If I test HIV positive, can I spread the virus or kill myself? Munyango Ruth Esther, 6, S3 Anwar HS, Wakiso.

Dear Esther, It's normal to feel that way when you have just discovered that you have HIV. However, there is no need for you to infect others or kill yourself. When you test HIV positive, calm down, talk to someone you trust and seek proper HIV counselling, care, support and treatment. HIV is a virus that can be managed. You can live healthy with it and be able to study, do productive work and even have children in future.

If you spread it to other people, they may re-infect you with different types of HIV. This will weaken your body faster. If you infect others, you will regret afterwards.

Dr Stephen Watiti, Watiti Foundation

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Bravo Anguzu. It's true many people have never tested for HIV because of fear, they are virgins, they look healthy and do not fall sick so often or they think their chicks or guys are faithful. If you feel this way, it's time to change your mind and test. Testing is the only way you can be sure whether you have HIV or not.

Nansongo Yvonne, 17, S3, Bweyogerere HS Kampala, says: "Some of my friends used to fear testing. Others said it wasn't necessary because they had never had sex. I talked to them and they accepted to test. I'm abstaining but I have tested for HIV three times just to be sure of my HIV status."

Thanks Nansongo for making a life saving decision and encouraging your friends to test. Virgins too can have HIV. They could have been infected by their HIV positive mothers during pregnancy, child birth or breast feeding. Every year, about 25000 babies are born with HIV in Uganda.

Dr Stephen Watiti from Watiti Foundation is living positively with HIV. He says: "Testing for HIV is the only way you can be sure of your HIV status. It may be scary but it's an entry point to HIV prevention. If you test positive, you will be linked to HIV care, support and treatment services. If you test negative, you will be encouraged to abstain from sex, be faithful to your partner and use condoms correctly whenever you have sex. Testing for HIV is free in all government hospitals. Test from a recognized health facility.

If you must have sex, first test for HIV with your partner. You can test from Government health facilities near you, or visit:

- AIDS Information Centres, 
- TASO Centres, 
- Naguru Teenage Centre, 
- Marie Stopes , 
- Reproductive Health Uganda and Straight Talk Foundation Youth Centres like, Kitgum Youth Centre, and Gulu Youth Centre

The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development has a helpline that you can use to report any form of abuse or get information on available services. It is free of charge.

Have you ever felt like having sex but you did not go ahead to have it? How did you control the sexual feelings?

Send your letters to PO Box 22366, Kampala.
**Whatever the results, life is better after testing**

Testing for HIV benefits everyone regardless of what the results are.

**Nabukenya Prossy, 19, MTAC Institute Kampala says:** “I tested for HIV twice. I tested negative. I’m abstaining.”

My boyfriend reminds me to take my ARVs every day. He gives me transport to come and pick ARVs from Mulago hospital after every two months. Sometimes, he escorts me to the clinic.”

Bravo Nabukenya for protecting your boyfriend. Testing helps prevent infection and re-infection. If you are in a discordant relationship where one of you is HIV positive and the other is negative, use condoms correctly every time you have sex. The negative partner can get infected anytime they have unprotected sex. Remember, discordance is not permanent. Your partner could have survived getting infected just by chance. Support your HIV positive partner. Do not blame them or think they have been unfaithful to you. He or she could have been infected before you met.

**Josephine Nabukenya who was born** in 1996 and tested positive to HIV says:

Get friends. Chat and discuss issues concerning your future.

Don’t isolate or stigmatise yourself. When they react positively, go ahead and tell them your status.

If you are in a relationship, it’s important that you test together. Do not rely on the results of your partner. You could be HIV negative when your partner is HIV positive. When you test together with your partner; Disclosure is made easy because of proper counselling you get before and after testing.

**Namakula Sarah, Nursing Officer at Nakisunga Health Centre III, Mukono says:**

If there is any tension the counselor is able to support you and after testing.

If you test negative, you will now plan on how to keep your partner safe, they are able to support you when you are ill.

If both of you are positive, you get information on how to avoid re-infecting each other with HIV.

**Test Together, Know Together**

Say **NO** to Early Marriage

Awareness about early marriages and child sacrifice that is rampant in the district. At least 33 out of every 100 children aged between 6 and 12 years drop out of school before completing studies. Early marriage denies boys and girls their rights to education and good health. The girls are affected the most.

**Ngonzi Joshua S3 Bumadu Seed SS, Bundibugyo, says:** “I know of a girl who was forced to get married. She died while giving birth.”

**Ntoroko District Inspector of schools, Rev. Kibinwa David says:** “An S2 girl committed suicide when the parents forced her to get married. They were arrested and taken to court.”

If you are in a relationship, it’s important that you test together. Do not rely on the results of your partner. You could be HIV negative when your partner is HIV positive. When you test together with your partner; Disclosure is made easy because of proper counselling you get before and after testing.

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**Nakalembe Judith, Legal officer**

**Uwonet Kamuli says:** Some parents do not respect children’s rights. The moment girls start menstruating or developing breasts, they find men to marry them. This is wrong. If any of your rights or those of a child you know are being abused speak out.

**Parents:** Do not accept bride price for your young daughters. Leave them in school.

**Women and Girls:** Support yourselves through good peer groups.

**Men and boys:** Choose not to marry young girls and speak up against the practice.

**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, Hope After Rape and Raising Voices.
World Population Day will be celebrated on July 11, 2016 under the theme: “Invest in preventing Teenage Pregnancy. Let Girls be Girls’ Teenage pregnancy is a big problem in Uganda. Imagine 1 in 4 girls aged 15 to 19 is already pregnant with her first child. Of the 1.2 million pregnancies that are recorded in Uganda annually, 25 per cent (300,000) of these are teenage pregnancies according to the Ministry of Health.

Never Kalisun, 20, 56, Koboko Modern SS says: “My friend got pregnant and bad people advised her to abort. She died in the process of aborting.”

Kanya Rehema, Nurse at Dranya Health Centre III Koboko says: When girls get pregnant, they rush to abort due to fear of being blamed by their parents or dropping out of school. Abortion is illegal in Uganda and it leads to death, infections, infertility and school dropout.

In Uganda, there are 297,000 induced abortions every year among girls and women between 15 and 49 years. Out of these, about 1,500 die from abortions. About 6,000 Ugandan females die each year due to pregnancy related problems.

Pregnancy is risky for every woman, but is more risky for adolescent girls. This is because their bodies are not yet well developed. Girls often fail to push out the baby and it dies in the womb. In addition, the uterus may tear during prolonged labour and the girl may die due to over bleeding. Prolonged labour may also make the baby’s head to tear the vagina of the mother, causing a hole between the vagina and the bladder creating a fistula, a condition where urine or faeces constantly leak out.

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Dear Emmanuel,

Philly Bongoley Lutaaya was the first Ugandan to publically declare that he was HIV positive. He passed away on 15, December 1989 at the age of 38. Before dying of AIDS, Lutaaya composed songs about his battle with AIDS including; Alone and Frightened. Lutaaya also spread messages of HIV prevention in schools, churches and communities. In Uganda, 17, October is the Philly Bongoley Lutaaya Day. The day is set aside to celebrate his life as the first prominent Ugandan to go public about his HIV status, something which gave courage to many Ugandans to open up and freely access HIV/AIDS care, support and treatment.

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I have a girl lover. We have never had sex but she is now asking for the sweet pain. What can I do to please her?

Ojiambo Emma, S3, Muni Girls SS,
Kakama Robery, 17, S3, Green Valley S5, Kampala says: “Sorry about the hard time you are going through. Share this problem with your parents so that they can come to school and solve that problem immediately.”

Mambo Ronalds, S6, Bukooli College Bugiri says: “Report this teacher to police. Forced and early marriage is a crime.”

Proscovia, 19, S4, Gulu HS.

Dear Proscovia, are you having problems with periods or is someone you know taking longer days in periods? It is not normal for one to menstruate for 2 weeks. These are very many days. See a doctor or any health worker to identify the cause and give treatment. Normal menstruation days range between 2-7 days.

Do condoms have side effects?

Dear Nsubuga, Some people who are allergic may react to natural rubber which condoms are made of. They may experience some itching. We advise such people to use the Female Condom or get male condoms made of plastic. These contain artificial rubber which may not affect you. If you have any challenges in using condoms, talk to a health worker for proper advice.

Is it normal for a girl to spend more than two weeks in her periods?

Dear Asiimwe, The effectiveness of any family planning method depends on the user. If you follow the instructions, contraceptives will help you prevent unwanted pregnancy. However, condoms is the only family planning method that can protect you from both pregnancy and HIV/STDs if used correctly every time one has sex. Before you start using any contraceptives, get the right information from a health centre near you.

What does the word wet dream really mean?

Dear Aletiru, A wet dream is when boys release sperms if not released through a wet dream will be re absorbed back to the body. This is normal and will not cause any side effects to you. Be careful of people who give you wrong information that will push you into having sex early. Do not rush to have sex. Nothing bad will happen to you.

Students of Bishop HS, Kamuli say: "You have a right to education but what is your responsibility?"

Advice to Esther

In Straight Talk Feb - June, Esther from Biyaaya SS, Adjumani said: My Physics teacher forces me to get married to his son. He gave me one condition that if I refused, he would not mark my physics paper and I would not attend his lessons anymore? Thanks for the advice.

Straight Talk commends you for seeking a proper answer from Straight Talk Foundation. Accumulation of sperms does not cause any effects on your body. Infact, sperms if not released through a wet dream will be re absorbed back to the body. This is normal and will not cause any side effects to you. Be careful of people who give you wrong information that will push you into having sex early. Do not rush to have sex. Nothing bad will happen to you.

Dear Charles,
you made the right decision to say no to early sex. Stick to it. Life is not about doing wrong things to please others. Make decisions that are good for you and your partner. Continue telling her that sex is not your priority for now. You can also ask a friend to talk to her. Early sex increases your risk of contracting HIV/STDs. You can be imprisoned if you made her pregnant. Are you ready to be a father or the reason for her to dropout school?

Dear Emmanuel Crane HS, Kampala.

Douglas Biira, Iganga SS, says: “Your priority should be to study not to get married.”

Mbabazi Rose, S6, S3, Lumino HS Busia says: "Don't listen to that teacher. Report him to the headteacher immediately. Remember, you went to school to study not to get married."

Kakama Robery, S6, Green Valley S5, Kampala says: “Sorry about the hard time you are going through. Share this problem with your parents so that they can come to school and solve that problem immediately.”

Mambo Ronalds, S6, Bukooli College Bugiri says: “Report this teacher to police. Forced and early marriage is a crime.”

Dear Biira, What you heard is not true and we commend you for seeking a proper answer from Straight Talk Foundation. Accumulation of sperms does not cause any effects on your body. Infact, sperms if not released through a wet dream will be re absorbed back to the body. This is normal and will not cause any side effects to you. Be careful of people who give you wrong information that will push you into having sex early. Do not rush to have sex. Nothing bad will happen to you.

Students of Crane HS Kampala say: True friends won’t force you to drink alcohol. Say no to underage drinking. Focus on education."