Menstruation is a body change that girls experience at puberty. Girls start to menstruate between the age of 8 and 16. Every month, an egg is released from the ovary. If the egg is not fertilised, the lining of the uterus breaks and blood starts flowing out through the vagina. The flow lasts about 3 to 7 days. Whereas menstruation is a normal and natural process, many girls get worried and confused during that time of the month. When Straight Talk visited Koboko district, students shared their menstruation worries. Read on!

**Harriet Sunday, St Francis Ayume Memorial SS Koboko** says: “I hate this period. I always feel alot of pain. Sometimes, I’m forced to leave class.”

**Driciru Lonida, S1, 15 Koboko Public School** says: “It puts me on tension. I fear staining my dress.”

**Dr Mariam Mabwire, a Gynaecologist** says: Dear Straight Talkers, menstruation should not be a period of shame and misery. It’s possible to enjoy your period. Here are few things you can do to make life better.

**Know when it’s coming:** Menstruation can start when you least expect it. While you can’t always tell the exact day, signs like tender breasts, abdominal, back and joint pain can help you know that your period will come soon. Wear a pad around this time to avoid staining your dress.

**Manage unstable periods:** It’s 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 diseases, stress, changes in weight and diet. If you have irregular periods, talk to a health worker for help.

**Reduce the pain:** Do some exercise, eat lots of fruits and vegetables. Taking a warm bath or holding a warm water bottle on your abdomen can also help reduce menstrual pain. If too painful, talk to the school nurse or a health worker for help.

**Facts about menstruation**

- **Koboko Deputy District Health Officer, Wito Rachael** says: Menstruation is not a disease. It is a normal body change in girls. You can get pregnant when you have sex during menstruation or before you see your first period. Sex does not reduce menstrual pain. Menstrual pain can be managed. If too painful, seek medical help. Menstruation should not be a reason for you to stay away from school. It’s not a sign that you are ready for marriage if you are over 16 years and you have not started your menstrual period yet, see a doctor.

- **Students of St Francis Ayume Memorial** say: “Menstruation is a part of us. Love it.”

**For teachers**

- Dear teachers, work with the school management and the community to ensure that the school provides water and separate latrines for boys and girls.
- Keep some pads and extra uniforms at school incase a girl stains her uniform.
- Encourage girls to come to school even when they are in their periods.
- Ask the boys and male teachers to support girls in menstruation.

**For students**

- Keep your body healthy. Exercise regularly. When you dance, jog or play a spot of your choice, your body releases special chemicals called endorphins that make you feel happy.
- Love it: Always remind yourself that periods are a natural and normal process and a sign that you are growing up well.
**Practicing good personal hygiene during menstruation prevents infections, bad smell and enables girls to stay in school.** A study done by The Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV) International Water and Sanitation Centre in 2012 shows that four million Ugandan girls live without proper sanitary care. As a result, they miss up to eight days of study per term. Others dropout. Here are some tips to maintain hygiene during your periods and stay in school.

**Change pads** every 3 to 4 hours to avoid staining your dress. Pack spare pads for changing while at school.

**Bath regularly:** Wash between your labia or around the opening of the vagina to avoid bad smell. Wash the used knickers and re-usable pads. Hang them under the sun to kill germs.

**Use manufactured or re-usable pads,** cotton wool wrapped in gauze or a clean piece of cotton cloth. Avoid using toilet paper, sponge, newspapers, leaves, dirty cloths or sitting on sand to prevent infections.

**Make re-usable pads**

Learn to make re-usable pads from clubs like GEM or PIASCY in your school. Keep them clean to avoid infections.

**Talk to a senior woman teacher** to provide water, soap and spaces for washing and bathing.

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**Keep clean, make own pads**

Dada Daudi, Head teacher Kochi SS Koboko says: “We provide girls with pads, water and soap to use during menstruation. They have separate washrooms. Girls, seek help whenever you need it.”

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**Learn to make re-usable pads**

1. Cut a clean cotton cloth into small pieces, the size of a handkerchief.
2. Join three to four pieces together Fold them in a shape of a modern pad.
3. Cut a strong polythene sheet to the shape of the pad and insert it at the bottom of the pad.
4. Sew the sides and make the pad thick.
5. Sew the strings to either side of the pad to tie under their pair of knickers.
6. Now your pad is ready to use.
7. After using it, wash it with clean water and soap.
8. Dry the knickers and pads under the sun to kill germs.

**How to access the Youth Livelihood Fund**

You may have brilliant business ideas but only to be let down by lack of capital. Make use of the Youth Livelihood Fund for wealth creation provided by the government. Below is the procedure of accessing the Fund.

- **Form or join an existing youth group** then pick an interest form from your sub-count.
- **Open a file with the sub-count** Community Development Officer (CDO)’s office. In this file, the group will put the form of interest, a constitution and any other documents that may be asked for, like birth certificates.
- **The file is scrutinized by the CDO, Youth Chairperson and the LC3 Chairperson.**
- **You can now apply for the grant.** The application form details how the grant will be accessed.
- **The file is then sent to the district where it is scrutinized.** Districts approve up to 12.5 million shillings.

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**Be creative, fight poverty**

Bravo Namboole for the steady progress. Straight Talkers, you too can pick a leaf from Namboole HS and do something. Think big but start small. Take one step at a time. Have a timetable for revision and work. Follow them to excell in both academics and business.

Get someone you trust to run your business during class time. You should never dropout of school because of business. Stay in school. You still need to acquire more knowledge that will help you to live a more productive life.

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Unemployment problem continues to affect young people in Uganda. About 83 percent of the youth are unemployed. You can do something to make money in a safer way.

Members of Namboole HS Straight Talk Club Kampala make chapatis, chips and sausages which they sell to their fellow.

Sserunkuma Trevor, 20, S6, says: We run our business every Friday evening and Sunday. On a good day, we make Shs 50,000. The School Secretary keeps the money. Sometimes, we use part of the savings to support the needy including patients in different hospitals. We buy for them soap, sugar and bread. This term, we plan to visit patients in Kawolo Hospital, Buikwe district.

Mirembe Precious, 15, S3, says: “If you want money with no strings attached, work hard for it. Stop despising jobs and begging money from people who ask you to pay back by having sex with you.”
**Climate change, act now**

Climate change also called global warming refers to the rise in average surface temperature. The deadly effects of climate change are already being felt in our homes. Floods, landslides, prolonged drought leading to famine and reduced incomes of over 85% of Ugandans whose livelihoods depend on agriculture continue to affect many families.

Oyet Francisco, S3, Bishop Angelo Negrin College, Gulu says: Drought has destroyed crops in my village. Some families have one meal a day. Stop cutting down trees and polluting the environment.

Livelihood and Environment Officer at Straight Talk Foundation, James Gordon Okurut says: Cutting down trees, draining wetlands, burning fossil fuels that release green house gases into the atmosphere are some of the human activities causing climate change. Draining wetland and deforestation affect rainfall formation. Burnt fossil fuels produce carbon dioxide which builds up in the atmosphere, creating what is known as the greenhouse effect. This effect traps energy from the sun and raises the temperature of the earth.

**Why we need trees**

Trees use sunlight to absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere through photosynthesis and store it as carbon in the form of wood. Photosynthesis is a process by which green plants use energy from the sun to transform water, carbon dioxide, and minerals into oxygen we breathe in. People breathe out carbon dioxide needed by plants. Trees can also help moderate temperatures, serve as windbreaks, improve water infiltration and produce wood, fruits, fodder and medicines.

Straight Talk Foundation promotes tree planting in schools and community. We provide seeds and seedlings for trees like Mvule, Mahogany, Musuzi (Maesopsis eminii). We also train teachers and young people in agro-forestry and making energy saving stoves. The World Bank estimates that climate change will push about 100 million people into extreme poverty by 2030. What are you doing to reverse the effects of climate change?

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**Meet the “The queen of Katwe”**

Have you heard about the new movie called “The Queen of Katwe”? It’s about the real life experience of Phiona Mutesi, a Ugandan chess champion who was raised by a single mother in Katwe slum, Kampala. Phiona, 20, lost her dad at the age of 3. In 2005, she dropped out of school at the age of 12. She started selling boiled maize to fend for her family of five. Today, Phiona is a Chess champion. Her perseverance inspired a New York City based film maker Mira Nair, to make a movie out Phiona’s experience.

Phiona’s life started changing when Brian Mugabi, her 10 year old brother asked her to go with him to Som Chess Academy in Katwe to take porridge. They had spent days without food. Phiona shared her problems with Som Chess Academy’s founder, Robert Katende. He was teaching several other slum children how to play chess. Katende invited Phiona to play chess. In 2007, Phiona scored aggregate at PLE to join St Mbuga Vocational SS, Makindye Kampala. Phiona is currently in S6 offering History, Divinity, Fine Art and Maths. Her dream is to build a house outside Katwe for her mother. Whenever Phiona gets discouraged, she thinks of chess. She says: “Chess is a lot like my life. It helps me make better decisions.”

Brian Mugabi, 22, Phiona’s brother who is now a student of Electrical Engineering at Kyambogo University. He says: “Coach Robert has mentored us into responsible people. Life is full of challenges. Have hope and look for people who can help you get out of trouble.”

Just because yesterday may have been hard doesn’t mean today can’t be great. Robin Sharma, a Canadian writer.

Phiona’s coach: Katende says: We have over 80 slum children at Som Chess Academy. Thirty of them play in the National Chess League. We have centres in Kibuli, Kawempe, Bwaise, Ntale and Gulu. Gulu centre has got 800 children. We train them in Chess, talk about life challenges, growing up and nurture them to realise their full potential.

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**The Positive Diary**

We can eliminate HIV/AIDS from our families

Josephine Nabukwasa

Tumusiime, 22, was born with HIV but she is focused. In May, Josephine completed a Degree Course in Social Sciences from Makerere University. Josephine share the benefits of knowing your HIV status and sticking to ARVs if positive.

She says: Have you ever heard about the UNAIDS 90-90-90 target of HIV? It means that by the year 2020, 90% of the population in the world should have been tested for HIV, 90% of those found HIV positive started on ARVs and 90% of the people on ARVs should have the amount of HIV in their body reduced. With this target, we can eliminate HIV/ARVs by 2030 in the world. What are you doing to make this target a reality?

On my side, I take my ARVs at 9:00 am and 9:00 pm everyday to reduce the amount of HIV in my body. I set an alarm to remind me. When I’m challenged, I talk to a doctor for advice. In September, I attended a meeting in the USA. I emphasized the need for friendly treatment for children living with HIV.

Do you have questions for Josephine? Send them to PO BOX 22366, Kampala

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**Boys, know your body**

Is it true that if you wash your penis using OMO it becomes big? M Eriku, S4, Koboko parents SS

Dear Moses, washing your penis with OMO will not make it bigger but rather expose you to infections and irritation of the skin. The penis just like anywhere body part will grow as you grow. Besides, people have different penis sizes. Do not compare yourself to your friends. Love the size God gave you.

By Counselor Stella Magomu.
Dear STF

P. O. Box 22366
KAMPALA

It is two years since I started feeling something like a stone in my breast. When I touch it, it runs to another position. Could it be breast cancer? Nakirro Babirye, S3, 19, Tender Talents Magnet School, Wakiso. Dear Babirye, what you are feeling may be a symptom of breast cancer. However, to be sure of the cause of the problem, go for medical examination at a nearby health center. Breast cancer screening is free at government hospitals like Mulago. Cancer can be cured if detected early.

There is a girl I love so much. I fear to approach her because she is in a higher class. What should I do? Bahato Innocent, Standard HS, Nyamwambota, Kasese.

Dear Innocent, it is important that when you love someone the feeling is shared mutually for a healthy relationship to grow. However, at your age, it is more important to support each other in education and not love relationships as this may divert your focus from education. You have the ability to avoid trouble.

How can I pass UNEB? Chol Abraham, S3, St Johns HS, Kazinga.

Dear Abraham, It is possible to excel in UNEB. Believe in yourself and prepare for exams throughout the term. Attend classes regularly, pay attention in class, revise and hold discussions with your friends right from the beginning of the term. Don’t wait until the examination timetable is out and start panicking. Continuously consult your teachers and friends whenever you get stuck, read through past papers to get an idea of how UNEB questions are set. Good luck in your exams.


Dear Mubiru, marijuana also know as cannabis is the most commonly used illegal drug. Some young people take marijuana due to 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.

My friend asked me whether it is true that boys who are circumcised will never produce more than two children in future. How can I advise him? Akello Cinderella, S3, St Francis HS, Agagos.

Dear Cinderella, this is not true. Tell your friend that circumcision does not determine the number of children one should have, instead it has health benefits like reducing the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS, cancer of the penis and improves penile hygiene.

How can you avoid sex yet it is a precious gift from God? Nambi Suzan, 19, S3, Galaxy SS, Wakiso.

Dear Nambi, sex is good but it was designed by God to be enjoyed in marriage by a man and a woman. Sex before marriage is a sin in the eyes of God. Delay sex until marriage to avoid early pregnancy and STDs/ HIV. Respect yourself, avoid bad peer groups and pornographic materials to resist the temptation of having early sex.

My friend is 16 years but she does not have pubic hair. Will she produce in future? Mandre Haron, 14, S2, Bishop Angelo Negri College, Gulu.

Dear Haron, your friend will be able to produce in future. Lack of pubic hair does not cause infertility. Besides, different people develop at a different speed. Your friend will get pubic hair at the right time. However, if this persists up to 17 years and above, advise her to see a doctor.

Counselor: Stella Magomu

Students of Kochi SS Koboko, say “Always think before you act. The decisions you make today will determine your future.”

Please advise TT

I’m in love with a University guy. I have given him whatever he wants but he still tells me that there is something very important which I have never given him. If that thing is sex, Should I do it to strengthen our relationship? TT, 15, S3, Tender Talents Magnet, Wakiso

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Students of Kisaasi College School Kampala, say “The festive season is what everyone is looking forward to. Celebrate responsibly and stay safe”

Auma Fortunate of Alliance HS Wakiso

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