STIs and HIV
Anybody, regardless of who they are (gender, race or culture) or where they live, can contract STIs including HIV.

• People may not have any symptoms that mean they can transmit STIs (Sexually transmitted Infections). This is a common mistake. Symptoms like rashes, sores or warts can be so small they go unnoticed, so the only way to know if you have an STI is to get tested. That is why it is important to get regular STI screenings.

• Many people are embarrassed to go to the clinic. There are services at the clinic where the healthcare worker will test you privately and confidentially. It’s important to get tested as soon as possible because even though most STIs are easily treatable, if left too long untreated, the symptoms become more severe.

• If you have recently had unprotected sex, have a new partner or more than one partner or for any reason are worried that you might have an STI, it is important to get screened as soon as you can.

Testing for STIs
STI screenings involve being tested for a range of different STIs and usually include the following:

• Symptomatic testing (testing for STIs based on presentation of symptoms)
• HIV Testing and Counselling
• STI Screening (blood or urine)
• Medical history analysis
• Pap smear/cervical screening (checks the health of your cervix)
• Blood pressure and weight check
• Breast examination
• Urine analysis
• Contraceptive consultation

• Remember to always use a condom every time you have sex!

• The female condom puts the power in a woman’s hands. Go to your local clinic and ask one of the nurses or healthcare workers for a female condom. Go with your friends if it will make you feel less shy. While you’re there, you can ask one of the nurses how to use it properly.

• Check for any signs of a skin rash.
• While some discharges are normal, do you have any unusual vaginal discharge?
• Struggling to sleep or night sweats.
• Look for unusual bumps like sores or warts near your genitals or mouth.
• Itching, swelling or redness near your genitals.
• Experiencing pain during or after having sex.
• To protect yourself against STIs, you can use a male condom or a female condom.

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Dual protection – Remember... Condoms are the only method of contraception that offer dual protection. This means prevention from pregnancy and of transmission of HIV and other sexually transmitted illnesses.

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Choosing what’s best for you and your future.

The decision you make about sex can affect your future. For instance you can choose to have protected sex, keeping yourself healthy. Or you can wait until you are ready to have sex. These are conscious and empowering decisions.

Just because everyone else is doing it doesn’t mean you have to.

• Irresponsible sexual behaviour can affect your future. An unplanned pregnancy can change your plans or your current path. Having a baby is a big responsibility — physically, emotionally and financially. Whether you’re a boy or girl you need to be sure and ready.

• Responsible sex is when you make a decision to protect yourself from sexually transmitted illnesses (STIs) including HIV, as well as preventing an unplanned pregnancy.

• Condomise — Having sex without protection is risky. You could get HIV or a Sexually Transmitted Illness. Or you could make a girl pregnant or become pregnant if you are a girl. Always insist on using a condom with your partner. It’s loving behaviour. Using a condom is as much a responsibility for a girl as it is a guy.

• Have one partner at a time — Having multiple sexual partners is risky, especially if you don’t use protection. You could spread a disease from one partner to another.

• Use a contraceptive to avoid unwanted pregnancy.

• Contraception for sexual health & preventing an unwanted pregnancy

Male Condoms

These condoms are worn by the guy. They are safe, effective, easy to get and offer protection against both pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. They are the shape of a penis with a small tip at the top to collect the semen. They are placed on an erect penis before intercourse and keep semen from entering the vagina. They are made of latex which is a kind of soft rubber. There is a chance of a condom breaking or slipping off during sex, so make sure the condom is placed on the penis correctly by holding the tip and then sliding it onto the shaft of the penis. This leaves a space at the tip of the condom to allow space for the sperm to collect.

Female Condoms

These condoms are worn by the woman and fit inside the vagina. They protect against pregnancy and STIs and can also be used in conjunction with other contraception like the pill.

What is HIV?

HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) is a virus that attacks the immune system, the body’s natural defense system. Without a strong immune system, the body has trouble fighting off disease. Both the virus and the infection it causes are called HIV. White blood cells are an important part of the immune system.

HIV causes AIDS, which stands for acquired immunodeficiency syndrome. AIDS is a condition in which the immune system is so weakened that it can’t fight off certain infections. AIDS can cause death.

HIV infection begins when the HIV virus enters the body through the mouth, skin, or mucous membranes. After a few weeks, the person may have a flu-like illness called primary HIV infection. This illness usually lasts for about six months and then goes away. However, the virus remains in the body and continues to multiply. Over time, the immune system is weakened and the body becomes more vulnerable to infections and certain kinds of cancer.

The female condom has flexible rings at each end. To use it, squeeze the smaller ring at the closed end of the condom and insert it into the vagina. Make sure that the larger ring at the open end of the condom covers the vaginal opening. Make sure that the penis enters the female condom, not between the condom and the side of vagina. As soon as you’re done, remove the female condom, by gently pulling it out, tuck the tail end of the condom inside the speculum leaving out and then dispose of it in a bin.

The Pill

The pill is taken orally by the female. It contains a combination of the hormones oestrogen and progesterone which prevent the body from ovulating. Ovulating is when an egg is released every month, if there is no egg to be fertilised then pregnancy cannot occur. The pill is most effective when taken every day at approximately the same time of day. You will still have your period, but some girls find positive or negative side effects, or both. You will need a doctor’s prescription to go on the pill. Speak to your nearest healthcare worker or doctor about the right pill and form of contraception to suit you.

Contraception for sexual health & preventing an unwanted pregnancy

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