HIV BASICS

I have a friend who is HIV Positive and pregnant. Her parents do not know about it. What advise should I give her?

Nakato Shakira, 18, St John Bosco SS
Kamuli.

Dear Shakira, Advise your friend to visit a health centre so that she is counselled. She will also be given tips to stay healthy and avoid infecting others. She will be started on ARVs to keep her body strong and reduce the risk of transmitting HIV to her unborn baby. Encourage her to open up to someone she trusts like her parents. she needs their support. By Dr Joel Lwasa, St Charles Lwanga Buikwe.

We can end teenage pregnancy

Every parent’s wish is to see their children complete studies and become responsible adults. Sometimes, this dream never comes true. Their children may get pregnant or make girls pregnant and drop out of school. The 2016 Uganda Demographic and Health Survey indicates that teenage pregnancy is on the rise. Imagine, three in every 10 adolescent girls of 15 to 19 years have begun child bearing.

In February, Straight Talk visited Iganga and Kamuli districts. Students said sex for something like phones, food, money, gifts and early marriages greatly contribute to early pregnancies. The temptation to engage in early sex is worsened by famine.

Kirya Fahad, 16, S4, St John Bosco SS Kamuli, says: “A married man deceived a girl that if she accepted to have sex with him, he would buy her food and take her to Kampala. The girl got pregnant and dropped out of school.”

Straight Talkers, take charge of your lives. Avoid sex for gifts or favours. It may be tempting to get involved in a relationship especially when your parents are not able to meet all your needs but remember, no gift or money is worth the consequences of early sex.

Fatuma Nanangwe, 17, S4, Kamuli College, says: “My friend was almost killed by the mother when she refused to get married. The mother used to get for her men until she got pregnant. The girl now stays with a relative and doesn’t go to school.”

The Director of Studies at St Paul SS Iganga, Namulondo Fatuma says: “Teenage pregnancy is a threat to young people’s health and education. Our student got pregnant and disappeared after registering for UNEB. Most girls who get pregnant are forced to get married. They experience sexual violence and emotional abuse throughout their life.

Early sex and teenage pregnancy are a crime that you must report. You can report to a teacher, trusted family member, LCs, Straight Talk Foundation, Child and Family Protection Unit, Naguru Teenage Centre or child rights NGOs. Get the right information about growing up and sex. Make wise decisions and stay in school.

FACTS

- A teenage mother is twice as likely to die during pregnancy than a woman above 20s.
- Teenage mothers are more at risk of complications and disabilities including fistula.
- Teenage pregnancy exposes you to STDs including HIV/AIDS.
- Teenage pregnancy leads to school dropout and loss of education. This denies you employable skills and keeps you in a vicious cycle of poverty.
- Boys can be imprisoned for making girls pregnant or forced to marry.
- You lose respect in your family, community and among your peers.
We are too young to be parents

You might think that because you are a girl and teenage pregnancy does not affect you. It could be your little sister who turns up pregnant. What if you are imprisoned for making a girl pregnant? Boys and girls have a role to play in ending teenage pregnancy. You shared what you are doing to prevent early pregnancy. Read on!

Ogwang James, S5, 16, Bukoyo SS
Iganga says: “I admire girls but I don’t approach any for a relationship. I’m a virgin and my mission is to excel in academics.”

Luganda Peter Kigoita, Itanda SS
Iganga says: “I don’t watch bad films like blue movies or read materials of naked women. I read educative material like Straight Talk.”

Dembe Joseph, 13, S1, St John Bosco SS, Kamuli, says: “I always keep my mind busy by doing important things like sports, farming, house work, reading good books. An idle mind is a devil’s workshop.”

Nakisuyi Brenda, 15, S1, Jenima SS Kamuli says: “Many boys and men have approached me for love but I always refuse. When they insist, I report them to my parents. I’m abstaining.”

Mukyala Juliet Agnes, 18, Kamuli College SSS says: “I don’t take gifts from strangers. I appreciate the little I get from my parents.”

The Head teacher of Itanda SS Iganga, Kakaire Godfrey says: It’s normal for boys and girls to abstain. Abstinence does not mean you lack opportunities. It means you respect your body and appreciate its benefits like preventing unwanted pregnancies, school dropout, HIV/STDs and Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) which causes cancer of the cervix.

Sex is not the answer

Sometimes, young people are tempted to have sex because of poverty.

Naiwubwe Eve, S1, Iganga Parents says: “Some girls in Sigulu Island in Namayingo district sell their bodies in exchange for fish or money.”

Famine or poverty should never be a reason to engage in early sex. There are safe options you can consider.

Find time outside school

hours to earn some money from school to cater for your needs like slashing or making bricks for the school.

Form groups with friends and start income generating activities like poultry.

This work should be done when you come back from school, over the weekends and during holidays. Your work should not affect your studies.

Sewemogerere Reagan, S3, Itanda SS
Iganga says: “When I had a girlfriend, we used condoms whenever we had sex. I have given it a break to focus on my studies.”

Dear Reagan, avoid things that can tempt you to have sex like bad peer groups, drinking alcohol and abusing drugs. Be assertive. Being assertive means knowing what is good for you and being able to stand for it. For example, saying No to friends who want you to engage in early sex.

Think before you act

When you decide to do anything in life, think about it carefully to avoid regrets. Get the facts before you make any decision. If you decide to have sex, ask yourself, Is this what I want right now? What are the likely outcomes, does it support my studies and goals in life?

Set your standards. What are you willing or not willing to do? Remember, saying no may sound like you do not enjoy life but it means you respect yourself. Get accurate information. Talk to teachers, counsellors or visit our youth centres in Kitgum, Bugiri, Nwoya, Adjumani and Gulu.

You can resist temptations

Temptations are part of life and they come in different forms. The challenge is how you respond to them.

To remain focused, avoid people and situations that tempt you. Always move in a group, avoid dark and isolated places including bars, lodges and video halls.

If you have a problem, talk to your parents, teachers, religious leaders and keep busy. If you make a mistake before, admit it that you made a mistake and change. Take the lesson not to repeat the same mistake.

Does washing your private parts with salty water cure Candida? Kiconco Prossy, 12, S2, Horby HS, Kabalore.

Dear Prossy, If you suspect you have Candida, visit the nearest health centre for medical examination and get treatment. Avoid self medication. Females naturally have Candida germs in the vagina. They act as harm less organisms that prevent infections by other germs. However, when these organisms exceed the normal number, they make your private parts itchy. This maybe due to low immunity, poor hygiene like wearing dirty wet knickers or using soap that kills normal organisms in the vagina.

By counselor Stella Magomu

Do not wash your private parts with salty water.

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REPORT ANY FORM OF ABUSE TO: District Probation and Welfare officers – at all district headquarters. • Child and family protection office – at all police stations in Uganda • Non-governmental organisations like FIDA, ANPPCAN, Action aid, Plan International Uganda, Hope After Rape and Raising Voices.
Climate change, act now

Climate is the average weather condition of a place over a long period of time. It includes patterns of temperature, rainfall, humidity, wind and seasons. Our climate is rapidly changing. The deadly effects of climate change are being experienced in our homes.

Oyet Francisco, S3 Bishop
Angelo Negri College, Gulu
says: “Drought has destroyed crops and caused famine in my village. Many families are forced to have one meal a day. Let us stop cutting down trees and polluting the environment.”

The prolonged drought has also reduced incomes of over 85% of families whose livelihoods depend on agriculture.

Livelihood and Environment Officer
at Straight Talk Foundation, Okurut
James Godwin says: Cutting down trees, draining wetlands and burning fossil fuels that release green house gases into the atmosphere are some of the human activities causing climate change. Draining wetlands and deforestation affect rain formation. Burning fossil fuel releases carbon dioxide which builds up in the atmosphere, creating what is known as the greenhouse effect. When carbon dioxide accumulates in the atmosphere, it bounces back reflected heat to the earth resulting into high temperature.

Why we need trees
Okurut adds: Trees help to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere through photosynthesis.

THE POSITIVE DIARY
Why you need a viral load test

Josephine Nabukenya
Tumusiime, 22, was born with
HIV but she has never let her status define her. She always uses opportunities to make her life and that of young people better. In this issue, Josephine explains the importance of going for a viral load test.

Josephine says: Happy New Year to you my superstars. I am happy we made it to 2017 and trust me with God’s grace and good adherence, we will make it through 2017 to 2018 and to all those other years.

Last year, I did my viral load test. The amount of HIV in my body had reduced. I was happy. I got to know that am taking my ARVs well and above all, my medication works for me.

I encourage all my friends living with HIV to go for a viral load test so as to make wise decisions and stay healthy.

A viral load test measures the number of HIV virus particles in the blood of people living with HIV. It helps provide information on your health status and how well antiretroviral therapy (ART treatment with HIV medicines) is controlling the virus so that it does not multiply and weaken your body. This test can tell whether your medicine is working well and whether you are responding well or not. It is your right to have a viral load test done. It’s free of change in government hospitals.

The good news is when the amount of the virus in your body is reduced, you have little chances of transmitting the HIV virus to others. When you visit the ART clinic or on your appointment day, ask your doctor about this test.

This year, my team and I plan to hold a charity run in Kampala to raise school fees for needy students. Kindly support us. Straight Talkers, Do you have questions for Josephine? Send them to PO BOX 22366, Kampala.
Dear STF

I heard some people say that if you wash your vagina with coca cola, you become a virgin again. Is this true or not? 

Uruzia Sarah, 15, Adjumani SS.

No. This is not true. A virgin is a girl or boy who has never had sex. The moment you have sex, you cease being a virgin. Say no to early sex.

Sometimes when I'm urinating, I feel pain in my penis. What is wrong with me? 

Seena Bulunya Ronald, St. John's HS Wakiso.

Dear Ronald, sorry about the pain. The pain you feel may be due to an infection in the urinary tract system for example, the bladder and urethra. However, to be sure of the cause of that pain, seek advice from a health worker at a recognised health centre so that you are given the right treatment.

I always have back pain every morning and when I told my friend about it, he said it was due to the accumulation of sperms in my testes. He told me to remove them by having sex. What should I do? 

Kule Michael 17, S 3 Standard HS Nyamwamba.

Dear Michael, that is not true and attempts to have sex may expose you to sexually transmitted infections including HIV/AIDS. You could also have sex may expose you to sexually transmitted infections including HIV/AIDS. You could also have sex. What should I do?

Dear Michael, sorry about the pain. The pain you feel may be due to an infection in the urinary tract system for example, the bladder and urethra. However, to be sure of the cause of that pain, seek advice from a health worker at a recognised health centre so that you are given the right treatment.

Is it normal to have your period twice a month? 

Peace Namulondo 17, S 3 Kamuli College.

Dear Peace, yes some girls have short menstrual cycles and it’s normal for them to have periods twice a month. It is common for a girl’s period to be irregular especially for the first few years. This is because their bodies are still growing. It can also be due to disease, stress, changes in weight and diet. If you have irregular periods, talk to a health worker for help.

Dear Ronald, sorry about the pain. The pain you feel may be due to an infection in the urinary tract system for example, the bladder and urethra. However, to be sure of the cause of that pain, seek advice from a health worker at a recognised health centre so that you are given the right treatment.

It is two years since I started feeling a stone like thing in my breast. When I touch it, it runs to another position. Could it be breast cancer? 

Nakitto Babirye, S 5, Tender Talents Magnet School, Wakiso. 

Dear Nakitto. It is difficult to establish whether this is breast cancer or not without medical examination. However, to be sure of the cause of the problem, go for medical examination at a nearby health centre. Breast cancer screening is free at government hospitals like Mulago. Cancer can be cured if detected early.

I produce some yellowish substance from my vagina. What causes that? 

Prossy Nandera 16, Itanda SS Iganga.

Dear Prossy, a vagina naturally has a discharge that keeps the vaginal fluid is whitish and does not smell. However, if the vaginal fluid is yellowish or has a bad smell, it means you may have an infection. Please seek medical attention from a health centre near you.

Do you think girls in secondary school should start using family planning methods? 

Namulondo Mary 16, S 3 St. John Bosco SS Kamuli.

Dear Mary, the best contraceptive for girls in secondary school is abstinence. However, if they are already sexually active, then contraceptive methods like condoms can help prevent unwanted pregnancies and STDs including HIV/AIDS.

Why do young people take marijuana? 

Mubiru Hakim, S 2, 15, Standard SS Kamala.

Dear Mubiru, marijuana, also known as cannabis is the most commonly used illegal drug. Some young people take marijuana as a result of bad peer influence, family or role model influence and curiosity. Continuous usage of marijuana exposes them to health dangers such as lung cancer, brain damage and loss of self-control and addiction which sometimes leads to death.

I tested positive for Hepatitis B. Does it mean that If I have sex with a girl I will infect her? 

Boy, 17, S 3, Francis Ayume Memorial School Koboko.

You made a wise decision to go for a blood test. Hepatitis B is a disease that attacks the liver. It is possible for you to infect a girl with Hepatitis B when you have unprotected sex with her. A person can get it when they come into contact with blood, vaginal fluids and semen of a person suffering from Hepatitis B, through blood transfusion and sharing sharp objects like needles with an infected person.

Counselor: Dr Joel Luasa St Charles Luwanga Hospital Bukwe.

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Students of Jenima HS, Kamuli say: Discipline and hardwork are key to success.

Please advise me.

I love music so much than revising books. What can I do?

Herinyo Hakim 17, Progressive SS Kitintale Kampala.

Dear Herinyo, sorry about your dilemma. On one hand, music can be a source of joy and relaxation. However, on the other hand, revising books is important for your academic success. It is important to find a balance between the two. You could try revising books during the day and listening to music at night. You could also try making music while revising books. This way, you will be able to enjoy both.

STRAIGHT TALK FOUNDATION 4 Acacia Avenue, PO Box 22366, Kampala (U) Telephone: 0312-262030/1

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