



## **Reproductive Health Guide**

This Guide will give you information on two things:

- (a) Birth Control / Contraception
- (b) HIV and other Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs)

**Note:** This Guide only gives you some general ideas about reproductive health. It should not be treated as a substitute for medical, legal or other professional advice.

### **(Part 1) Birth Control**

#### **What is it?**

Take actions to prevent or to reduce the likelihood of pregnancy.

#### **Why is it important?**

Unexpected pregnancy could bring problems to you, your partner and your family. You have to be responsible for the child.

#### **Decision-making**

If you don't have vaginal intercourse, you will not become pregnant. Contraception methods described below are NOT 100% effective.

For females, before having vaginal intercourse, think about the followings:

- (a) Do you really want to have sex with your partner? Don't say yes just because your partner wants it.
- (b) Consider alternative sexual activities, e.g. kissing, oral sex etc. Also pay attention to the possibility of STDs (see below).
- (c) If you do want to have vaginal intercourse and you don't want to be pregnant, insist on your male partner to wear a condom. Or, that other preventative methods

are taken such as using “the pill,” which can prevent pregnancy.

For males, remember you have to be responsible for your actions.

## **Regular Contraception**

There are several ways for regular contraception. Two common methods are explained below:

Male Condoms: This is a simple and effective way of birth control. It helps to avoid STDs as well. Pay attention to the followings:

- (a) Check the expiry date on the packaging.
- (b) Squeeze the closed end of the condom (but don't let your fingernails damage the condom) and then put the condom on. Air trapped inside a condom could break it.
- (c) Condom should not be too loose.
- (d) Use water-based lubricant (e.g. KY jelly) for extra lubrication. Oil-based lubricant (e.g. baby oil, lotions etc.) could harm the condom.
- (e) Condoms can only be used once.

Calendar-based Methods: There are several calendar-based methods available. The one described below is called the Standard Days Method.

- (a) This method is only suitable for females whose cycles are regular and between 26 and 32 days in length.
- (b) Day 1 of the menstrual cycle starts from the first day of menstrual bleeding.
- (c) Under a regular menstrual cycle, Days 1 – 7 should be *relatively* infertile.
- (d) **Days 8 – 19** are **relatively fertile**. This includes approximately 5 days before ovulation, the day of ovulation, and several days after ovulation.
- (e) Day 20 to the beginning of next cycle should be *relatively* infertile.

**Note**: It is **FALSE** that a woman *absolutely* cannot get pregnant if she had sex during her period (or menstruation, first four days of the cycle).

## **Emergency Contraception**

Emergency contraception refers to the methods which prevent a female from being pregnant after she had unprotected sex. Not all countries approve the use of emergency contraception, and even if it is approved, prescription may be required. Therefore, regular contraception remains to be the primary method. Generally

speaking, there are two types of emergency contraception:

EC Pills: Two doses of hormonal pills: started within 3 days after having unprotected sex and taken 12 hours apart

Copper T IUD: Put into the uterus within 7 days after unprotected sex

### **How do you know you are pregnant?**

#### **If it happened unexpectedly, what should you do?**

If your period does not come on the day that you would expect, then you may be pregnant. Note that the menstrual cycle is not always regular, so few days delay is possible.

However, there are other signs of pregnancy. The followings are few examples:

- (a) Breast pain, tenderness or enlargement
- (b) Increased basal body temperature sustained over 2 weeks after ovulation.
- (c) Increase in urination frequency

If you suspect that you are pregnant, then you should take a pregnancy test. There are two types:

- (a) Urine test: This is normally a home pregnancy test. Find out where you can acquire a home pregnancy test pack, which should contain two sticks; then follow the instructions as stated on the pack (Incorrect use will lead to inaccurate results). You should have waited till the first day of your missed period to do the test.
- (b) Blood test: This is normally carried about by medical doctors.

If the test result is positive, then you have to find out what to do next. Find a person whom you can trust to talk to (e.g. doctor, social worker etc.) and explore the options available to you.

### **Common Mistakes**

**WRONG**: If the man withdrew his penis just before ejaculation, then the female would not be pregnant.

**CORRECT**: During intercourse, the penis could secrete some pre-ejaculative fluid which may contain sperm.

**WRONG**: Female cannot become pregnant as a result of the first time she engages in

sexual intercourse.

**CORRECT:** Female could get pregnant as a result of her first vaginal intercourse.

**WRONG:** Having sex while standing up or with a woman on top can prevent pregnancy.

**CORRECT:** No sexual positions can prevent pregnancy.

**WRONG:** Douching immediately following intercourse works as a contraceptive.

**CORRECT:** Douching after sex is not effective. It wouldn't kill or wash away all the sperms.

The following myths are **INEFFECTIVE:**

Having sex in a hot tub; Apply toothpaste to kill sperm; Sneezing after sex; Urinating after sex

## **(Part 2) HIV and other STDs**

### **What are they?**

HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus, which is the virus that causes AIDS. There is **no known cure** at the moment. Generally, there are no immediate symptoms after infection, but some people may have flu-like symptoms. If you worried that you are infected, **go and get tested**. There are treatments which could help to decelerate virus' progression.

STDs stands for Sexually Transmitted Diseases, which refers to any diseases which are likely to be transmitted by means of sexual contact. Some examples:

- (a) Gonorrhoea: Caused by bacteria. If untreated, it could spread to other body parts causing health problems. In many cases there are no symptoms, but some may have unusual discharges.
- (b) Syphilis: Caused by bacteria. If untreated, it could cause long term health problems. Symptoms are not easily recognizable: sores, rash etc.
- (c) Genital Warts: Caused by virus. Often no symptoms for some time before warts actually appears.
- (d) Others: Chlamydia, Herpes, Hepatitis B etc.

**If in doubt, go and see a medical doctor as soon as possible.**

## **Prevention**

**First Rule:** You can't tell by looking. A person who is infected by STDs may look fine and healthy. Don't leave it to chances.

**Second Rule:** If you do not have sexual intercourse, the chances of getting STDs are greatly reduced.

**Third Rule:** If you do want sexual intercourse, use latex condoms. Usage of condoms as explained in Part 1 applies to here as well. In addition, note that non-latex condoms cannot protect against HIV.

**Fourth Rule:** If you have an active sex life, make sure you get tested regularly. This is to protect yourself and your sex partner(s).