

2005

the  
**red**  
book

what you want  
to know about  
yourself

**10-14** years

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## WHY THIS BOOKLET?



As you grow up you experience many changes. There are changes in the body, in the way you behave, the way others expect you to be, and in your interests and preoccupations. All this is normal. It is part of growing up. But growing up is not easy. This is the time in your life when you have many questions and hardly any straight answers, especially if your questions are about the changes in your body, the new feelings you experience and anything to do with sex. People do not easily talk about these sorts of things because they are connected with sexuality. Many older people seem unwilling to discuss these things openly. You then have to put together pieces of information that you have got from your friends or the TV or magazines or rely on



your imagination. What you come up with may be far from the truth.



Sexuality is about many things like your emotions, beliefs, relationships, what you feel about yourself and your body, etc. It is more than 'just sex'. Sexuality is a basic part of everyone's life. But sometimes people don't know enough and they end up doing things that later they are not happy about. So, who do you speak to about things like: *What is happening to my body? Why is my body changing? What is this sex stuff really all about? Am I attractive? Am I normal?*

These are some of the questions that many young people ask. At TARSHI, we run a telephone helpline on reproductive and sexual health issues. People from



all walks of life call in. Since 1996, over 20% of the 55,000+ calls have been from young people between the ages of 10 and 21 years. They have many questions and doubts, and also many interesting ideas.

We feel it's important that you have information that will help you be a happier, healthier, and more in-charge-of-your-life sort of person. Because questions vary with age, we have prepared 2 sets of booklets; in Hindi and in English. The Red Book is for 10 to 14 year olds and The Blue Book is for those who are older. This is a rough dividing line. Feel free to use whichever booklet suits your needs.

## You need to know about

- What can help you be a happier, healthier person.
- The things that affect your life and sexuality.
- How to protect yourself from harm.
- Your right to say “No” to any unwanted touch of any kind by anyone.

In this booklet you will find information about different aspects of sexuality and relationships. This book has been written keeping you in mind – what you might want to know and what you might already know but be confused about. You can also check if what you know is accurate.

## OUR BODIES

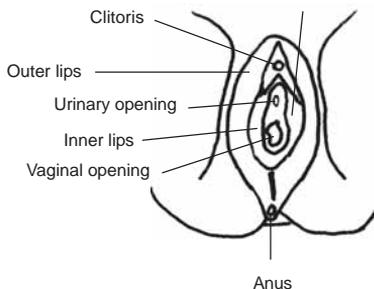
You may be tall, fat, thin, dark, short, sporty, fair, studious or have special needs because of a physical or mental disability..... Your sexuality is not restricted to your body or certain body parts alone. However, because sexuality is also expressed through your body it is important to know how it functions. You learn about your body from an early age but that knowledge is limited. No one tells you as much about your sexual organs as they do about your nose, eyes or stomach, for example. Knowing the right names of sexual organs is the first step to understanding more about how they function.

The main difference between the bodies of girls and boys is that girls have a vagina and boys have a penis. These parts of the body are called the genitals. Another difference between boys and girls is that as girls grow up they develop breasts and boys don't.

## GIRLS' BODIES

A girl's genitals (vulva) are not clearly visible because they lie within folds of skin. What is visible is the outer part which in the teen years begins to get covered by hair. This hair is called pubic hair and is usually thicker and curlier than the hair that grows on the head. Both girls and boys develop pubic hair as they grow up. The vulva is like a fleshy V-shape between a girl's legs. A slit (like the one between buttocks, but smaller) separates the two outer lips. Within the outer lips lie the folds of the two thinner, smaller inner lips.

### GIRLS' GENITALS



### To maintain good hygiene

- Wash genitals daily with water. No soap, antiseptic, deodorants, etc required.
- While washing after defecating (shitting), wash from front-to-back, in a motion away from the vagina, to prevent infection.
- Change underwear regularly (at least once a day) and avoid synthetic panties.
- Wash panties carefully to make sure you wash off all the soap.
- Dry panties in the sun. Sunlight kills germs.
- Do not put any unclean, sharp edged objects into the vagina.
- Do not touch your genitals with dirty hands. Keep your nails short so you don't hurt yourself.

The urinary opening, from which liquid wastes are removed in the form of urine, is within these folds of skin. Just above the urinary opening is the clitoris. The clitoris is a tiny (about the size of a small pea) structure hidden within the folds of the inner lips where they join. It is extremely sensitive to touch and when stimulated gently becomes firmer and slightly bigger.

Both boys and girls have an opening for removing solid waste products (shit) from the body. This is the anus, which is present between your buttocks. In boys there is a common opening for the passage of urine and sexual fluid. But in girls there are two different openings – one for urination (peeing) and one for other things (sexual fluid, baby comes out, periods). Just below the urinary opening is this other opening which is called the vagina or vaginal passage. This is where babies come out from. When you (start to) menstruate (see page 8) this is also where the menstrual fluids come out from. The vaginal passage is elastic and muscular. The body produces a fine liquid to keep the walls of the vagina moist, healthy and clean, something like saliva that is always present in your mouth. The liquid is present in very small amounts so most of the time you do not feel it. But sometimes, especially when you are excited, you might feel the liquid or see some wetness on your panties. This is normal. It is also normal that this part of your body has a particular smell. As long as you keep yourself reasonably clean (for example, daily baths etc.) the smell is not dirty or offensive. **Just like different people have differently shaped hands and faces, the outer lips, clitoris and vagina may differ in size, shape and colour from girl to girl.**

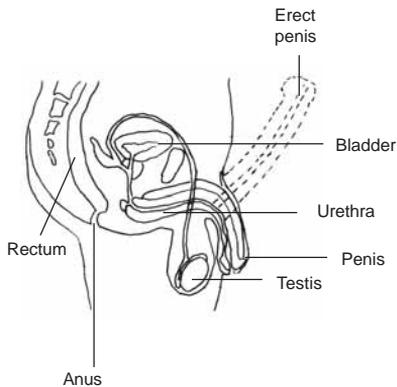
The vaginal passage leads to the uterus or womb inside the body (see diagram on page 9). This is where a baby grows in its mother's body. On either side of the uterus is an ovary. These are two small almond-shaped structures. The ovaries contain thousands of little eggs from the time a girl is born. Boys do not have a uterus or ovaries – that is why they cannot have babies.

## BOYS' BODIES



Boys have a penis (that looks like a tube or a small sausage) and testicles (balls) that hang between their legs. Below the penis are the two testicles or testes which may not be of equal size. One testicle may hang slightly lower than the other. The penis may be tilted towards either the left or the right side of the body. It is usually slightly curved at the tip. The tip of the penis has a small opening for the urine as well as the sexual fluid (called semen) to come out. The outer layer of skin covering the penis is the foreskin. This skin can be moved back a bit to show the tip (which is pinkish in colour) more clearly. This skin also moves back a little on its own when a boy has an erection (his penis becomes hard).

### BOYS' GENITALS



Pull back the foreskin gently while having a bath (when there is no erection) so that you clean off the whitish sticky substance that collects below it. If you do not do this you might feel itchy and uncomfortable. In some communities people remove the foreskin during childhood. This is called circumcision.

When a boy is sexually excited his penis becomes hard and 'stands up'. This is known as an erection or a 'hard-on' and occurs because of increased blood flow to the penis. Erections sometimes occur on their

own, without any sexual stimulus. Many boys have what are called Morning Erections and also erections during sleep. This is perfectly natural and normal. It does not mean that they are 'over-sexed'.

## To be clean and healthy



Wash genitals daily with water. No soap, antiseptic, deodorants, etc. required.

- Dirt might accumulate as a sticky white substance, called smegma, under the foreskin. Gently move your foreskin back and wash the tip of the penis. It will be easier to do this when you do not have an erection.
- While washing after defecating (shitting), wash in a motion away from the penis, i.e. front to back, to prevent infection.
- Change underwear regularly (at least once a day) and avoid synthetic undies.
- Wash undies carefully to make sure you wash off all the soap.
- Dry undies in the sun. Sunlight kills germs.
- Do not touch your genitals with dirty hands. Keep your nails short so you do not hurt yourself.

## GROWING UP



As you grow up, your body begins to change in size and also in shape. These changes start happening from around the age of 10 years or so. They can also happen earlier or later. You may suddenly find that your shoes and clothes do not fit you any more. Hair begins to grow in your armpits and in the genital area.

At this time you also begin to become more conscious of your body and your appearance. Your skin may become more oily and pimples may appear on your skin. Keeping your face clean by frequent washing (but not too much soap), avoiding fried foods like those crunchy chips and burgers and regular exercise prevent pimples and help you look your best.

Because you are now growing very fast your food requirements may increase. Eating a balanced diet with lots of fruits, vegetables and milk also help you look smart and feel fit.

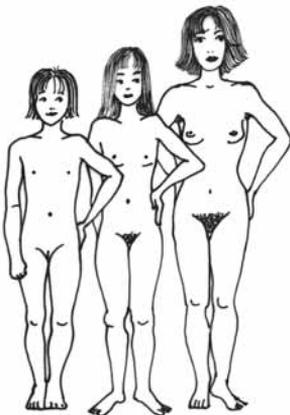


These changes happen because of changes in the natural chemicals in the body called hormones. Both boys and girls have hormones but they have different amounts of different hormones. That is why some of the changes that take place are different for girls and boys – for example, boys have more body and facial hair growth than girls. Let's look at some of the changes that occur.....

## GIRLS

As a girl grows older her breasts begin to develop. Sometimes there might be a slight soreness or pain as the breasts grow. This soon passes. You must have noticed that breasts may be round, conical, upright, sagging, soft or firm

### STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT IN GIRLS



depending on age and fitness. The two breasts may not be equal in size. The tips of the breasts are called nipples. They are dark in colour and highly sensitive to touch and temperature. The darker area around the nipples is called areola. Sometimes when the nipples are touched and stimulated, they become hard and seem to stand out. This is called Nipple Erection. This happens to both men and women. The breasts begin producing milk only when a woman is pregnant and stop producing milk when the baby does not need this milk anymore. If there is secretion from the breasts at any other time, consult a doctor.

## ABOUT BRAS AND OTHER THINGS....

Women wear bras or brassieres to support their breasts. As a girl's breasts grow she may need to get a different sized bra every couple of years, till her breasts have stopped growing. Some of you may need to wear a bra earlier or



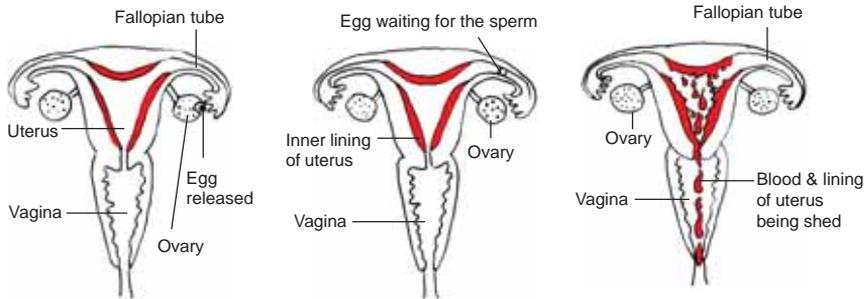
later than your friends start wearing one. There is nothing unusual about this. Everyone grows at a different pace.

You know you need to wear a bra when your breasts have grown enough to jiggle or bounce when you run. You may feel more comfortable wearing a bra especially if you go jogging or are the sporty type. The right bra for you is one that supports your breasts like a second skin. Wear a bra that is neither too tight nor too loose and preferably a cotton one. Take off your bra at night to allow for proper blood circulation and so that you can breathe comfortably while sleeping.

## MENSTRUATION

Apart from the breasts growing there are other major changes that happen at this age. Normally when you are between 10 and 15 years old, the ovaries (see diagram) begin to release one egg every month. Just before the ovary releases one egg every month, the uterus begins to thicken its lining and collect blood in case a baby is to be made. If the female egg has not met the sperm (the 'male egg'), then a baby cannot be made. Then this blood and lining is not needed so it comes out little by little through the vagina. It takes between two and eight days to come out. This is called menstruation. In slang, it is called 'chums', menses, 'periods' or 'being down'.

## MENSTRUAL CYCLE



Menstruation is something that happens to all girls while growing up. It happens every month and is absolutely normal. Some girls get frightened by this and think there is something wrong with them. There is nothing wrong. In fact this is a sign that the body is working and maturing well. Once you have begun menstruating, you may also notice that a small amount of a whitish sticky fluid comes out of your vagina at certain times of the month. This is normal as long as it does not feel itchy or burn or have a horrible smell.

Menstruation stops totally when a woman is around 45-55 years old. Menstruation is not an illness. At this time of the month you are not dirty. Think about it – the blood that comes out is the same blood that the body has collected to nourish a baby. How can it be dirty? This blood comes out because it is no longer needed by the body, not because it is dirty.

### Stay clean during your period

- Always use a clean sanitary towel or cloth to absorb the blood.
- Sanitary towels need to be changed frequently (at least every four to six hours) in order to prevent bad odour or infections.
- If you are using a cloth which is to be reused, it should be washed thoroughly and disinfected by drying in the sun.
- Keep yourself and your genitals clean during your periods.

Having your periods does not make you dirty or ill. There is no reason why you should not bathe, eat pickle or icecream, play games, wash your hair, or do other things during your periods.

During your period you need to wear a sanitary pad or napkin to absorb the blood. A sanitary pad is a thickish cotton pad. Some pads come with a thin elastic belt which holds the pad in place. Put the belt around your waist and the pad against your vagina and between your legs. Some pads, called 'belt-less' pads, have a sticky strip which helps to stick the pad on to your panty. Some people wear tampons to soak up the blood. Tampons are special small pads (cylindrical and about 2" long) that are put inside the vaginal passage. You need to change your pad or tampon every four to six hours or when you feel it is soaked enough, whichever is earlier.

There is no reason why you should feel shy about having your period or needing to wear a sanitary pad. When you start menstruating, your period may be irregular because your body has not yet got used to it. Some of you might feel slight pain or a heavy feeling in your lower back, legs or below your navel. Walking and light exercise help to keep your muscles relaxed. You could also use a hot water bottle to soothe the pain. If the pain is very bad and you cannot bear it, ask someone older for medicine for period pain. Do not pretend that you have a stomach-ache or some other ache because those medicines may not help you!

You need to eat a well-balanced diet since you lose some blood every month. Eat fruit, green leafy vegetables, and drink milk to remain strong and healthy.

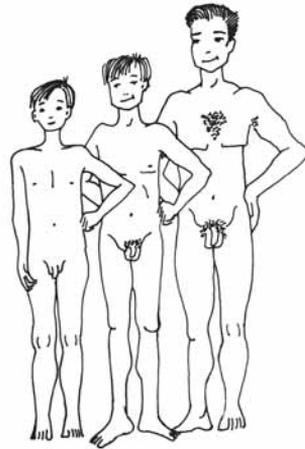
## BOYS

As boys grow up their bodies become more muscular. Their voice may 'crack', sometimes sounding deep and sometimes squeaky. Hair begins to appear on the face, especially above the lips.

The body begins producing semen as the boy begins to mature. Semen or 'cum' is the whitish sticky substance that comes out of the penis. It is formed in the testes continuously and contains sperms (the 'male egg'). The coming out of semen in spurts during a sexual act is called ejaculation. The amount of semen that comes out may be different at different times. It is normal for it to come out of the body from time to time.

Sometimes semen comes out of the body at night, during sleep. This is called 'nocturnal emissions', 'nightfall' or 'wet dreams'. Nocturnal emissions do not always happen because of sexual feelings or sexual dreams. They start happening around puberty (in the teens) and some boys get quite embarrassed or frightened by this. Nocturnal emissions are normal and do not lead to weakness. While urinating, you might find that a few drops of a whitish fluid come out just before the urine does. Both the semen and urine come out from the same tube and opening and so if semen is present in the tube, it naturally comes out before the urine does. Erections may also begin to occur more frequently, especially when you are excited. If you find that you have an erection at an embarrassing time (e.g. in class or while on the games field), try distracting yourself and it will subside on its own.

#### STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT IN BOYS



## SEX

Sex is very special, complex and can seem quite confusing. We have been asked many questions about sex and related topics by young people between the ages of 10 and 14. Here are some of the most frequently asked questions with their answers.

## What is sex? Why do people have sex?



As you grow up you begin to feel attracted to certain people and want to express these feelings. Something happens in your body when you are with that person or are thinking about them. This is a different feeling from the loving feelings you have about other people. People express these feelings through doing things like holding hands, kissing, and other things that give them pleasure. Hugging and kissing your friends or your family is not sex. But hugging and kissing someone you are attracted to in a sexual way is part of sex.

## How does it feel when you have sex?

If you have sex when you are ready for it, with someone you care about who cares about you, it feels good in your body and in your mind. But if you are scared or unwilling or not ready for it, it may not be a nice experience. Some people start smooching (deep kissing) and doing other things because their friends make fun of them if they refuse. Doing these things because of pressure from someone else can make sex feel quite horrible.



**Excited, warm, tingly, thrilled, pleasurable, gentle, loved, wanted, special, happy** – these are some things that people feel when they have sex.

## When can we start having sex?

People can start having sex when they understand what they are doing and are old enough to handle the after effects. Sex is more than a physical act and involves many other things like feelings and relationships. Sex between a man and a woman can also lead to having babies which, as you know, is a serious matter.

## What is smooching?

Smooching is another word for deep kissing where you explore your partner's mouth with your tongue.

## How do men and women have sex?

People do different things with each other to express their sexual feelings. They touch each others' bodies, hold hands, smooch, have intercourse, and do other things that feel good to them. Having intercourse means that the man's penis goes into the woman's vagina. After some time semen comes out of the penis. As you know, the semen has many sperms that travel into the woman's body and can make her pregnant. The idea of smooching and intercourse and touching each other might seem a bit strange to you when you are young and you might wonder why people want to do this sort of thing. Sex is a normal and enjoyable activity that most adult human beings engage in.

## What is oral sex?

Sometimes people like to kiss each other on different parts of the body. Oral sex is the name for any sexual activity done with the mouth and/or the tongue.

## What is the meaning of homosexual? How do they have sex?

People can be sexually attracted to anyone. Different people feel different things and may be attracted to men or to women. People who are sexually attracted to others of their own sex are called **homosexual**.



Can you make out who is homosexual, bisexual or heterosexual ?

Of course, you can't...

People who are sexually attracted to people of the opposite sex are called **heterosexual**. And people who are sexually attracted to both sexes are called **bisexual**. Women homosexuals are called **lesbians** and male homosexuals are called **gay**. Sexual attraction as we have seen is different from love. If you love your best friend who is the same sex as you this does not mean that you are homosexual. Homosexual and bisexual people feel love and sexual feelings just like heterosexual people. They make love in different ways, doing different things with each other.

### **Why don't people have babies every time they have sex?**

People don't have babies every time they have sex because the egg and the sperm do not always meet and mix or because the couple may be using something called a contraceptive, to prevent having a baby.

### **What is a virgin?**

A virgin is anyone (male or female) who has not had intercourse.

### **What is masturbation?**

When people touch themselves and get sexually excited and do things to their own bodies that give them sexual pleasure, it is called masturbation. Masturbation may involve rubbing, stroking and caressing one's own genitals. It is a normal and natural activity, done by boys and girls, men and women. As long as people take care to not hurt themselves and do not let it interfere with the other things they have to do (like studies, games etc.) there is no harm in masturbating.

### **Is there any harm in deep kissing?**

There is no harm in deep kissing as long as both partners are clean and do not have any infection, especially in the mouth.

## **Why do our thoughts change when we are 12, 13, 14?**

This is something natural. At this time the body begins to become more mature and starts to prepare itself for future sexual activity. Along with changes in body size and shape, there are also changes in the hormones. Part of growing up means that our ideas and interests also begin to develop and change. We become more conscious of ourselves, our bodies, what we feel, want to feel more 'grown up' and start experiencing sexual feelings. We also start getting attracted to people, notice how they look, wonder if they will pay any attention to us and want to be noticed by them.



## **When you see a romantic song or movie it feels like something coming out in the panty. Why does it happen?**

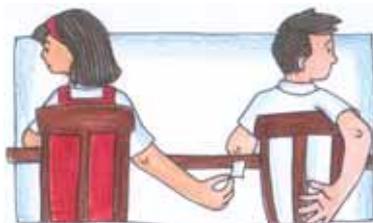
When you see something that is romantic or sexy or exciting it is absolutely natural to feel something happen in your body. Some people feel their heart beat increasing, or feel sweaty, their pulse might race, they feel a tingle in some part of the body, girls might feel a slight wetness in the vagina and boys might have an erection accompanied by semen coming out. During the teen years because the body is just getting used to these new sensations, sometimes you might find yourself reacting like this quite suddenly. With time, you will be more in control of these physical feelings.

## **Do people have sex on the marriage night called 'suhaag raat'?**

Sometimes they do, and sometimes they wait till they get to know each other a little better.

### **Can girls and boys be best friends?**

Of course they can. Girls and boys can be very good friends with each other as long as they respect each other as human beings.



### **Do boys have a stomach-ache when the semen comes out?**

Semen coming out of the body is not like girls having periods. Boys don't have a stomach-ache when semen comes out. But sometimes they might have a feeling of tension in the penis or testes because of sexual excitement. This is not a pain, but because it is a new feeling, they may not know what to call it.

### **Why do we feel bad about our bodies and the way we look, as we grow older?**

The way we feel about our bodies and our looks is called body image. It's what we see when we look in the mirror and how we feel inside our own skin. Some people accept themselves as they are while others dislike just about everything to do with their looks. Each person is unique and special. A positive attitude about yourself will help you feel better about yourself and the way you look.

### **How does a woman know when she is pregnant?**

A woman who has been having regular periods stops having her periods when she is pregnant. So if a woman who has sex does not get her period this might be a sign that she is pregnant. To be sure that she is pregnant she needs to have a pregnancy test, because sometimes her periods can also stop because of illness or tension.

### **Can a 13 year old girl become pregnant?**

A girl who has started having her periods can become pregnant if semen enters her vagina. Also, if a girl has not yet begun to get her periods but will start having her periods from that month onwards, she can become pregnant if semen

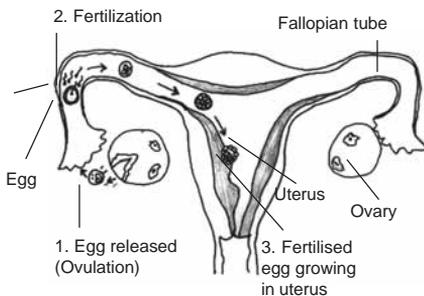
enters her vagina.

## Do I have to have sex when I grow up? Isn't it dirty and wicked?

You don't have to do anything you don't want to do. Sex is something that is enjoyed only if it is done out of free choice. Right now it might seem quite strange to you but later you might change your mind. That's OK. Sex is a way of expressing ourselves and our feelings. It is not dirty or wicked.

## HOW BABIES ARE MADE

To make a baby, the egg and the sperm (a 'male egg') need to meet and mix with each other. This happens when a man and a woman make love or have sex. The man's penis goes into the woman's vagina while they are making



love. After some time semen comes out of the penis. The semen has many sperms. They travel into the woman's vagina and reach her uterus. Only one sperm manages to meet the egg. The mixing of the sperm and the egg is called fertilisation. The fertilised egg grows in the uterus which nourishes it for nine months. The uterus nourishes the

growing baby with blood and other substance from the mother's body (see Menstruation). This is the reason why her periods stop till the baby is born. The uterus is like a strong elastic bag which grows along with the baby. Because it is elastic, it does not burst but keeps expanding. That is why women's stomachs stick out and grow bigger when they are pregnant. If the fertilized egg later splits into two, then identical twins are born. Sometimes two sperms mix with two female eggs. Then non-identical/fraternal twins are born.

You also probably want to know how girl babies and boy babies are made. The

mother's egg and the father's sperm have something called chromosomes in them. Chromosomes decide whether the baby will be a girl or a boy. Women have only one type of chromosome – the X chromosome. Men have two types of chromosomes – X chromosomes and Y chromosomes. X chromosomes make girls and Y chromosomes make boys. So if a sperm with an X chromosome fertilizes the egg (which has only X chromosomes), the baby will be a girl. If a sperm with the Y chromosome fertilizes the egg, the baby will be a boy.

If for some reason the sperm and the egg cannot meet inside the woman's body but the couple wants to have a baby, they can have a test-tube baby. Test tube babies are made by taking the woman's egg and the man's sperm and making them meet outside the body, in a laboratory (but not in a test tube, as the name suggests). Then the fertilized egg is put inside the woman's uterus where it grows like any other baby, and is born after nine months. People do not want to keep having babies every time they have sex. So they use certain things to prevent the sperm and the egg from meeting. These things are called contraceptives, like condoms, pills etc.

## INFECTIONS

You know that sometimes you get sick and the doctor says that you have an infection. Infections can happen in any part of the body – throat, stomach, ear etc. They also happen in or near the genitals. Infections can happen for different reasons. Some infections that affect the genitals have nothing to do with sex; they also happen to people who do not have sex. Good habits of cleanliness (see pages 3 and 6) will help you avoid infections.

**Common signs of infections:** Burning sensation while urinating (different from the slight burning if you do not drink enough water), itching, redness, boils or rash in the genital area and unusual discharge or foul smell from the genitals.

If you feel itchy or a burning sensation in your genitals, or you notice that you are getting a rash or boils in that area, ask someone to take you to a doctor. You may have an infection. The doctor will give you some treatment to cure the infection and it will get alright in a few days. If you do not get yourself treated, the infection will last longer, may become worse and make you more uncomfortable.

## HIV

You may have heard of AIDS. AIDS affects the whole body, not just any one part of it. It is caused by a virus called HIV. HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus. AIDS stands for Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome. This means that the whole body's immunity gets weakened and can no longer fight infections. A person who develops AIDS gets ill with different infections and may finally die because the body cannot properly recover from the infections.

AIDS does not have a cure as yet. It is dangerous because one can get it in a number of ways and there are no signs in the beginning. So everyone has to be careful. People who are not infected do not have HIV in their bodies. HIV is present in body fluids of an infected person. An infected person's blood and sexual body fluids have the highest concentration of the virus. A person who is infected with the virus is said to be HIV-positive and a persons who is not infected is HIV-negative.

### Here is how people become infected with HIV

1. By blood transfusion and sharing objects that allow the transfer of HIV infected blood (injection needles etc.).
2. By having sex without a condom with an infected person.

### Safety from infections

- Maintain good personal hygiene
- Maintain good genital hygiene during menstruation
- Don't sit on wet or dirty toilet seats
- Always wash your hands after going to the toilet

3. Children born to an HIV-positive woman may also be infected with HIV.

You will not get HIV by hugging, kissing, touching, or playing games; sharing clothes, food, toilets or class rooms; or through mosquito bites.

Just by looking at someone you will not know whether they are infected with HIV or not. The only way of detecting HIV infection is through some special blood tests.

To remain uninfected people need to take some basic precautions. As you grow older there are many things that you might have to decide about. You need to know what to do and not to do, so that you can remain uninfected for the rest of your life.

Precautions that you need to take throughout your life are: use disposable needles and syringes when you need an injection or have to give blood, or want your ears, nose or any other part of your body pierced; if you need to receive blood (e.g. during an operation) make sure that the blood has been tested and does not have HIV; do not have sex without using things that protect you from infection.

Anyone can become infected with HIV depending on what they do. It is not because they are bad people or because they have to be punished in some way that they get infected. Being mean or bad to someone who is infected is wrong and unfair.

People who are HIV positive (infected) need to take good care of themselves in terms of diet, medication, rest and stress control. They need to feel loved by their friends and family.

There are many ways in which people might touch you. Some things feel good whereas some others don't. For example, some touches might make you feel

## ABUSE



### **If someone older (eg. a relative or a family friend) touches you in a way that you do not like**

- Tell that person firmly that you do not like it and that you will tell someone about it.
- Tell someone older (may be your parents or brother or sister, if you have any),
- Don't be alone with that person.
- Even if you are scared don't believe their threats of complaining about you if you don't do what they want.
- Always trust your inner feelings about what feels right and what feels wrong.

good while others make you feel dirty, horrible, confused, disgusted, angry or upset. It is for each person to decide what feels good to them and what does not.

Your body is your own. It is your 'private property'. If someone touches you in a way that you do not want or do not like, it is wrong.

**When you are young, no matter how much or how little you know about sex, it is not right for an adult to be sexual with you –it is called sexual abuse.**

Perhaps some of you have had the experience of walking down the road and having a man show you his penis. Or may be someone has insisted that you sit on their lap and be fondled by them even when it feels uncomfortable to you. These are some examples of people doing things to you that are not right.

Sexual abuse can happen to anyone. Both girls as well as boys are at risk. Most young people who have been abused have been abused by someone they know e.g. a neighbour, a driver, a relative, a family member, or a domestic help. Sexual abuse takes many forms and does not always involve direct physical contact. If a person is forced to have sex when they do not want to, it is called **rape**. When someone is sexually

abused by a relative, it is called **incest**. The person who has been abused is not at fault. Abuse involves trust being broken and can make a person feel horrible or angry or scared or all of these feelings and more.

### **If something like this happens to you, what can you do?**

If you are walking on the road and someone shows you his penis – don't stare at him but just look away, keep walking, do not show him that you are shocked or angry although you may feel it; tell someone older about this so maybe they can do something to stop him from doing this to other children; avoid taking that road alone for a few days at least; if you are with friends make sure that none of you giggle or show any interest in what he is doing because that will encourage him to do this again.

Unfortunately, sexual abuse is quite common and many people have experienced it in some way or the other. If it has happened to you, **remember that it is not your fault**; it is the abuser who did wrong, not you; it does not have to spoil your life. Look for help if you are feeling confused or bad. If you are in a situation that you feel might be abusive, speak to someone you trust; try getting out of the situation if you can; try not to be alone with the abuser, and seek help from the resources listed at the end of this booklet.

Someone who has been abused needs your support. They also need you to respect their wishes and not tell everyone about what has happened to them. If you know someone who abuses others, do not protect them; abusers are a danger to other people.



You may be a parent or teacher or an older well-wisher wondering how to talk to a young person about sexuality. You may be thinking.

## NOTE TO OLDER PEOPLE

“What do I say? How much do I tell? How do I say it? What if this encourages experimentation? Will all this information harm them instead of protecting them? They are still children after all....”

Talking sensibly and matter-of-factly about these issues has never caused harm.



Not talking about these things causes far more harm and puts children in danger, especially of sexual abuse. Younger children are at more risk than older ones because they are less able to convey that someone is abusing them or touching them inappropriately. They do not have terms to express what is happening to them. That is why it is important that they know terms for different body parts and functions and

have some information on sexual behaviour. Never dismiss a child's reports of sexual abuse as the result of an over-active imagination. Children do cook up stories about many things, but not about abuse. It is too serious a matter to be dismissed lightly no matter how uncomfortable it makes you feel or who the abuser might be.

Parents often fear that this kind of information might encourage children to experiment. The opposite is true. In fact studies have shown that when young people have information about sexuality, they are more likely to make responsible decisions (including delaying sexual activity) and engage in healthier behaviours (WHO 1996).



Whether you talk to them or not, young people in any case are exposed to all sorts of information (the media, friends, life- experience). More than 20% of those who call the TARSHI helpline are between the ages of 10 and 21. They

are from all walks of life.

Young people have many misconceptions and questions about sexuality issues. Their queries are based on inaccurate and fragmented information. Half-baked information is dangerous. Information is essential not only to prevent negative things like sexual abuse and infections from occurring but also to promote a healthy sexuality.

Sexuality is a part of everyone's life, even adolescents' lives. Decisions about sexuality are based on more than information alone. Values and emotions also determine choice. It is in the home, at school and with one's friends that young people develop their value systems. **Young people's ideas about sexuality are influenced by not only what is said but also by the way things are said. Your unspoken attitudes about sexuality also leave a lasting impact.**

If for some reason you find yourself unable to talk about these issues with young people, you could do some other things: get them some books to read, put them in touch with someone who they can talk to, and educate yourself so perhaps in time you can discuss things with them. Above all, encourage young people to ask questions and express their opinions. Talking is one of the ways of imparting 'sexuality education'.

**Frank discussion and openness about sexuality conveys some very strong messages**

- That young people can be responsible
- That you are concerned about their well-being
- That you trust them
- That they can come to you without waiting for a

## **SERVICES YOU CAN ACCESS**

- 1. AAG, New Delhi**  
**For HIV/AIDS and De-addiction counseling**  
**Phone: 011-26187953, 26187954**
- 2. Child Line, New Delhi**  
**For people under 19 years**  
**Phone: 011-24324503**
- 3. Madhyam, New Delhi**  
**Legal Services for women in distress**  
**Phone: 011-24324503**
- 4. Pratidhi, New Delhi**  
**For legal issues related to sexual abuse**  
**Phone: 011-22527259, 22058718**
- 5. Sanjivini, New Delhi**  
**Counselling on emotional problems**  
**Phone: 011-26864488, 24311918**
- 6. Sangini, New Delhi**  
**Counselling for women attracted to women**  
**Phone: 011-55676450**
- 7. Sumaitri, New Delhi**  
**For those depressed, in distress or suicidal**  
**Phone: 011-2710763**
- 8. TARSHI, New Delhi**  
**For sexuality issues**  
**Phone: 011-24372229**

# TARSHI

Talking About Reproductive and Sexual Health Issues  
believes that all people have the right to sexual  
well being and to a self-affirming and enjoyable sexuality.

TARSHI works towards expanding sexual and  
reproductive choices in people's lives in an effort to  
enable them to enjoy lives of dignity, freedom from fear,  
infection and, reproductive and sexual health problems.



Helpline: 011-24372229

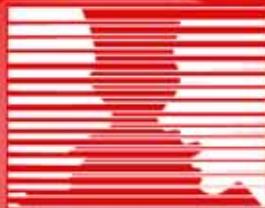
Visit us at: [www.tarshi.net](http://www.tarshi.net)

TARSHI is registered under the Societies Registration Act XXXI of 1860

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Helpline: 91-11- 2431 2229

Website: [www.tarshi.org](http://www.tarshi.org)