

THE QUESTIONS ADOLESCENTS ASK MOST FREQUENTLY ABOUT

Sexual Relationships

AND THEIR ANSWERS

Vol. 3



This booklet was developed together with adolescents
by REPRO gtz

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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What exactly is a virgin?

The term "virginity" is used for any woman or man who has not had sexual intercourse in his or her life. By sexual intercourse we mean the penetration of the penis into the vagina.

Some people say that the fine layer skin a woman has in her vagina, which is like a membrane, determines virginity. It tears as soon as it is poked with a solid item, such as a finger or the penis. But a few women are born without this membrane and some women's membrane is torn when they do physical exercise, such as riding a bicycle or climbing a mountain. Also, during a health examination or treatment regarding internal sexual organs, the membrane can tear.

Therefore, the existence or non-existence of this membrane is not a good indicator of virginity. The only way of identifying a virgin is to know whether the person has or has not had sex. If you have had sex already and you have lost your virginity, there is no way you can get it back, even if you wait for a long time.

Does the term virgin apply for girls only, and what is the term used for boys?

The term "virgin" applies for any person who has not had sexual intercourse in his or her life, be it a woman or a man.

In earlier times, people often defined the term "virgin" as a woman whose fine membrane in the vagina was still intact. However, because this membrane can also be torn through other ways than sexual intercourse, it is not a good indicator for identifying girls who had not had sex (i.e. virgins).



It is very common in many societies to use the term "virgin" to describe girls, who have not had sex. People often only think about girls' virginity and many societies emphasise the importance of girls being virgins until the day they get married. Nevertheless, the term "virgin" applies both to men and women.

How can a boy know whether the girl is still a virgin?
And how can a girl know whether
she is a virgin?

A boy cannot find out whether a girl is still a virgin, neither by looking at her, nor by having penetrative sex with her. This is, because virginity is defined as "not having had sex" and it is not determined by the existence of the membrane in the vagina. A girl for example, who has abstained from sex but whose membrane has torn for another reason, is still a virgin. The only way of knowing whether a girl is a virgin, is to know everything she has done in her life, and this, indeed is impossible.

A girl can know that she herself is a virgin, if she has not had sex. Sex here means that the penis of the man



penetrated into the vagina of the woman or girl.

People often emphasise the necessity for girls to be virgins at the time they get married. But not having sex until the day you get married is important for both, the girl and the boy. Not having sex until the day you get married means that you avoid related problems, such as unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases and even HIV/AIDS. If in any case you can not withstand the urge to have sex, you must make sure to protect yourself from pregnancy and disease by using a condom.

If a person does not have sexual intercourse for a long time, does it lead to any damage or sickness?

The truth is that there are no health problems at all if

I am still a virgin ...



... do I look ill?!

you abstain from sex for a long time. No harm will be done to either your private parts or any other part of your body. And, if a man or a woman starts having sex after a long time, she or he will be able to feel enjoyment and excitement.

There is a rumour that if you abstain from sex for a long time you get pimples on your face or on your private parts, or that you will have psychological problems. It is not true that pimples or

psychological problems are caused by not having sex, the causes of these conditions have their roots somewhere else.

You can be sure that not having sex is totally safe for you. But as we mentioned above, having sex can lead to many problems such as unplanned pregnancy, and sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS.

If a woman stays virgin for a long time, will it be difficult to tear the membrane the first time she has sex?

The membrane in the vagina stays very thin and soft, even if a woman has remained a virgin for a long time. Therefore there is no need to worry about not being able to tear the membrane, even if you wait a long time before you have sexual intercourse for the first time.

What should I do about my sexual feelings?

For many young people it is not easy to know what to do about the feeling of wanting to have sex. You can try to distract yourself and to get involved in other activities, such as physical exercise, studying, helping at home or joining a community youth group. Some young people take a cold shower to cool down their sexual feelings.

Having sexual feelings or an erection does not mean that you must have sex. Sexual intercourse is only one way of expressing sexual feelings, but there are many



other ways. For example talking to each other, holding hands, cuddling, kissing and touching each other.

Another way of coping with those sexual feelings is to masturbate. Masturbation is when a girl softly rubs her own clitoris until she feels sexual excitement or when a boy rubs his own penis until he ejaculates. Most people who masturbate prefer to do so, when they are alone.

Masturbation has no negative consequences, neither for your health nor for your mind.

If under no circumstance you can abstain from having sex, make sure you have safe sex. Safe sex is sex, which does not involve any risk of unplanned pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases or HIV/AIDS. Safer sex on the one hand includes physical contacts, which do not involve the penetration of the penis into the vagina. On the other hand it includes penetrative sex, if the required safety precautions are taken (that is using a condom).

Why do some people like to have sex with people of the same sex?

In many African countries it is not legal for anyone to have sex with a person of the same sex. If someone has a sexual relationship of that type, he or she breaks the law. Nevertheless there are people all over the world, as well as here in Africa who are sexually attracted by people of the same sex, rather than by people of the opposite sex.

The answer to the question why this happens is difficult to give, because the scientists are still debating the issue. Nowadays scientists think that being sexually attracted to people of the same sex is caused by a variety of factors. These include biological or genetical determination, as well as social influences. However, the scientists stress that the subject is not fully explored yet and that there might be other reasons as well. Because the scientists are still debating this issue, it is too early to make final statements.

Who has more enjoyment when having sex, the man or the woman?

It is not easy to say who has more enjoyment when having sex, because the extent of enjoyment a man or a woman has, depends on both of the people involved.

The most important thing about having sex is that both the man and the woman try to satisfy each other to the maximum extent. If both seriously try to satisfy their partner, both will get a lot of enjoyment from having sex. Earlier, many men thought that it is only the woman's task to satisfy the man's desires, and often

That was good, indeed!

That was good!



women did not get much enjoyment from having sex. This is not how it should be. Nowadays things have changed, because men have started to realise that having sex is more enjoyable if both partners try to satisfy the other one.

Do women also have orgasms?

Yes, women also have orgasms when having sex. A woman reaching an orgasm when having sex feels a very special

excitement and well-being in her body. In contrast to men, women do not ejaculate when reaching an orgasm.

Normally, men ejaculate when they reach their orgasm during sex. Because this sign of reaching an orgasm is very easily discernible, some people may think that only men can have orgasms when having sex. But this is not true. Even if you can't see it, a woman can have orgasms as much as a man can.

Why does the woman's vagina get wet, when the penis touches the vagina?

If the penis and the vagina touch each other or rub against each other, people get sexually excited. If a woman's vagina gets wet after being rubbed by the penis, it is a sign that she is sexually aroused. This fluid also smoothens the way for the penis to penetrate into the vagina. The source of this fluid is special glands within the vagina.

What is the easiest way for a man or woman to have an orgasm?

The most important thing is that both partners are ready to have sex. That means that they love and respect each other, and that they are physically and mentally ready. Not being ready to have sex, for example if you fear getting pregnant, may hinder you from reaching an orgasm.

They are both ready...



If both are ready, whether or not you reach an orgasm depends on the way you go about having sex. You should make sure that you have agreed together upon the ways of having sex, which bring most enjoyment and satisfaction to both of you. Indeed, every woman and every man has certain parts of the body, which are very sensitive to touching and if you cuddle them it is very easy to have an orgasm.

Orgasms can also be reached through masturbation. For example the man can gently rub his own penis, or the woman can softly rub her clitoris until he or she has an orgasm. Masturbation is a safe way of satisfying sexual desire and has no negative consequences for your health.

Why is it mostly men who take the initiative to have sex? And why do men often have an orgasm faster than women?

Many studies show that it is often boys who take the initiative to have sex, and it is commonly accepted that men often have an orgasm before women do so. This indeed is how it seems to be in many places on earth.



Some boys misuse the fact that they are more assertive in going for sex. They follow girls and seduce them to have sex at an early age. However, having sex as an adolescent can lead to many problems, such as unplanned pregnancies or sexually transmitted diseases. Therefore boys should try to refrain even if they feel the urge to have sex, because by having sex here and there you endanger your well being in the future. There are other ways of expressing you sexual feelings, such as kissing, holding hands, cuddling or even masturbation.

Because of their physiology, men often reach orgasm faster than women do. However, if men make sure that the woman is ready to have sex and if they take enough time for foreplay, it is possible for a man and a woman to have an orgasm together. This will bring a lot of enjoyment to both of them.

Why does a man's penis erect when he sees a woman's thighs?

The hips or thighs are body parts, which are very close to the sexual organs of the woman. Because of the natural sexual feelings which can arise between a man



and a woman, a man can get excited when he sees something that he relates to the sexual organs of the woman or if he sees these organs themselves. Sometimes it is even enough that the man thinks about a woman or her sexual organs for his penis to erect. The erection of the penis is one sign of male sexual excitement and a big proportion of it is related to a man's thoughts.

What can be done if someone cannot have an orgasm when having sex?

When a man has an orgasm, his penis erects and normally he ejaculates. Sometimes a man cannot ejaculate when having sex. This can be for different reasons. To ejaculate requires a lot of energy. Therefore anything which reduces the physical energy of a man, like for example sickness, drunkenness, drug abuse, feeling hungry can hinder the man from ejaculating properly. Other important reasons for not being able to ejaculate, are not being ready to have sex or not really being in love. If for example drinking or smoking is the reason for not ejaculating, the person should try to refrain from drinking or smoking. He

should also try to relax and increase the time spent on foreplay when having sex.

For women as well, there are several reasons for not reaching the orgasm. But often it is caused by too little sexual foreplay, by not being mentally ready to have sex or by fear of the possible consequences. If a woman is mentally ready to have sex and if the man tries to satisfy her, it is very likely that there will be no problem for the woman to have an orgasm.

Why does the penis sometimes not erect properly?

Pooh, today
I have no
energy at all!



To penetrate into the vagina of the woman the penis of the man has to get stiff. If a boy is sexually excited, a lot of blood flows to the blood vessels within the penis. Because of the pressure in the blood vessels, the penis gets stiff. Therefore, insufficient pressure of the blood leads to partial erection or total lack of erection.

Insufficient pressure in the blood vessels to make the penis stiff can be for several reasons. Among those are not being ready to have sex, being troubled in your mind, not really being in love, drinking too much alcohol, abusing drugs, smoking, a poor diet or being sick.

If your penis does not get stiff when having sex, try to see which one of the above mentioned reasons could be the reason for your problem. Afterwards, try to solve the problem.

Can one's penis get stuck when penetrating into the vagina?

It is impossible that a penis can get stuck in the vagina, because the vagina is made from elastic skin. Remember that the vagina can expand sufficiently for giving birth to a child. So even if you have a big penis, you can not get stuck in a vagina.

How wide can the vagina of a woman become, especially during the delivery of a child?

During delivery, the vagina of an adult woman expands to ten to twelve centimetres in diameter, in order for

the head of the baby to pass through. When a woman gives birth the vagina and the opening of the uterus normally expand to a sufficient extent.

Young girls, however, may have a lot of problems when giving birth, because their sexual organs are still small and are not strong enough for bearing children. Frequently, girls face prolonged labour, because their pelvic bones are too narrow for the baby to pass through easily and quickly. Sometimes, surgery is needed for the baby to be born. Girls who are not attended to by a trained person who can appropriately react to the condition of the girl and the child during delivery, often get permanent disabilities. These include injuries to the urinary canal and/ or anal canal. Such injuries prevent the woman from controlling urine and stools, and often it just drips out of the vagina or anus. In other cases, the girls and their unborn children die, because they are not attended to by a sufficiently skilled person during delivery.

Is it necessary to get washed after
having had sex?

There is no serious problem, if you do not get washed after having sex. However, for reasons of hygiene you are advised to wash your private parts every time after having had sex.

Is having sex whilst a girl is
menstruating a problem?

Having sex whilst the girl is menstruating does not lead to health problems, neither for the girl nor for the boy, if neither of them is carrying a sexually transmitted disease.

However, if one of them has a sexually transmitted disease, there is a big danger of infecting the other person, because the lining in the uterus is loose and the opening of the uterus is open. Therefore it is very easy for the infection to get into the body of the girl. In addition, if the girl is already infected with a sexually transmitted disease, the parasites are in her blood and the boy can easily be infected.



Because it is often very difficult to know whether one of the two is infected with a sexually transmitted disease, it is advisable not to have sex while the girl has her menstruation or, at least, to use a condom.

Is it true that rubbing a woman's clitoris can lead to an orgasm? And does it lead to any negative consequences?

It is true that rubbing certain parts of the body leads to sexual excitement. The clitoris is one of these parts of the female body. This is, because the woman has a lot of nerves in the clitoris. For girls softly rubbing the clitoris is one of the safe ways of responding to the feeling of wanting to have sex. There is no problem whatsoever for your health or your mind, if you rub your clitoris.

Can a boy reach orgasm by rubbing the penis with the hands? Does it lead to any negative consequences?

Yes, a boy can reach orgasm by rubbing the penis with the hands. If a boy rubs his penis with his hands, the sexual excitement in his body increases and blood is pumped into the blood vessels of the penis. Then the penis gets stiff and often, if rubbing is continued, the boy ejaculates. For boys, softly rubbing the penis is one of the safe ways of responding to the feeling of wanting to have sex.

For sure, some of them masturbated already ...



... but none of them looks ill!

There is no problem whatsoever for your health or your mind, if you rub your penis. Some people say that masturbation causes psychological problems or loss of virility. Others say that men who masturbated will have problems when having sex with a woman. However, this is not true and those people, who are telling such things are disseminating rumours and lies.

What are the consequences of anal sex for girls and boys, especially if done often?

The main problem with having anal sex is that there is an even higher risk of infecting one another with sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS. To have anal sex is dangerous, because there is no fluid to smoothen penetration and the skin is very vulnerable. Therefore it is very easy to get small injuries, which do not only cause pain but which also enhance the chance of transmitting sexually transmitted diseases.

If you have decided to have anal sex, inspite of the inconveniences mentioned above, you are strongly advised to use a condom, in order to prevent the transmission of diseases.

Is it true that sex can be as exhausting as physical exercise?

It is perfectly true that men and women often feel exhausted after having sex. During sexual intercourse many of the small muscles in your body are used and it is therefore totally normal that one feels the same exhaustion as if one had walked for a long time. Having sex very often puts a lot of strain on the body.



Exhausted?

Is there a problem if a girl's mouth comes into contact with sperm?

If none of the two lovers is infected with a sexually transmitted disease, there is no health hazard if sperm comes into contact with the girl's mouth. However, many girls do not like to receive sperm in their mouth or they are disgusted to do so. The man and the woman should communicate with each other and decide, whether they both like the practise of male sperms going into the girl's mouth. This is a crucial element of respecting each other.

If the man is infected with a sexually transmitted disease, the woman is likely to be infected when receiving seminal fluid or sperm in her mouth. Using a condom with oral sex is therefore safer.

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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**

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