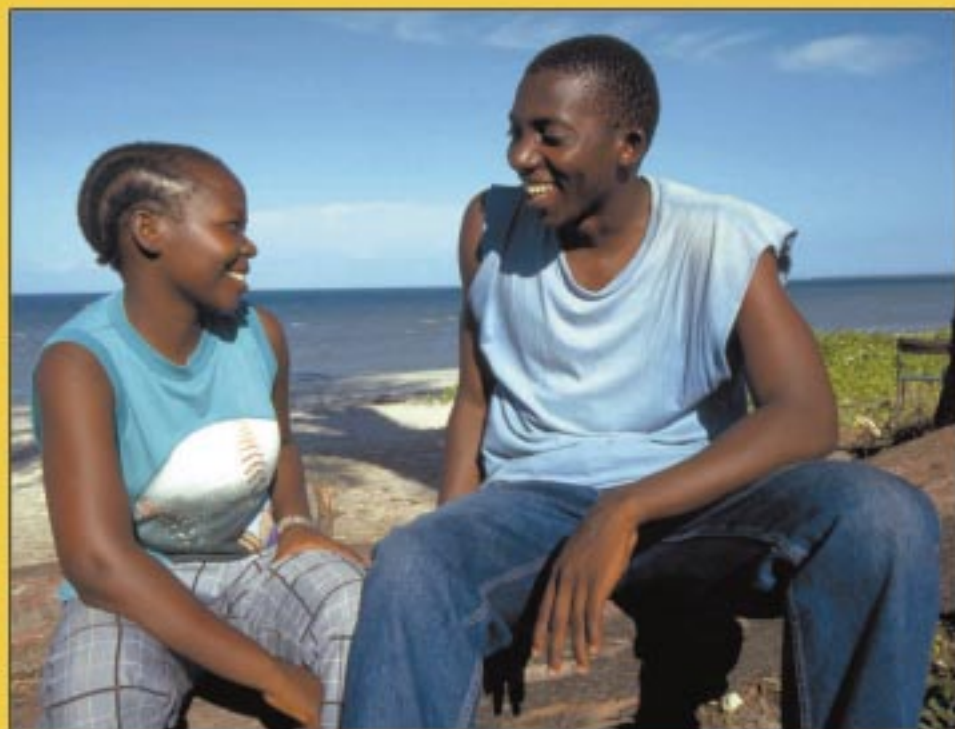


THE QUESTIONS ADOLESCENTS ASK MOST FREQUENTLY ABOUT

# Healthy Relationships

AND THEIR ANSWERS

Vol. 5



This booklet was developed together with adolescents  
by REPRO 

Recent studies in Tanzania show that a large percentage of adolescents are sexually active. At the same time they lack basic knowledge about the functioning of their bodies and the risks involved in becoming sexually active at an early age. This ignorance often puts them at risk. Unwanted pregnancies, hazardous abortions, as well as sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS are a real threat to uninformed youth.

This booklet has been developed in response to this situation. It is meant to provide youths with information on the most crucial facts and to guide them in becoming responsible decision-makers for their own lives. Without sufficient knowledge adolescents cannot make informed choices, and experience has shown that informed youth often choose the safer option!

All of the questions in this booklet have been collected in recent years by counsellors and researchers working with adolescents. The youth originate from different regions of Tanzania and their ages range from 11 to 20 years. Please note that none of the questions are made up by adults!

The booklet has been developed by a multi-disciplinary team of social scientists, medical doctors and education specialists. The adolescents were involved in all stages of the process. With the publication of this booklet, we hope to contribute to the prevention of avoidable hardship for adolescents, caused by their ignorance.

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Regina Goergen, MSc, MPH, PHD  
Teamleader REPRO/GTZ

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## What is safe sex?

Safe sex is sex, which does not involve any risk of unplanned pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases or HIV/AIDS. Safe sex on the one hand includes physical contacts, which do not involve the penetration of the penis in the vagina. On the other hand it includes penetrative sex, if the required safety precautions are taken.

Ways of satisfying sexual desire without penetration of the penis into the vagina are kissing, hugging, deep kissing, holding hands and masturbation. All those things are safe with regard to unplanned pregnancy and HIV infection.

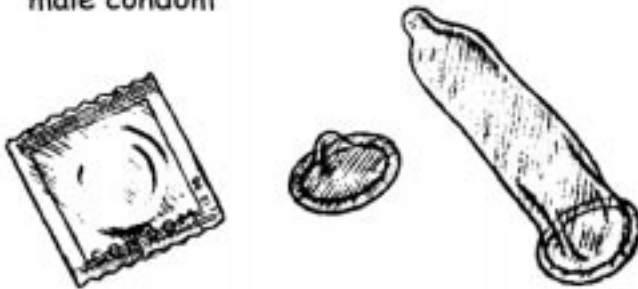
If the penis penetrates into the vagina during sex, it is necessary to take precautions. One possible precaution is to be faithful to your partner, but that also requires that you were both free of sexually transmitted diseases, when you first had sex. Another precaution is to use a condom. Condoms prevent not only pregnancies, but also sexually transmitted diseases.

## How many types of contraceptives are there?

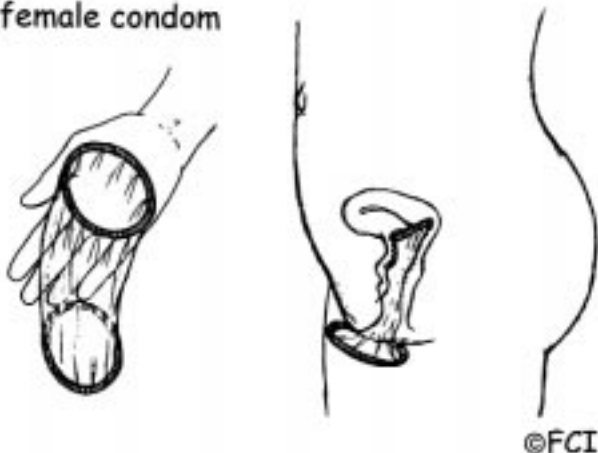
There are many types of contraceptives and they can be grouped into different categories:

Barrier methods: These prevent the sperm from fertilising the egg. Condoms are rubber tubes, which are closed at one end. Different condoms are produced

male condom



female condom

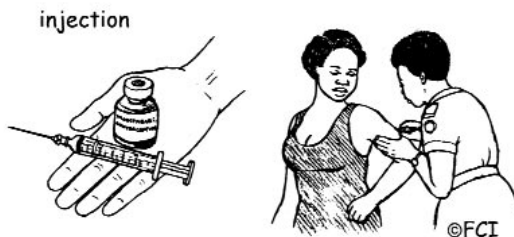


for men and women. Male condoms are placed on the stiff penis before it penetrates into the vagina. The female condoms are placed inside the vagina before sexual intercourse.

Contraceptive pills: The woman has to swallow one tablet every day, even on days she doesn't have sex.



There are also long-acting contraceptives. No special measures to prevent pregnancy have to be taken when



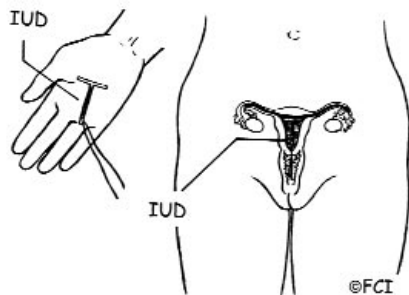
having sex and the woman does not have to remember everyday. Among those contraceptives are injections, which are given to a woman every three months.



Secondly, there are implants. Implants are thin plastic tubes, which are placed in the upper arm of a woman through a minor operation, and they contain a substance, which prevents the eggs from ripening. In addition, there are intra-uterine devices, in

short called IUD. Intra-uterine devices are made from a special type of plastic and are inserted in the uterus of the woman by a trained health worker. Injections, implants and intra-uterine

devices have to be applied by a trained health worker in a sufficiently equipped health facility. Since long-acting contraceptives interfere more strongly with the



normal menstrual cycle of the woman, also their side effects are greater than those of, for example, the pill.

There are irreversible ways of contraception for men and women, which require a minor operation. For men, the seminal canals are cut and sealed, in order to prevent sperm from mixing with the seminal fluid. If a man has sex after this operation, he can still ejaculate, but there are no sperm in the seminal fluid. For women, the fallopian tubes are cut and sealed, in order to prevent the egg from reaching the uterus. After this operation the woman will have her period as usual, but the eggs will not be able to unite with sperm anymore.

In addition, there are methods, which do not require the use of medicine or barrier methods. However, these methods do not give very good protection from getting pregnant. Sometimes women observe specific signs or count days for identifying days she is likely to get pregnant and subsequently she avoids having sex during this period. Men trying to ejaculate outside the vagina and women hoping that breast-feeding prevents pregnancy are some of the traditional ways of



contraception. Remember that these are commonly used methods, but that are not very safe with regard to preventing pregnancy and infections with sexually transmitted diseases.

It is important to realise that each methods fits some people, but is not appropriate for others. Therefore, each person who decides to use contraceptives should consult a clinic, in order to get the method which fits him or her best.

What is the best age to start using contraceptives?

The best time to start using contraceptives is when you start having sex. This is a good time to start using a condom, because that protects you from unwanted pregnancy, as well as from sexually transmitted diseases.



This is also the good time to go to the clinic, in order to get advice on the different methods of contraception. The doctor or the nurse can help the couple to decide which method they should choose.

Often people think that family planning services are for married women, pregnant women and mothers only. But that is not necessarily true. In many countries, any person in the reproductive age, whether it is a girl or a boy is legally entitled to use family planning service.

Is it true that you can avoid pregnancy  
by counting days?

An egg is released 14 days before the onset of the next period, either from the left or the right ovary. From there the egg moves through the fallopian tubes towards the uterus. If an egg unites with a sperm from the man while moving through the fallopian tubes, it can be fertilised. If a woman avoids sex on all days when there is an egg ready to be fertilised, she can also avoid getting pregnant.

I must have made  
a mistake  
when counting days...



However, most young girls do not exactly know, when to expect their next period and therefore it is very difficult to know when there is an egg ready to be fertilised. A girl's menstrual cycle can easily be affected by stress, sorrow, travelling or other changes in a girl's life. Even if a girl had regular periods for some time, they may suddenly become irregular. Young girls can not rely on counting days to avoid pregnancies, as they can never really know whether there is an egg

ready to be fertilised or not. There are no "safe days" from pregnancy for adolescent girls!

Is it true that women using contraceptive pills get stomach ulcers?

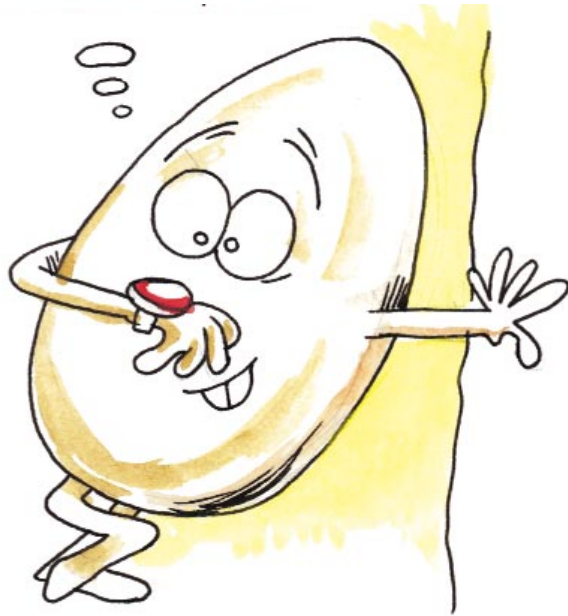
Some women get stomach ulcers, but these ulcers have no relation to the use of contraceptive pills. The causes of stomach ulcers are often stress, having a very fatty and spicy diet, as well as having a history of stomach ulcers in your family. The contraceptive pill does not cause stomach ulcers.

Can women who use the pill or injections get pregnant after stopping the use of these contraceptives?

Pills and injections prevent pregnancy by preventing eggs from ripening. If a woman uses these methods of contraception, she has her periods as usual, but in her sexual organs no eggs are getting ready for fertilisation.

Once the woman stops taking the pill, eggs ripen in her ovaries and she will be able to conceive. For a woman

Once she will stop taking the pill,  
I will start ripening...



who has used injections, it may take some time before she starts producing eggs again. For some women it takes up to 12 months.

The most important thing to remember is that neither injections, nor pills are permanent methods of contraception, even if it may take some time for a woman to produce eggs again.

Is it really necessary to take the pill even on days you do not have sex?

There are certain brands of pills, which come in packets of 21 pills and there are pills, which come in packets of 28 pills. If you are prescribed a brand with 21 pills, you will stop taking the pill for 7 days each month. If you are prescribed a brand with 28 pills, one pill has to be swallowed every day, even during the days the woman has her period. In order for contraceptive pills to provide full protection from pregnancy, ask the person who prescribes you the pill, exactly how you have to take it.



If a woman forgets to swallow the pill, even if it is only for one day, she may get pregnant. If she forgets to take the pill, it is advisable for the couple to use a condom while having sex, in order to prevent pregnancy. This also applies, if a woman has diarrhoea or has been vomiting within 4 hours of taking the pill. If a woman forgets to take the pill again and again, she should consult the clinic on other possible ways of contraception.

Which contraceptive method is best for a sexually active teenager?

Each contraceptive method has its advantages and disadvantages. For example, the advantage of pills is that nothing has to be done while having sex, if the woman takes the pill regularly. The disadvantage of pills is that the woman has to think of taking the pill every day. For example, the condom has the advantage that it does not only protect from pregnancy but also from sexually transmitted diseases. But it has the disadvantage that you have to put it on, while you are having sex.



Similarly, injections have the advantage that they have to be given every two or three months only. The disadvantage is that some women take a lot of time to start ovulating after stopping the use of injections and that some women have irregular periods, while they are using the injections.

Therefore, the girl together with a family planning specialist should look at the situation and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of different methods. They can then decide which method is the best one for the girl.



## How should I use the male condom properly?

When using a condom the following steps have to be followed. Make sure that the packet of the condom is not torn and that the date of expiry has not passed yet.

If the penis is erect, open the packet carefully and do not use razor blades, teeth, scissors or a knife. Squeeze the top in order to release all air from the condom when



you put it on. This helps to prevent the condom from bursting. Roll the condom over the penis until it is fully covered. Once you are sure that the condom is placed well, you can have sexual intercourse safely.

When withdrawing the penis from the vagina, be careful that the condom remains on the penis. After withdrawing the penis, remove the condom carefully before the penis gets soft, in order to avoid sperm reaching the vagina. Throw the used condom into a pit latrine or burn it, but do not leave it lying around.

In many condom packets available in the market, you can find more explanations on how to use condoms. If you want to use condoms when having sex, it may be a good idea to try putting a condom on whilst you are alone in order to get experience in using it.

### How should I use the female condom properly?

In most African countries female condoms are not yet widely available and they are rather expensive.

Female condoms are placed inside the vagina before

having sex. If you use a female condom, make sure that the packet is not broken and that the date of expiry has not passed yet.

Carefully tear open the packet. The condom has two plastic rings and an opening on the upper side. One ring is smaller and it is on the closed side. The second ring is big and it is on the side of the opening. Take the condom on the closed side and squeeze the ring with the thumb, the index and middle fingers. Sometimes the condom slips away, but continue to try until you squeeze it well. Find a good position and while you are still squeezing the ring, insert the female condom into the vagina with your fingers. Let the ring go, so it holds the condom inside the vagina, when you remove your fingers. Now insert your finger into the condom in order to push the ring until it reaches the opening of the uterus.

After having sex, remove the condom carefully. Throw the used condom into a pit latrine or burn it, but do not leave it lying around.

Who should put on the male condom, the man or the woman?

Whether it is the man, who places the condom on the penis or whether the woman helps to put it on, fully depends on the decision-making of those two people having sex. Both can put in on the penis while having sex and both can also buy the condom.

Is it true that the condom is too big for some men and too small for others?

There are different sizes of condoms. On average, the size of the condoms fits almost all adult men. Very rarely, the condoms are too small for a certain man. Some men like to show off by pretending to have a big penis but they are only making excuses for not using a condom.

For adolescents, however, the situation is different. Often

Is the condom too big  
or am I too young?



the condoms are too big if you compare them with the size of an adolescent's penis. In many African countries smaller than average condoms are not available. Adolescents whose penis is still too small for using condoms should abstain from penetrative sex and use other ways of expressing their sexual feelings, such as hugging and kissing.

### Why can a condom only be used once?

Condoms must only be used once, because if they are used twice or three times they will not protect well from pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases



anymore. Condoms must not be washed and reused. They must be thrown into a pit latrine or burnt after use. Condoms are made to be used only once.

### Why do condoms sometimes burst when having sex?

Condoms burst sometimes if they are not placed well on the penis. It is most important to squeeze the tip of the condom when putting it on the penis, because the air inside the condom can make the condom burst when having sex.

In addition, you must not apply lubricant, such as Vaseline to the condom, in order to smoothen the penetration. Lubricants, such as Vaseline endanger the durability of the condom and they may lead to the condom bursting. The lubricant, which is in the packet of the condom as you buy it, assures the durability of the condom and is different from other types of lubricants.

It is most important to remember that if a condom is used properly, the chance of it bursting is very small.

### Can male sperm pass through a condom?

No, sperm can not pass through a condom. Condoms are produced in order to prevent sperm from reaching the vagina when having sexual intercourse. Because seminal fluids cannot pass through a condom, condoms are a good way of avoiding pregnancy, as well as sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS.

Some people say that there are small holes in the condom, which sperm and microorganisms causing sexually transmitted diseases can pass through. But this is a lie. If you want to be sure that a new condom has no holes, take one and fill it with normal water. You will see that water can not pass through the condom at all. After doing this experiment, throw the condom into a pit latrine or burn it. Don't use it for sexual intercourse!



What is the lubricant in the condom packet for and is it harmful to humans in any way?

The lubricant in the packet of the condom is a special type of lubricant and it is there to protect the condom until the day it is used. Without this lubricant the durability of the condom would not be guaranteed, because the condom would dry out and lose its elasticity. This lubricant does no harm at all to most people. Very few people, whose skin is very sensitive, have an itchy feeling after using a condom, but this is not a serious problem. Such people are advised to gently

Without the lubricant, I am useless!





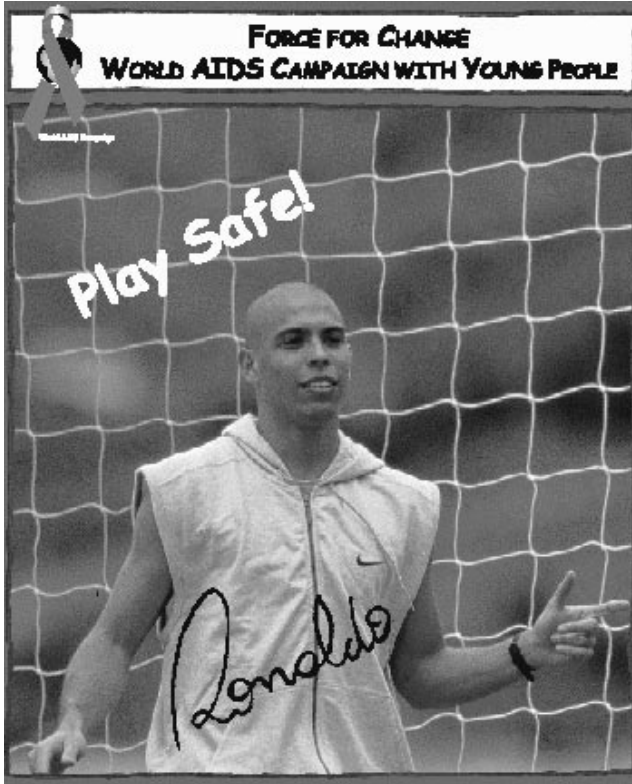
wash their sexual parts with mild soap after having sexual intercourse.

There is a rumour that the lubricant on condoms contains HIV. This is not true, the lubricant is there only to guarantee the durability of the condom.

How does it feel for a woman to have sex with or without condom?

We can not say how it feels for a woman to have sex with or without a condom. Each person has his or her preferences. But the most crucial issue with regard to sex is the emotional part, mutual understanding between the lovers and the level of mutual excitement.

Some women prefer having sex if the man uses a condom, because there is no fear of getting pregnant or being infected with a sexually transmitted disease. Other women prefer having sex without condom. However, in addition to the danger of getting pregnant, nowadays, there is the danger of getting a sexually transmitted disease or even HIV/AIDS when having sex without a condom. Therefore it is safer not to trust



anyone, until both have done medical tests and have been proved to be healthy.

If I use a condom every time I have sex, can I still get sexually transmitted diseases?

The viruses of sexually transmitted diseases are in the seminal fluid. So if you use a condom every time you have sex, you can avoid being infected with a sexually

transmitted disease, because seminal fluid can not pass through a condom. If you use condoms properly, you are safe from being infected.

How can I withstand the temptation to have sex without condom?

Sometimes it is not easy to withstand the temptation of



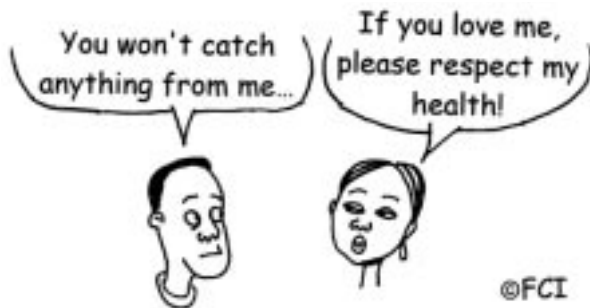
having sex without a condom because of pressure from your lover. But remember that it is often not easy to recognise whether someone has a sexually

transmitted disease and therefore you can not easily make sure that your lover does not have any sexually transmitted diseases or even HIV/AIDS.

You cannot know with how many other people your lover has already had sex in his or her life, and your lover cannot know if you already had sex with someone else.



Each time having sex involves the possibility of getting a sexually transmitted disease. Therefore, discuss with your lover and agree with him or her about the necessity of using a condom when having sex, in order to protect both of you. If your partner tells you that he or she does not have any such diseases, tell him or her that there is no certainty of not being infected with HIV/AIDS until you undergo a blood test. If one of you has not had the test yet, there is still a chance of carrying the virus. Do not agree to not use a condom, because it can endanger your life.



### How are sexually transmitted diseases transmitted?

Sexually transmitted diseases are transmitted from a person who is already infected to a healthy person, when having sexual intercourse.

In many African countries sexually transmitted diseases are very widespread, with up to around 10% of all people who are treated in a clinic having such a disease. Therefore, if you are uncertain whether you or a lover you have had sex with is infected, it is most important that you consult a health worker. If such diseases are not treated completely and in time, they can lead to major physical damage. Sexually transmitted diseases are a major cause of infertility.

### What types of sexually transmitted diseases exist and what are their symptoms?

There are many different sexually transmitted diseases, however, those which are most widespread are gonorrhoea, syphilis, chlamydia, chancroid, candidiasis and HIV/AIDS. The big problem with these diseases is that their symptoms are often not well discernible and that they can lead to major physical

damage, if they are not fully treated in time. Below is a description of the most common sexually transmitted diseases:

**Gonorrhoea:** It takes 1 to 14 days between being infected and showing symptoms of gonorrhoea. Women's symptoms of having gonorrhoea are pains in the lower abdomen, which can be accompanied with fever, or discharge from the vagina. However, many women do not have any symptoms. Men's symptoms are festering discharge from the penis and pains when urinating. Potential consequences of gonorrhoea for women are blocking of the fallopian tubes and eggs settling outside the uterus, as well as infertility. Unborn babies of women suffering from gonorrhoea may become blind. For men gonorrhoea sometimes results in the blocking of the urinary canal.

**Syphilis:** Women's symptoms of syphilis are sores and rashes on sexual organs, especially in the pubic hair and around the anus. Men often develop sores at the tip of the penis, sores on the rest of the penis and around the



anus. Men can also get rashes on their sexual organs. The potential consequences of syphilis are heart problems, forgetfulness and giving birth to disabled children.

Chlamydia: Very often, the symptoms of women suffering from chlamydia are not easily discernible. Men normally get pains when urinating and they feel the urge to urinate again and again. Potential consequences for women are the

blocking of fallopian tubes together with eggs settling outside the uterus. Life threatening pregnancies or

infertility are possible outcomes. For men, chlamydia often results in a blocked urinary canal or even infertility.

Chancroid: Its signs are painful sores on sexual organs, sharp pains when passing urine, sores and ulcers on the sexual organs. If such ulcers burst, a smelly discharge occurs, accompanied by sharp pains.

Candidiasis: For women, the symptoms are a smelly discharge looking like yoghurt and small itchy sores on the sexual organs. For men, itchy sexual organs and pains while urinating are the most frequent consequences. Having sexual intercourse can be very painful when suffering from candidiasis.

HIV/AIDS: In the first stage after being infected with HIV/AIDS there are no special symptoms. This stage can last up to ten years. However, when AIDS fully breaks out, there are many signs. The immune system of the person becomes weak, the person loses a lot of weight and is ill all of the time. The final consequence of suffering from HIV/AIDS is death.



Is it true that there are people who are more or less prone to get sexually transmitted diseases?

It is not true that some people are born with a better immune system than others to combat sexually transmitted diseases. The danger of being infected with sexually transmitted diseases depends on your behaviour.

As their name suggests, sexually transmitted diseases are transmitted by having sexual intercourse. Therefore, if you have sex with several people without using a condom, you run a high risk of getting a sexually transmitted disease.

If you have only one sexual partner and your partner has no other lovers than you, and if medical tests have proved that both of you are healthy, then there is no risk of infection for you. However, often it is difficult to know whether both are perfectly healthy and it is difficult to be sure that your lover has no other sexual contacts. Therefore it is safer to use a condom, every time you have sex.

If I wash myself just after sex, can I avoid getting sexually transmitted diseases?

No, you cannot avoid getting a sexually transmitted disease by washing yourself just after sex. The microorganisms related to sexually transmitted diseases enter into the body right away and settle in your blood.

We have reached the blood...



...now we can't be washed away anymore!

Can sexually transmitted diseases be transmitted if the penis is withdrawn before ejaculation or when having anal sex?

Yes, sexually transmitted diseases can be transmitted, even if you withdraw the penis before ejaculation. People suffering from sexually transmitted diseases often have small sores on their sexual parts and the parasites of the diseases can easily pass through these sores. Therefore, you can be infected with sexually transmitted diseases, even if you withdraw the penis before ejaculation.

Similarly, anal sex is not safe with regard to sexually transmitted diseases. Because the skin inside the anus is very soft and because there are no fluids as for example, in the vagina, having anal sex often leads to small cuts. Through these cuts the microorganisms related to sexually transmitted diseases can easily pass. Therefore, the danger of getting a sexually transmitted disease is even higher with anal sex than if the vaginal canal is used.

If you are not sure whether your partner is infected with a sexually transmitted disease or not, you are strongly advised to use a condom.

How long does it take between infection and the outbreak of a sexually transmitted disease?

The time between infection and the outbreak of a sexually transmitted disease depends on the type of disease and the general circumstances. Some diseases do not lead to any symptoms at all, the symptoms of other diseases become apparent after a few days, for others it takes a week, one or several months or even years. For HIV/AIDS it can take up to ten years between being infected and displaying the first symptoms. Some people show signs very soon after being infected, for others it takes a long time. Therefore, there is no general answer to this question.

What are the potential consequences of having sexually transmitted diseases?

The consequences of sexually transmitted diseases depend on the type of disease. Each disease has its own



consequences. There are temporary and permanent consequences. Temporary consequences can be wounds and small cuts, as well as itching or pains on sexual organs, smelly or sticky discharge from the vagina or the penis or pains while urinating.

If these conditions are not fully cured in time they can lead to permanent physical damage. For example, a women's fallopian tubes may become blocked and subsequently eggs may settle outside the uterus. Men often have problems with blocked urinary canals. For men, women and unborn children sexually transmitted diseases can lead to mental disorders, infertility or even death.

Therefore it is most important to protect yourself from getting sexually transmitted diseases, every time you have sex.

How can I judge whether my partner has a sexually transmitted disease and how do I find out whether I have a sexually transmitted disease?

Some sexually transmitted diseases can be detected more easily than others can. You can see their symptoms with bare eyes, like for example sores on sexual organs. However, these sores can also be inside your body and therefore you can not see them.

Therefore, if you have symptoms and/or doubts about whether or not have contracted a sexually transmitted

disease after having had sex, you must go to a clinic for an examination. By performing a physical examination together with blood tests, a trained health worker can find out whether you are infected or not. If you have a disease like gonorrhoea, syphilis, chlamydia, canchroid or candidiasis, the health worker can prescribe you with a treatment.



Why do men show more symptoms than women when they have a sexually transmitted disease?

Very often, the symptoms of sexually transmitted diseases like gonorrhoea are visible on internal sexual organs. Men's infections are often in the urinary canal, where itching and pain is more easily felt than in women's internal sexual organs. Especially when urinating, the caustic substances in the urine irritate the sores in the canals. Therefore, it is easier for the man to feel that he is infected.

In addition, often the end of the urinary canal becomes irritated and a purulent discharge becomes apparent. Women's vaginas produce substances, which hinder the diseases from irritating the skin quickly and therefore the disease is less visible. Unfortunately, these substances do not prevent the infection, they only reduce the visible symptoms.

Do not forget that if a man has the symptoms of a sexually transmitted disease, his female partner has to be examined and treated as well.



## Is there any medical treatment for sexually transmitted diseases?

For many sexually transmitted diseases there is a treatment, like for example for gonorrhoea, syphilis, chlamydia, canchroid or candidiasis. However, it is most crucial that medical treatment is sought early. If you wait too long before being cured, you are likely to have permanent damage to your sexual organs already, such as blocked fallopian tubes.

It is very important to go to the clinic early with your sexual partner. Because if only you are treated, but your lover still has an infection, he or she will infect you again, as soon as you have sex.

Many sexually transmitted diseases can be treated and healed completely, except for HIV/AIDS. HIV/AIDS is an exception, because until now there is neither a cure nor a vaccination for it.

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Regina Goergen,  
Teamleader REPRO/GTZ




Babette Pfander,  
Consultant



This booklet is part of a series of six booklets with the following titles:

1. **Growing Up**
2. **Male-Female Relationships**
3. **Sexual Relationships**
4. **Pregnancy**
5. **Healthy Relationships**
6. **HIV/AIDS and the New Generation**

If you are interested in any of the booklets, feel free to contact: REPRO 

P.O. Box 65350

Dar es Salaam

Tel.: ++255 22 215 1365

Fax: ++255 22 215 1337

e-mail: [repro-gtz@africaonline.co.tz](mailto:repro-gtz@africaonline.co.tz)