Some children stop coming to school after being circumcised because the wounds take long to heal. Wesonga Nelson, Seeta Central PS, Mukono.

Cultural circumcision

The practice involves removing of the foreskin of the penis using unclean knives by untrained people. Cultural circumcision among the Bagisu, Bakonjo and Bamba is meant to move from being a boy to being a man.

Counsellor Eriya Murana says boys in Bugisu are forced to have sex after circumcision to “clean” their penises. This is done when the wounds have not healed properly. This increases the risk of HIV/AIDS.

Avoid the risks, go for safe male circumcision

Dear Young Talker,

Avoid the pain and risks of cultural or traditional circumcision. Go for Safe Male Circumcision (SMC). SMC is done for health reasons such as reducing the risk of HIV and keeping good hygiene. It is done in a safe, clean environment by trained people. Before circumcision, you will be tested and treated for any illness. The doctors will also advise and give you medicine for killing the pain and healing the wound very fast.

SMC is available in all government hospitals, missionary hospitals and big private clinics.

Dr Stephen Watiti, Watiti Foundation

Doreen and Kaitesi of Shimoni Demonstration School

Young Talk

WESONGA NELSON, SEETA CENTRAL PS, MUKONO

A drawing by Magololo Swaliki, P6, Namirembe Boarding Primary School, Budaka. It shows how cultural circumcision is done.
Other bad cultural practices

Early sex/marriages
Some parents force their daughters to have sex with rich men in order to get money or bride price. Some of these girls get pregnant and die while giving birth because their bodies are not fully developed. Boy, Kasubi Central PS, Gulu.

Child labour
In my village, some children don’t go to school. They stay home to look after cows, work in rice fields, stone quarries and sand pits during school time. Alex Makhona, 13, P6, Majani PS, Busia.

Not taking care of girls
In my culture girls are not valued as boys. When girls are chased from school for lack of fees, some parents ask them to get married and stop wasting money. Wafula Benard, P6, Railway Children PS, Kampala.

Wife inheritance
Some children are forced to inherit older women whose husbands have died. This exposes them to HIV. Some drop out of school. Wesswa Mathias, 11, P7, Namirembe PS, Budaka.

Sexual abuse
When children lose their parents, some adults including relatives and guardians speak very well at the funeral promising to help them. But some of these adults end up forcing these children into sex. Nakimbowa Judith, Erina Bright PS, Kampala.

Not taking care of girls
In my culture girls are not valued as boys. When girls are chased from school for lack of fees, some parents ask them to get married and stop wasting money. Wafula Benard, P6, Railway Children PS, Kampala.

Health risks
Lotome Joseph, 14, P4, Loroo PS, Amudat says: “Sometimes one knife is used to cut many girls. This increases the risk of getting HIV. Some die while others fail to produce in future.”

Pain, over bleeding
Gabriel Naitale, 15, P6, Katiki PS, Amudat says: “Girls feel a lot of pain and lose a lot of blood. They are forced to lie down, with their heads pressed hard on the ground and their mouth held to prevent them from crying during the cutting.”

FGM has no health benefits
FGM is not the same as Safe Male Circumcision. It has NO health benefits. It harms girls’ bodies. It does not protect against HIV. In Uganda, it is a crime to practice or carry out female genital mutilation. It is also a crime to discriminate against a girl or woman who has not done it. If you are found practicing or carrying out FGM, you will be arrested and taken to prison. If the girl dies during female genital mutilation, those involved will be taken to jail for life.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is a harmful cultural practice. It is common among the Sabiny, Pakot, Tepeth and Kadama. FGM involves removing all or part of a girl’s clitoris and the labia. FGM causes severe bleeding and pain when urinating, infections, infertility as well as complications in childbirth. Children from Amudat share with us their experiences:

Cheruto Proscovia, Kalas Girls PS says: “I know an 8 year old girl from Naguliet village in Amudat who refused to be mutilated. The father wanted her to do it from Kenya. She refused and ran to the children rescue centre at Kalas Girls Primary School.”

Pupils of Kiswa Primary school, say: “Talk to your parents. They are not angels to know all your concerns and thoughts.”

Mulume Kalubika, Railway PS, Kampala

A pupil of Kiswa PS, Kampala

A pupil of St Yowana Maria Muzeeyi PS, Wakiso

Mulume Kajubika, Railway PS, Kampala

Karungi Sandra and Muyinza Sharon of Kiswa PS, Kampala

Cherop Christine, 13, Jumbe village Amudat town council says: “I was mutilated two years ago. It was so painful. People do it secretly. Girls cross to Kenya where it is not abolished.”

A mudat Resident District Commissioner, Bewayo Nsubuga says: Bad cultural practices expose you to disease and death. If you or your friend is being forced into a harmful cultural practice, do not keep quiet. Report to the LCs, Police, RDC’s office or any organizations helping children for help and protection. In Amudat many girls come to my office to get help when their parents force them to get married or to go for female genital mutilation. We take them to boarding schools, rescue centres or organizations that are willing to help them. We also talk to parents to make them understand the danger of these bad practices.
Sometimes, children commit crimes due to ignorance, because they think they will be forgiven. The crimes they commit include stealing, having sex with their fellow children, killing, fighting and taking alcohol and drugs. Kilama Joseph, the In-charge of Gulu Remand Home says: “Like anybody else, if a child commits an offence, he or she will be punished for it. If it is a serious offence, you will be arrested and taken to court. If you are found guilty, you will be taken to the children’s prison called a remand home.”

It damages your body organs like the pancreas, heart, liver and brain. Alcohol can kill you. Because of such problems, the government does not allow children below 18 years to buy or drink alcohol. It does not even allow parents who sell alcohol to allow children to help them sell alcohol.

Nyangoma Joyce, Railway PS Nsambya, Kampala says: “Some children mix alcohol with juice or soda so that the teachers do not find out. When a teacher is facing the blackboard, they bend under their desks and drink very fast.”

What are the signs of HIV? Tushemerirwe Natasha, Mbuya PS, Kampala.

Soon after getting infected with HIV, there may be no serious signs apart from a rash and flu-like illness but then these signs can be caused by any other viral infection. Later on as the disease develops, signs like skin rash, weight loss and other serious infections follow. However, going for an HIV test will help you know your HIV status. By Dr Stephen Watiti, Watiti Foundation

It can be tempting to try alcohol because you see people drinking alcohol or because you see adverts that make drinking alcohol look fun and enjoyable. None of what you see is true!

Emmanuel Ssekidde, a health worker at Serenity Centre says: “Alcohol changes your ability to think, speak, and see things as they really are.

“Some children mix alcohol with juice or soda so that the teachers do not find out. When a teacher is facing the blackboard, they bend under their desks and drink very fast.”

Watsusi Emmanuel, P6, Kiswa PS Kampala says: “Some children in my school ask for permission pretending to be going for a short call. But they instead hide in the banana plantation behind girls’ latrines to drink alcohol. They come back to class with red eyes.”

Don’t believe anyone who says you are not cool for not drinking alcohol. You are actually cool, strong and smart. If you are already drinking alcohol, it is important that you stop immediately.

Mwanda Alex, teacher, Nakivubo Blue PS, Kampala

Pupils of Christ the Lord PS Gulu say: Love God to avoid trouble.

Pupils of Nakivubo PS say: Respect laws or go to prison.

Pupils of Mbuya PS say: “It’s because we copy only the good things and leave out the bad ones.”

Saying away from ALCOHOL is Smart:

Children are not above the law.

Another Boy, 16, says “I was found having sex with a 14 year old girl. The girl’s parents got annoyed and reported me to the Police. I was arrested.”

Gulu district inspector of schools, Robinson Obot says: “Last year, four P7 candidates did their PLE under the police guard. Their crime was having early sex with other children. The police would escort them from the prison to the examination room for the two days of exams.”

Children are not above the law. Avoid crime or you will end up arrested.

The remand homes in Uganda are in Naguru (Kampala), Mbale (eastern), Gulu (northern) Fort Portal (Western) and Kampiringisa, along Masaka road, which is a national rehabilitation centre.
Dear Young Talk

PLEASE ADVICE

 NN

I feel very uncomfortable when a teacher sends me to his home. What can I do? NN, Namirembe PS, Budaka

Write and send you letter to Young Talk, PO Box 22366, Kampala

My daddy no longer wants to pay my school fees because I used to steal his money. I'm changed but he does not believe it. What can I do? Nakajiri Suzan, Kirinya COU PS, Wakiso

Dear Susan, Apologise to your daddy. If he doesn’t believe you, tell another trusted elder to talk to him.

Why do girls have water in their vagina? Pamela, 15, Adjumani Central PS

Hello Pamela. That water is also called vaginal discharge. It has several purposes, like cleaning and moistening the vagina, and helping to prevent and fight infections. Normal Vaginal fluids are clear or whitish in colour. The following may indicate a problem:

• bad smell
• change in colour (like greenish, grayish
• looking like yoghurt or spoilt milk
• vaginal itching, burning, swelling, or redness
• vaginal bleeding that is not a menstrual period.

If you notice any changes in your vaginal discharge VISIT A DOCTOR IMMEDIATELY.

Dr Lydia Nanjula, ARR

Beware of Typhoid Fever

There is an outbreak of Typhoid in the country. Typhoid is a bacterial disease which is caused by eating food or drinking things that are contaminated by feces or urine of an infected person.

Symptoms: Fever, body weakness, headache, constipation or diarrhoea.

To prevent Typhoid: Wash your hands after visiting the latrine and before eating. Drink boiled water. Don’t drink water, juice or eat food sold in used mineral water bottles or polythene bags (buveras). Remember typhoid can be treated and cured if reported early.

This paper was pretest at St Joseph PS, Wakiso

QUIZ

Red card

Stephen 12, is tired of his violent father who beats up his mother whenever he comes home drunk. Stephen fears talking to him. He is tired of the situation but does not know what to do. Write a composition of 250 words advising Stephen. Best Composition Wins a laptop!

Write and send your letter to Young Talk, PO Box 22366, Kampala

What are the signs of gonorrhea? Mukasa Patrick, Mbuya COU PS Kampala

Gonorrhea is a Sexually Transmitted Disease. It can affect the genitals, rectum, and throat. In both women and men, gonorrhea may cause the anus to itch and pain when defecating. It can also result in a smelly discharge like pus from the penis and vagina. If detected early, Gonorrhea can be treated and cured.

Will I be able to produce if I do not pull my labia? Owembabazi Shallot 12, P6, Homecare Preparatory School, Kabale

Yes, you will be able to produce. Pulling your labia is not in any way connected to producing children. It’s a cultural practice for some tribes in Uganda.

Counsellor: Unia Nabayiiki

Know Your Body

Pupils of Nakivubo PS, Kampala say: “Girls respect yourselves, fight for your rights.”

Pupils of Odoot PS Katawki say: “Fellow children focus your energy on education because it’s a key to success.”

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