

# Adolescent School Health Booklet



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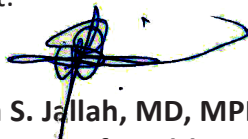
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# FOREWORD

The Liberia Demography and Health Survey of 2013 revealed that the country has a youthful population, with about 65% are people below 35 years of age and 53% of this group accounting for people under the age of 25 years.

Although there has been an increase in modern contraceptive use, the high rate of teenage pregnancy (30%) is a risk factor for Maternal Mortality, especially among Adolescents, and the issues with drug and substance abuse still remain a major challenge. Creating demand for school health club services, especially among Adolescents and young people (ages 10-24 years) can contribute greatly to addressing this situation as well as it is a cost-effective strategy for reducing teenage pregnancy, Maternal Mortality, school dropouts, unwanted pregnancies, and sexually transmitted infections.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Breakthrough ACTION Liberia for providing technical assistance through funding from the U.S. Government and to all partners and stakeholders for their cooperation and support for the development of the National Adolescent School Health Booklet.



**Dr. Wilhemina S. Jallah, MD, MPH, CDR, USPHS**  
**Honorable Minister of Health**  
**Republic of Liberia**



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Ministry of Education acknowledges the contribution and support of institutions and organizations in developing the Adolescent School Health Booklet. With support from Breakthrough ACTION Liberia, and the Family Health Program, the National Health Promotion Unit of the Ministry of Health, we created this manual for in-school adolescents.

Sincere appreciation go to the dedicated staff of the Ministries of Education and Health and their development partners, for their commitment and expertise during the development of this booklet.

Special thanks go to the entire Breakthrough ACTION Liberia team for its technical and financial support during the booklet's design.

The Ministry of Education wishes to encourage all partners and stakeholders to continue supporting adolescent health activities to keep students in school in order to complete their educational sojourn. It is believed that activities like these help address issues and challenges adolescents face in school.

The Adolescent School Health Booklet is incredibly informative and helpful in helping teenagers understand the changes and challenges they go through. The information presented is easy to read, and the advice is practical and realistic. Thank you for providing such a valuable resource for young people.

*J. Bongolee*

**Hon. Tarnue Marwolo Bongolee**  
**Assistant Minister, Student Personnel Services**  
**Ministry of Education**  
**Republic of Liberia**



# ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
CHA	Community Health Assistant
CHSS	Community Health Services Supervisor
CHV	Community Health Volunteer
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HPV	Human Papillomavirus
MOH	Ministry of Health
SBC	Social and Behavior Change
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
USAID	United States Agency for International Development



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# INTRODUCTION

This booklet is designed by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with Ministry of Health with support from Breakthrough ACTION Liberia. It is intended to increase adolescent knowledge on their sexual and reproductive health issues. It will be used by schools to encourage students take action to adopt safer health behaviors and improve positive health outcomes.

This booklet focuses on empowering adolescents to increase their knowledge in providing peer to peer education related to their sexual and reproductive health issues covering topics that include: puberty, family planning, self-esteem and other relevant topics to guide them make informed decisions as they grow into responsible and healthy adults who will meaningfully contribute to the growth and development of Liberia.







# 1. GOAL SETTING

## What is goal setting?

**G**oal setting is a step toward achieving something you want to achieve. It starts with identifying who you are, who you want to be, and why you want to be that person. After that, you make a plan for how you will achieve your goal, and then work towards achieving it.

## Why is goal setting important?

- Goal setting helps you identify a direction toward potential success/future dreams.

## When is the right time to set a goal?

- There is no better time than now.
- Throughout your life, you will set new goals as you decide what to do with your life.

## Some simple steps to get started with goal setting:

### Step 1: Start by brainstorming / thinking

- Take time to identify some focus areas and pinpoint what you're hoping to achieve in the future.

### Step 2: Think in terms of short, medium, and long

Think about possible goals like:

- Remain independent throughout school: Complete high school education.
- Explore different topics to understand what my passions may be.
- Explore post-school options, such as college and various jobs, so I can plan for my future.
- Remain alcohol and drug-free in school so I can focus on my education.
- Prioritize making decisions for me rather than for my friends.

### Step 3: Get out of your comfort zone

- Be ready to face your fears — prepare to deal with things that scare you, or make you feel anxious.
- Think positive — focus on the best things in your life and look for the best in every situation rather than dwell on the negative.
- Challenge yourself — push yourself, try new things or take on tasks that are difficult or require you to stretch your abilities.
- Turn every day into learning — in other words try to make positive use of every day by learning something new to impact your life.
- Find a friend for added support — seek support of a friend when you are facing a difficult situation or trying to complete a challenging task. Support can be emotional, sense of belonging.

### Step 4: Plan and work toward your future to become successful in life

Think about your goals in short, medium and long term and put them in writing. Revisit your goals periodically to see how far you have gotten.



## 2. SELF-ESTEEM AND CONFIDENCE



### What is self-esteem?

**S**elf-esteem is how you value and see yourself. It's based on your opinions and beliefs about yourself, which can feel difficult to change. You might also think of this as self-confidence. Your self-esteem can affect whether you like and value yourself as a person.

### Positive attributes of self-esteem

Positive attributes of self-esteem include communicating clearly, listening actively, resisting inappropriate social pressure, negotiating conflict constructively, and seeking to offer help when needed. Relationship skills are critical to success in life and work.

### Why is self-esteem important?

Self-esteem is important because it impacts your decision-making process, relationships, emotional health, and overall well-being.

It also influences your motivation, health, positive view of yourself, and understanding of your potential as you may feel inspired to take on new challenges.

### What are four characteristics of self-esteem?

The four characteristics that define the esteem you might feel for yourself:

- Self-confidence — a feeling of trust in your abilities, qualities and judgement.

- Self-identity — the knowledge and understanding you have of yourself.
- Feeling of belonging — is the feeling of security and support when you belong to a group.
- Feeling of competence — is the feeling of having the skill, knowledge, qualification, or capacity to accomplish tasks and goals.

## How do you improve self-esteem?

Recognize what you're good at. We're all good at something, whether it's cooking, singing, being a friend, etc.

- Build positive relationships.
- Be kind to yourself.
- Learn to be assertive: start saying "no" to bad things.
- Give yourself a challenge.

## What is a relationship?

A relationship is how you are connected to a person. Relationships bind people together. You have relationships with your friends, siblings, neighbors, etc. Relationships can influence behavior either positively or negatively. Healthy and happy relationships will help you become successful in life, so choose your relationships carefully.

## What are relationship skills?

Relationship skills are a set of skills that help you form healthy and happy connections. When you have deep connections with others, and have people who you can spend time with, you are able to enjoy just about everything else in life a bit more. Examples of relationship skills are communicating clearly, listening actively and openly, showing respect, and working to empathize.

## Why is it important to build relationship skills?

Spending time with others enables you to have a strong connection base i.e., people who can provide you a feeling of safety and security. Engage in activities with the people who you care about. All of these things make life more enjoyable.

## 3. PEER PRESSURE

### What is peer pressure?

**W**hen a person feels they must do the same thing that other people their age do, this is called peer pressure. Peer pressure means someone influences another to do something they usually would not do, or it can stop someone from doing what they want to do. A peer can be anyone you see as an equal in age or ability.

Peer pressure can be an especially influential factor during adolescence. At this time, you are transitioning towards adulthood, and figuring out important things in your life. As a young person, peer pressure can affect you in many ways, including:

- The way you dress.
- Whether you use alcohol or drugs.
- Your decision to have a boyfriend/girlfriend.
- Your choice of friends.
- Your academic performance.
- When you choose whether to have sex or not.
- How you talk.
- How you treat others.

### How does peer pressure influence teenage pregnancy?

Many teens are pressured by their friends and romantic partners to have sexual intercourse. This pressure may lead you to one more unplanned pregnancy. For example, a boyfriend may pressure you into having sexual intercourse before you're ready. Or a group of friends may encourage you to have sex and feel like you need to have sex to "fit in" with the group. Parents may pressure you into having a child or marrying before you feel ready. These are all forms of peer pressure that can lead to teenage pregnancy.

## How can you avoid peer pressure?

- Stay away from people who pressure you to do things that seem wrong, dangerous, or is otherwise something you don't want to do. A real friend does not pressure their friends into doing something they don't want to.
- Learn how to say "no", and practice how to avoid or get out of situations which feel unsafe or uncomfortable.
- Remember, resisting peer pressure only requires you to think for yourself. Don't let other people think and make decisions for you.
- Spend time with other peers who resist peer pressure. It helps to have at least one friend who is also willing to say "no."
- If you have problems with peer pressure, talk to an adult you trust, like a parent, teacher or your service provider at the health facility.

### MY NOTES

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## 4. UNDERSTANDING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

What are the qualities to look for in a healthy relationship?



There are several key qualities that any important person in your life should have, such as:

- Trust: They trust you and you feel that you can trust and rely upon them.
- Support: They support you and your decisions.
- Feel good: They make you feel good and “build you up” (i.e., encourage you and help you make better decisions for the future).
- Respect: They respect you and your decisions, including not pressuring you to do something that you don’t want to do.

## What are the warning signs of an unhealthy relationship?

The following are also some characteristics that act as warning signs to watch for:

- **Anger:** They are not able to control their anger — this is particularly a red flag for romantic relationships. Friends will always fight but it is not healthy when someone has uncontrollable anger.
- **Controlling/manipulative:** They try to get you to do something or to say something by making you feel guilty. Friends should be supportive in helping you make positive decisions.
- **Belittle:** They make you feel like your concerns or thoughts are invalid, wrong or unimportant. Friends should support or encourage you, not put down your ideas.
- **Malicious:** They are mean to you or make you feel small and unimportant — this can be a form of verbal abuse. Friends should love and support you, not make fun or be mean to you.

## 5. BODY CHANGES, PUBERTY AND MENSTRAUTION

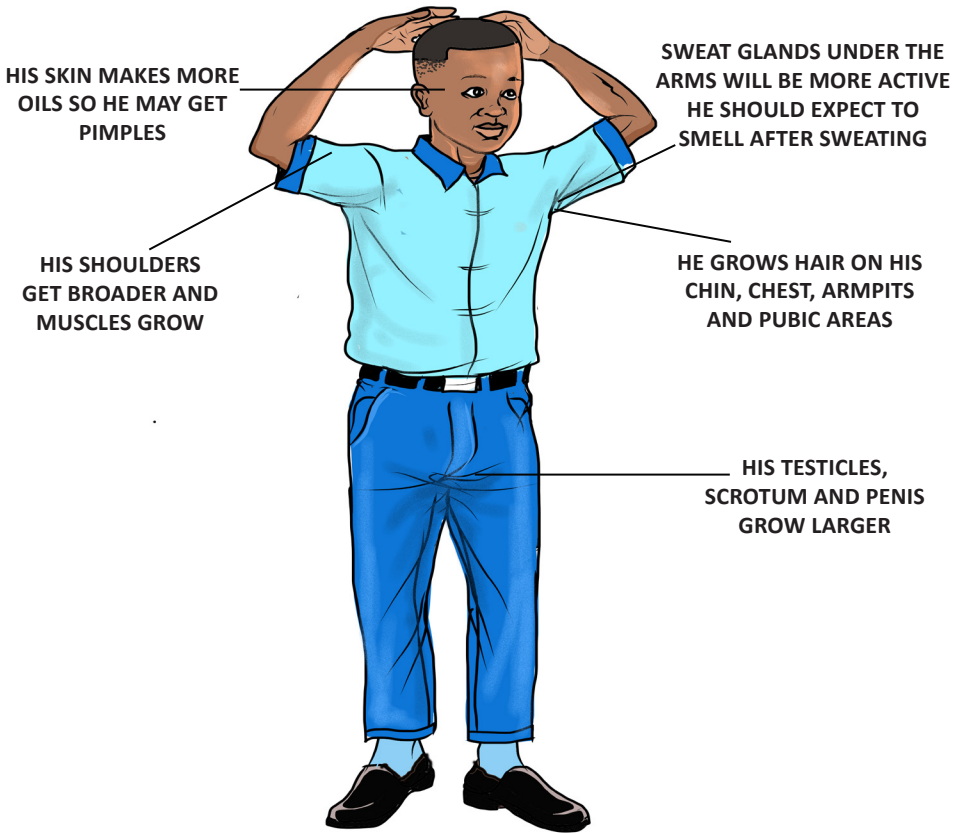
### What is puberty?

**P**uberty is the period during which your body goes through many changes to prepare for adulthood.

Puberty is also a time where you will start having many changes in your body (e.g., body hair growth around your vagina and penis, breast growth for girls).

Puberty is different for every person and you should not expect to look the same way as your friends.



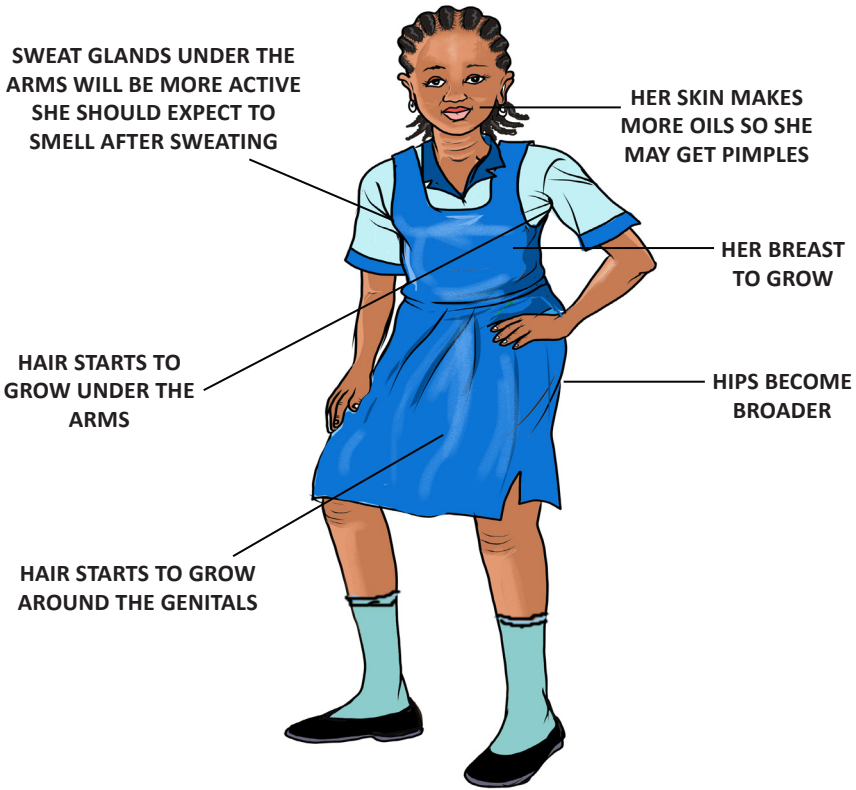


Puberty is also a time when you start to feel sexual desires and may make you want to experiment with others. These are all very normal feelings. However, interest in sex does not mean that you need to have sex.

As you go through puberty and start to think about sex more often, it is crucial that you learn about how to be safe, use contraceptives, and menstrual hygiene.

### **What is menstruation?**

Menstruation or "period" is when blood and tissue from your uterus comes out of your vagina. It usually happens every month. It usually begins between 11–16 years of age. A girl's first menstruation is called menarche. Some girls begin to menstruate as early as age eight or nine, while others may not get their first period until a few years later.



The average age to begin menstruating is 12, though that is just the average. It is normal for a girl to start menstruating anywhere from age 9-15. When a girl begins to see her period, it is a sign that she can become pregnant if she has sexual intercourse.

## What is menstrual hygiene?

Menstrual hygiene refers to women and adolescent girls using clean menstrual management materials (e.g., sanitary pads or cloth) to absorb or collect blood. Menstrual hygiene also means using soap and water to wash the body as needed and having access to appropriate facilities to dispose of used menstrual management materials.

Menstrual hygiene and management can be important in ensuring that your everyday life is not interrupted by menstruation.

It ensures that you can continue with your daily routine, including going to school, going to work, and being active and doing fun activities with your friends. Menstrual hygiene can help make you feel confident about yourself and your body. In this sense, maintaining proper hygiene is important for your well-being and development.

## How to manage menstruation?

- Use clean pads, cloths, or tampons for only as long as instructed and no longer. Usually, you should change them at least two or three times a day, even when the menstrual flow is light. Using damp or dirty menstrual supplies or using them for too long can lead to:
  - Urinary tract infections.
  - Rashes in the genital area.
  - Reproductive tract infections.
  - Increased risk of cervical cancer.
  - Tampons in particular, when left inside the body for more than four hours, can make you sick.
- Always remember to keep spare menstrual supplies in your bag or pockets before and during your period.
- Wear comfortable, well-fitting clothing, with underwear preferably made of a cotton blend. Thick and tight-fitting underwear, trousers, or shorts do not allow the skin to breathe, which increases likelihood of infection.
- Keep the vaginal area clean.
- Wash the vaginal area with warm water and mild soap as frequently as possible, at least twice a day is highly recommended. Avoid getting water or soap inside your vagina.
- Wash new underclothes before use to avoid infection, rinsing them thoroughly.
- Never use scented tissues, wipes, or douches to clean the vagina. They may cause rashes or irritation.

- When using reusable sanitary pads or cloths, be sure to take good care of them. They need to be cleaned thoroughly after use, fully dried in sunlight, packed and stored in a clean, dry place. Failing to clean and maintain reusable pads can lead to infections.
- Take care and be safe when disposing of used menstrual pads.
- Always wrap the used pads in paper or cloth before disposing them in garbage can and pit latrine to avoid bad smells and spread infections. Throwing away pads without wrapping them first causes bad smells and attracts insects.
- Always wash your hands thoroughly with soap and clean water after wrapping up and disposing the pad.

## FOR BOYS

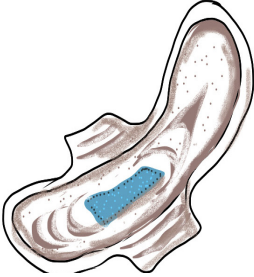
### How boys and men can support menstrual hygiene?

Boys and men have an essential role to play in effective menstrual hygiene, but many men are nervous about menstruation, whether acknowledging it, speaking about it or comfortably buying menstrual products for their partners. Boys and men have a meaningful part to play in this conversation; as brothers, fathers, uncles, cousins, schoolmates and teachers to name a few, they can take actions to advocate for clean and private bathrooms, be role models by showing positive behavior to students, communicate care and empathy rather than disgust and shame, and even buy pads for the women in your life!

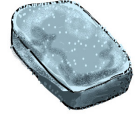


Men and boys can also help in constructing toilets, incinerators, and water facilities at schools, homes and their communities to help support menstrual hygiene for women and girls during their periods.

### DISPOSABLE HYGIENE



### REUSABLE PADS



## Personal hygiene and being a teen

Good hygiene is an essential part of being healthy. It is as important to your health as eating nutritious food (like fruits and vegetables), drinking water, sleeping, and training your body.

Good personal hygiene is also one of the best ways to protect yourself from getting sick or spreading diseases such as COVID-19, diarrhea, colds, stomach infections, and many other diseases.

Hygiene is especially important as you become a teenager. When you start puberty, you will notice that your body may sweat more. You may even start to smell bad. You will probably have to shower and clean yourself more than you did as a child. This is called personal hygiene. It is an important part of being a healthy adult.

### Personal hygiene includes:

- Cleaning your body every day.
- Washing your hands with soap and water at certain times (e.g., after going to the toilet, before you prepare food).
- Brushing and flossing your teeth twice a day.
- Covering your mouth and nose with a tissue (or your sleeve) when sneezing or coughing.
- Washing your hands after handling pets and other animals.

## **Why does this happen to me as I get older?**

Puberty is a normal part of growing older. And as you do, your body starts to create more stinky-smelling sweat, which is often caused by bacteria. These bacteria love to grow in warm and humid places like feet, under your arms, and around your genitals. This is both why these places start to smell first and also why it's especially important to wash these areas often – and with soap.

## **How should I practice personal hygiene?**

Bathe every day. Use water and soap to clean all areas of your body, including your hair.

After washing, apply deodorant to your armpits. Put on clean, dry clothing. Wash sweaty or dirty clothing well and, if possible, hang them outdoors to dry.

Boys should clean their penis. Gently pull back penis foreskin and wash underneath with warm water or soap.

Girls should gently wash all areas of the vagina, including the delicate skin around the vulva. You may choose to use salt water or non-perfumed soap since some bath products may irritate the sensitive skin. During menstruation (your period), wash your vulva as usual. Change sanitary pads several times a day. Wash your hands before and after changing sanitary pads.

## Are there other places I have to worry about for my personal hygiene?

**Mouth:** Your mouth is another place that bacteria enjoy living. As more and more of these bacteria build up in your mouth, they develop into a thin film on your teeth called plaque. If enough plaque builds up on your teeth, it can eat away at them and cause painful cavities — all of which may eventually lead to a bigger infection or even needing to get your tooth pulled! To prevent this and keep your breath smelling fresh, you should brush your teeth with toothpaste and floss at least twice a day — once when you wake up and once before you go to sleep. Brush softly for at least two minutes and don't forget to brush your tongue!



**Nails:** You should also trim your nails regularly so they do not catch and store dirt.

**Clothes:** Clothes can be contaminated with dirt and germs, especially if they have been used for several days. Be sure to clean your clothes with soap and water. Wear them once they are clean and dry.

## How about my hands? I always hear about hand hygiene

Yes! Handwashing is one of the most important things you can do to stay healthy. Germs, such as bacteria and viruses, can live on your hands and get inside your body. It is always a good time to wash your hands, but it's especially important:

- When you touch your nose, mouth, or eyes.
- Eat or prepare foods with unwashed hands.

- Before, during, and after preparing food.
- Before and after eating food.
- Before and after caring for someone who is sick with vomiting or diarrhea.
- After using the toilet.
- After changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has used the toilet.
- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- After touching an animal, animal feed, or animal waste.
- After touching garbage.

We all know how to wash our hands, but do we really know how to wash our hands? According to experts, handwashing is most effective when you follow these steps:

- Wet your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap.
- Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap.
- Lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
- Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the “Twinkle, twinkle little star” song from beginning to end.
- Rinse your hands well under clean, running water.
- Dry your hands using a clean towel or an air dryer.

Wash your hands before and after preparing food. Wash vegetables and fruits before you eat them. You should also wash utensils and pots to make sure they are clean before you cook with them. This will stop you contaminating food and will also protect you from getting sick.





## 6. HAVING SEX BEFORE YOU ARE READY

### What is sex?

Sex is often defined as sexual intercourse, or a man's penis being inserted into a woman's vagina. Without using contraception, sexual intercourse will often lead to pregnancy. To define sex more broadly, as it incorporates many different behaviors, sex can be thought of as when two people use their bodies to make them feel good.

### What is early initiation of sex and what are its effects on young people?

In Liberia, early initiation of sexual practices means engaging in sexual activities before the age of 18. However, having sex before you're ready may be different for every individual person. Every person is different, which is why it is important to understand your wants and values, and respect the wishes of others.

### Kinds of sexual activity

- Vaginal sex
- Oral sex
- Anal sex

### Why do some people have sex before they are ready?

- Lack of knowledge or having little education about sex and its complications.
- Peer pressure based on exposure to environmental and home circumstances.
- Early marriage based on a religious and cultural practice.
- Culture/tradition: some cultures demand and force young girls into sexual activities against their will.
- Drugs/alcohol use is sometimes attributed to peer pressure and mental state of the individual.
- Influence of media is based on age and social cultural factors.
- Lack of parental monitoring.

## Effects of having sex too early

Having sex too early can lead to a wide variety of negative life outcomes:

- Increased risk of contracting a sexually transmitted infection (STI).
- Increased risk of out-of-marriage pregnancy and childbirth.
- Increased risk of single parenthood.
- Decreased marital stability later in life.
- Increased likelihood of maternal and child poverty.
- Increased risk of teenage pregnancy.
- Increased risk of wanting an abortion.

## Reasons for delaying sex

- You can know when you are ready to have sex when you complete your education and can take care of you and your family.
- Girls: When you are older and your body is ready to handle the stress of having a child.



## MY NOTES

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## 7. TEENAGE PREGNANCY

### What is teenage pregnancy?

**T**eenage pregnancy refers to when a girl 19 years of age or below becomes pregnant. A girl can get pregnant if she has unprotected vaginal sex with a man at any age after she's begun having regular monthly periods.

### Is teenage pregnancy a concern?

Yes. It is a concern for the young mother, the child, the family, community and the country.

### How does teenage pregnancy affect young people?

- Adolescent pregnancy and childbearing often lead girls to drop out of school. That means a lot of mothers who get pregnant as teenagers may not go back to school and may end up living in poverty.
- Teen pregnancy is more likely to result in premature birth and health risks or complications. Complications during pregnancy and childbirth are the leading cause of death among 10–19-year old girls around the world.
- Fathering a child as a teenager can be life-changing. While teen fathers don't have to worry about the health implications of pregnancy and childbirth, they still face similar difficulties staying in school and earning a living.

### How does teenage pregnancy affect the child?

- The child could be born underweight.
- The mother may depend on others for support for the care of the child.
- The child may be malnourished since the mother can not afford to support that child and is dependent on others. This can later lead to stunting and creates a cycle of malnutrition in the family.

- The child may enter school late due to parents' inability to send them to school, since they are more likely to be poor or have other difficulties.
- The child may also drop out of school.
- A child of a teen is more likely to also become pregnant in their adolescence due to the above factors.

## **How does teenage pregnancy affect your family and community?**

- Since teens struggle to take care of themselves and their babies, they look up to others in the family or community for support.
- They look up to the family or other community members to help babysit, take care of the baby, and provide baby supplies (e.g., clothing, items for feeding the baby, medicines).
- Lack of education among young teens who could otherwise be future leaders also affects society as a whole.

## **How can you prevent teenage pregnancy?**

- Delaying or abstaining from sex and talking to a trusted family member about your sexual health.
- Talking with your sexual partner about preventing pregnancy if you are already having sex.
- Talking with someone that you trust if you have any concern (like a midwife at the clinic or another adult that you trust).
- If you have already started having sex, talk to your health care provider about which family planning method to use.

## 8. THE IMPORTANCE OF MODERN CONTRACEPTIVE AND PLANNING

### What is family planning and contraception?

**M**odern contraceptive methods are tools, such as physical barriers or medicines, that can help a couple prevent having a baby. An individual can use a contraceptive at any time.

Family planning helps people plan how they want to have their children: when they want to have children, how many children they want to have, and when they want to stop having children.

### What are common contraceptive methods?

Some modern contraceptive methods that young men and women in Liberia use are:



- **Condoms:** A latex covering that goes over the penis and acts as a barrier that is effective at preventing pregnancy. Condoms are most commonly used by men, but female condoms, which are inserted into the vagina, can also sometimes be found. Condoms are the only contraceptive method that protects against all STIs.

- The “pill”: A daily pill (tablet) that a woman takes to prevent pregnancy. It must be taken every day without fail for it to be effective.
- Depo-provera also called Sayana Press: Is an injection that is given regularly to a woman that prevents her from becoming pregnant.
- Intra-uterine device (IUD): A small piece of plastic that is put inside the uterus by a health provider to prevent pregnancy.
- Implants: A small rod about the size of a matchstick that is surgically placed inside a woman’s upper arm.

### **Who can use, take, or is eligible for contraception/family planning?**

Everyone at reproductive age who is not ready or wants to have a child is eligible. They can be sexually active or be thinking about becoming sexually active. Everyone should consider contraceptives and family planning before having sex.

### **How can you access contraception/family planning methods?**

You can get family planning methods from the nearest clinic, health center, hospital, Youth Friendly Centers, and from the Community Health Assistant.

## **9. PREVENTING STIs and HIV**

### **What is STI?**

**S**exually transmitted infections, or STIs, are infections that spread from person to person through sexual activity, including anal, vaginal, or oral sex. STIs are caused by bacteria, parasites, and viruses.

- Many health care providers use the term “infection” instead of “disease,” because a person with an infection may have no symptoms but still require treatment. When untreated, an STI can become a disease.

- Human immunodeficiency virus, or HIV, is a sexually transmitted infection which, when untreated, can progress to a disease called acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). Other examples of STIs include chlamydia, gonorrhea, human papillomavirus (HPV), and syphilis.

### **What is the connection between HIV and other STIs?**

- Having an STI can make it easier to get HIV. For example, STIs can cause a sore or a break in the skin, which then makes it easier for HIV to enter the body. If someone has both HIV and other STIs, they may also be at increased risk to transmit HIV to someone else.

### **Risk behaviors that can lead to STIs and HIV**

- Having sex, especially without consistently and correctly using condoms.
- Having sex with many partners.
- Having sex while/after using drugs or alcohol; drugs and alcohol impair a person's judgment, which can increase the likelihood of risky behaviors.

### **How can a person reduce the risk of getting STIs?**

Sexual abstinence (never having vaginal, anal, or oral sex) is the only way to eliminate any chance of getting an STI. But if you are sexually active, you can take the following steps to lower your risk for STIs:

- Stick to one faithful sexual partner.
- Get tested if you think you may have an STI or HIV and tell your partner to also get tested.
- Use condoms correctly every time you have sex.
- Do not drink alcohol or use drugs before and during sex.

### **How can a person with HIV prevent passing it to others?**

- Avoid having sex without a condom.
- Take HIV medicines that a health care provider has prescribed to you daily. Treatment with HIV medicines (called antiretroviral therapy or ART) helps people with HIV live long and healthy lives.



## What are the symptoms of STIs?

- Symptoms of STIs may differ depending on the type of STI, and not everyone will experience the same symptoms. Examples of possible STIs symptoms include: painful or a burning sensation during urination, unusual discharge from the vagina or penis, or fever.
- STIs may not always cause symptoms. Even if a person has no symptoms from an STI, they may still pass the STI on to other people. Talk to your health care provider about getting tested for STIs and ask your sexual partner to do the same.

## Can STIs be treated?

- STIs caused by bacteria or parasites can be cured with medicine. There is no cure for STIs caused by viruses, but treatment can relieve or eliminate symptoms and help keep the STI under control.

## What should I do if I think I have STI?

- If you think you might have a STI, visit the nearest clinic to get tested right away. The sooner that you are able to diagnose and treat a STI, the better your health will be. By testing and treating your infection, you will also lower your risk of transmitting the infection to sexual partners. It is important to tell your partner if you test positive for an STI so they can also get tested.

## Dealing with stigma and discrimination

HIV/ AIDS-related stigma and discrimination refer to prejudice, negative attitudes, abuse, and maltreatment directed at people living with HIV and AIDS. The consequences of stigma and discrimination are wide-ranging: being shunned by family, peers, and the wider community, poor treatment in healthcare and education settings, erosion of rights, psychological damage, and a negative effect on the success of HIV testing and treatment.

Young people frequently hear about discrimination and sometimes conceive of it as only dealing with race. However, people are discriminated against on the basis of many things including race, gender, appearance, religion, disability, social class, sexual orientation, and ethnicity. While discrimination is often thought of in terms of job opportunities, it can take many forms. When young people understand that discrimination, in all of its forms, affects people's lives, they are in a better position to discriminate less themselves and be less willing to tolerate discrimination from others.

## MY NOTES

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# 10. SUBSTANCE ABUSE

## What is substance or drug abuse?

**D**rug or substance abuse refers to dependence upon certain chemicals for the purpose of creating pleasurable effects on the brain. Drug abuse occurs when you repeatedly use a substance despite the harm it may cause in your life.

Most commonly used substances which may be abused:

- **Alcohol • Marijuana • Tobacco**



## Effects of alcohol and drug abuse

Being curious about alcohol and drugs is normal. However, remember that recreational drugs (marijuana, cocaine, heroin) are illegal and dangerous to your health and your future.

Once addicted to substances like alcohol and drugs, a person may experience:

- Pre-mature death due to misuse, overdose, or reckless behavior.
- Impaired ability to move well or think clearly. This can lead to engaging in extreme or dangerous actions.
- A desire to focus only on drugs and alcohol, losing interest in other activities.
- Receiving poor grades and even rejection and expulsion from school.
- Unemployment
- Losing friends and family members.
- Becoming dull, antisocial, depressed, tired, aggressive, or otherwise feeling or behaving poorly.



- Being more likely to engage in criminal activities such as robbery, theft, and homicide, especially as dependency gets stronger and the need for money for drugs grows.
- If using intravenous drugs and sharing the same syringe with other people, one may contract diseases like HIV.
- If using alcohol, failure of vital organs like the liver and kidneys, which ultimately leads to death. Other substances may have similarly bad effects on organ function.

## **Factors that contribute to substance abuse**

Some of the reasons a young person may end up addicted to recreational drugs or alcohol:

- Peer pressure to use alcohol and drugs.
- Availability of drugs from other young people.
- Learned behavior from others at home, in school, or the community.
- Social media (e.g., social networks may connect a user to someone who offers or enables substance use).
- Addictive properties: Drugs and alcohol both contain addictive chemicals and alter your brain so that you want more of them.
- Genetics: There is strong evidence that shows some people biologically are more likely to struggle with addiction than others.

## **Prevention and control**

Some ways to avoid use and abuse of substances or seek help if you are abusing them:

- Seek counseling and education on alcohol and drug abuse from a trusted official, provider, or teacher.
- When counseling is not available or isn't helping, seek medical advice or assistance from a rehabilitation center. Rehabilitation centers in particular can help someone overcome and live with addiction and its consequences.

- Avoid peer pressure and end any unhealthy relationships that may encourage you to abuse substances.
- Ask for help from family and friends.

## 11. NUTRITION AND HEALTHY EATING

### What is nutrition?



**N**utrition is the study of how food and drink affect our bodies, with special regard to important nutrients necessary to support human growth and health.

### What is healthy eating

- Healthy eating means eating different types of food so that the body gets the nutrients (protein, carbohydrates, fats, vitamins, and minerals) for normal growth and development.

- Food nourishes the body and gives us energy to get through each day. Healthy eating leads to good health and is a key element in human development, from the prenatal and early childhood years to later life stages. Healthy eating also helps reduce the risk of many chronic diseases.

## **Why is good nutrition important?**

- Good nutrition protects you against many chronic and non-communicable diseases (e.g., diabetes, cancer, heart disease).
- Nutrition provides the energy and nutrients we need to function physically and mentally at our best. It reduces our risk of illness and injury because our body has the right nutrients to repair, restore, and protect itself. Good nutrition also helps improve our ability to learn in school.

## **The six elements of nutrition and their importance to our bodies:**

- **Protein:** Protein is essential for muscle growth and health. Protein is found in foods like meat, fish, chicken, eggs, and beans.
- **Carbohydrates:** Carbohydrates provide energy and make up a large part of our diet. Foods high in carbohydrates include rice, cassava, bread, potatoes, eddoes, yam, etc.
- **Fats:** Fats are also a source of energy, and our body can store fat to use later. We need to consume a moderate amount of fat to survive.
- **Vitamins:** Vitamins are essential for our body to conduct various processes, such as healing wounds. Fruits and vegetables are particularly good sources of vitamins.
- **Minerals:** Found in most foods, including meats, grains, fruits, and vegetables, minerals like vitamins, help conduct various processes of the body. Mineral deficiencies, which can be common, can cause health problems.
- **Water:** The body needs plenty of water every day to function properly and stay alive.

## How do we eat healthily?

If you eat or drink more than your body needs, you'll put on weight because the energy you do not use is stored as fat. If you eat and drink too little, you'll lose weight or have other health problems. Therefore, to eat healthily, eat what your body needs, not too much or too little. Eating a wide range of foods ensures you're getting a balanced diet and your body is receiving all the nutrients it needs. In general, the fresher and less processed your foods are, the healthier you will be.

# 12. MALARIA

## What is malaria?

**M**alaria is a mosquito-borne parasitic disease that causes high fever, severe chills, and sweating.





## Who is at risk?

- Everyone in Liberia.

## Who is most at risk?

- Pregnant women.
- Children under five years.

## How is malaria spread?

Malaria is spread by the bite of the Anopheles mosquito. If a mosquito bites a person already infected with malaria, it can also become infected and spread the parasite on to other people.

## How can you prevent malaria?

Sleep under an insecticide-treated mosquito net everywhere and every night. The Anopheles mosquito which transmits malaria mostly bites at night, so remember to sleep under your mosquito net, as they are one of the more effective and cheapest ways to prevent getting malaria.

## What should I do if I think I might have malaria?

Go to a hospital or clinic whenever you have a fever to get tested for malaria. Always get tested before pursuing treatment; taking malaria treatments when you don't have it could cause harm. It is especially important for children under 5 and pregnant women to get tested for malaria if they have fever as they are most at risk for severe illness or dying from malaria.

## MY NOTES

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# MY NOTES

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