



IPPF International
Planned Parenthood
Federation
Africa Regional Office



Youth & Sexuality

Lesotho Planned Parenthood Association

• Sex and sexuality

What is sex?

Sex means *male* or *female*. It is one's physiological or biological identity.

What is sexuality?

Sexuality is a process that begins at birth and is a continuous lifelong process affecting our general behaviour, the way we think or express ourselves as males and females. It involves our physical appearance, thoughts, mental attitudes, emotions, beliefs and values.

What is a teenager?

It is a youth at the stage of puberty. At this stage, a teenager is capable of adult sexual functions. A teenager experiences physical changes due to hormonal changes in the body. This goes with changes in thoughts, feelings and sexual feelings are also included. Teenagers have to understand

their growth and development and get to know themselves more everyday.

• Teenage sex

What is it?

It is a sexual act whereby a teenage boy engages in penetrative sex with a teenage girl.

- Unfortunately, nowadays in your community, some youth engage in sex at a very early age (as young as 10 years old)
- Most of the time youth engage in unsafe or unprotected sex
- Unprotected sex often results in sexually transmitted infections (STI) including HIV, teenage pregnancy and unsafe abortion as well as early parenthood.



• Consequences of unsafe teenage sex

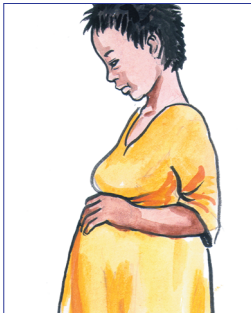
Sexually transmitted infections including HIV

Both young men and women are at risk of contracting STIs:

- STIs and HIV are more easily transmitted to women
- STIs are not easy to diagnose in women
- STIs result in more serious implications in women
- Common STIs can also cause infertility, cervical cancer and some pregnancy related complications
- STIs increase the risk of HIV
- Boys and girls who have multiple partners and engage in unprotected sex are in greater risk of infections with HIV

Teenage pregnancy

This is when a teenage girl becomes pregnant. The health of a teenager may be affected in this way: bearing a child at a young age is a health risk. The younger the youth the higher the risk of death of the mother and her infant.



Here are some of the complications likely to occur to young girls aged below 17 years of age during pregnancy and child birth:

- Anaemia
- Iron deficiency
- High blood pressure
- Haemorrhage
- Excessive loss of blood especially during child birth.

- Obstructed labour due to incomplete pelvic development. Injuries caused by obstructed labour can result in leakage of urine or faecal matter following delivery. These injuries may also cause infertility.

Other child birth risks are:

- Premature birth
- Low birth weight
- Such infants are vulnerable to infections and this affect their development
- Infant death.

Abortion

Most teenage pregnancies are unwanted. Teenagers are only eager to do away with it because in many instances they are school going.

- Many take the option of getting an abortion away from a health professional where it

is feasible, from a back street provider or self induced with sharp instruments or swallowed concoctions.

- Unsafe abortion can kill
- Other than death, unsafe abortion may cause chronic infection and infertility.
- Abortion is illegal in Lesotho.

Economic and social consequences of teenage pregnancy

- A pregnant girl more often drops out of school.
- Education and employment opportunities get limited for teenagers and subsequently for the child she will give birth to.
- A young pregnant girl becomes a social outcast. To gain community respect and acceptance, she is forced into an early marriage. Such marriages seldom last and most of the time, the girl has to go back to her family. As a result, the girl does not have any rights in her family nor at her in-law family when she has deserted

her husband.

- Often pregnant teenagers commit suicide.
- Young unmarried mothers sometimes abandon their children or turn to prostitution to support themselves.
- Early child bearing contributes to rapid population growth, because women who have their first child at a younger age tend to have many more children.
- An unmarried mother, who is also a school drop out loses self-esteem.
- The cost of treating unsafe abortion and child birth complications as well as premature births is high.

• **Saying no to teenage sex**

Who should a teenager say no to?

Both the boy and girl should say no.

Sex is the responsibility of both teenager who decide to be involved.

What can help teenagers to make responsible decisions?

- Know themselves and the changes taking place in their bodies.
- Be able to ask themselves some questions and be able to answer them genuinely.

Examples:

- What are my values as a person?
- What are my future expectations about life?
- What kind of job would I like to have to achieve my expectation?
- What kind of education would lead me to the job of my dreams?
- What should I do to get that type of education?
- What are the short and long term expectations of my family about me?
- What kind of partner do I want to spend the rest of my life with?
- When do I want to get married?

NB. If you say NO to sex you will be able to avoid all the above consequences.



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