



REPUBLIC OF KENYA



NATIONAL SYNDemic DISEASES  
CONTROL COUNCIL



**MY HEALTH**

*My Vibe*  
**15-18yrs**

# Puberty

"Everything you need to know about growing up and loving your body!"



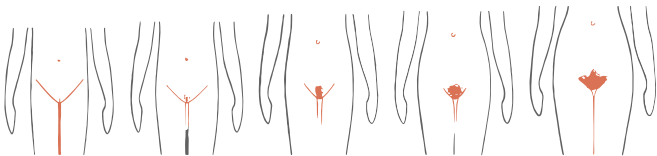
# What is Puberty?

**Puberty** is a natural stage of development that marks the transition from childhood to adulthood. It happens when your body begins to change, and you start to develop the physical and emotional traits of an adult.

For girls, puberty often starts between the age of 9 and 15 years, and 11 to 16 years for boys. These changes can sometimes be overwhelming and confusing. It's important to know what's happening and why.

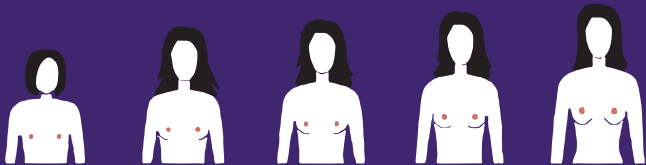
## Key Changes in Puberty

### Physical Changes: For Girls



During puberty the vagina changes and starts to produce a clear or milky discharge. It may seem strange at first but it's a positive sign as it helps to keep your vagina healthy.

**Menstruation:** One of the biggest changes for girls is starting menstruation (your period). This usually happens between ages 11-14, but it can happen earlier or later. Your period is your body's way of releasing blood and tissue from the uterus, and it typically lasts 3-7 days each month. **Periods show that you can now become pregnant.** Each month, one of your ovaries releases an egg which can be fertilised by a boy's sperm to create a pregnancy. If the egg isn't fertilised, the lining of the womb breaks down, creating the blood that passes through your vagina during your period.



**Breast Development:** at this stage, your breasts are continuing to develop and grow. It's normal for breasts to grow at different rates and one may be bigger than the other for a while. Some girls may have small breasts while others might have bigger breasts, which is normal.

**Body Shape Changes:** Your body may start to develop more curves, such as wider hips and more fat in areas like the thighs and buttocks.

**Facial and Body Hair:** You may have grown hair under your armpits and around your groin area. Some girls may also notice facial hair, but it's typically very fine and light.

## Physical Changes: For Boys

**Voice Changes:** Your voice will deepen as your vocal cords lengthen. This can happen gradually or suddenly.

**Facial and Body Hair:** Boys typically grow hair around their groin area and under their armpits. Chest, back and facial hair may also begin to grow and develop progressively over the years.

**Growth Spurts:** Boys often experience rapid growth in height during puberty. You may find yourself getting taller in a short amount of time.

**Development of Genitalia:** The penis and testicles grow larger, and you might notice more sweating and a change in body odor due to active sweat glands.



**Wet dreams:** Wet dreams occur when a person orgasms involuntarily while they are sleeping. They are caused by hormonal changes in the body.

**Involuntary erections:** Boys also experience involuntary erections, which happen without having a sexual thought and are a normal part of physical development.

## Hormonal Changes

- Your body produces an increase of hormones (estrogen in girls and testosterone in boys) that cause physical changes. These hormones also influence emotions and can sometimes make you feel moody, stressed, or confused.

## Emotional Changes

- Puberty also comes with a wide range of emotions. You may feel more sensitive or experience mood swings as your hormones fluctuate. This is completely normal, and it's part of growing up.

- You may also begin thinking more about your identity, relationships, and future. Some adolescents may begin feeling more attracted to others, whether it's friends, classmates, or people you see around you.

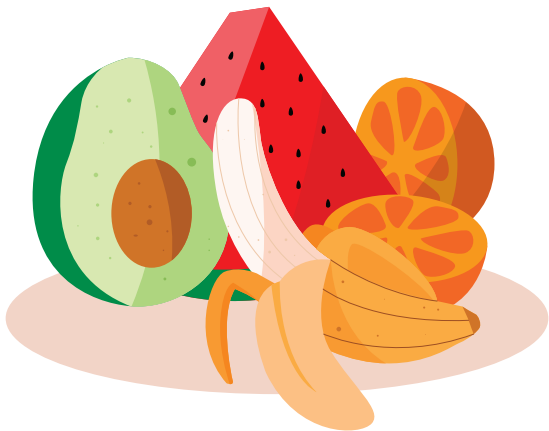
## Skin Changes

- You may experience acne, uneven skin texture, or oily skin as your body produces more oils during puberty. Keeping your skin clean can help manage these changes.

## Increased Sweat

- With increased hormone production, your body will sweat more, especially under your arms and around your genitals. This is normal, but it's important to keep clean to prevent body odor. Bathing regularly and wearing clean clothes will help.

## Healthy Habits During Puberty



## Nutrition

Eating a balanced diet full of fruits, vegetables, proteins, and whole grains is essential for your growth and development during puberty. Drink plenty of water and avoid too many sugary drinks or junk food.

## Exercise

Staying active helps your body stay strong and healthy. Whether it's playing sports, dancing, or walking, regular exercise helps keep you fit and reduces stress.

## Hygiene

Proper hygiene is crucial. Showering daily, using deodorant, and brushing your teeth regularly help you stay clean and comfortable. Also, change into clean clothes often, especially during menstruation or after physical activities.




# Dealing with Peer Pressure and Body Image

## Peer Pressure

Puberty brings new social dynamics. You may feel pressure to conform to how others look or behave. It's important to remember that everyone grows at their own pace, and it's okay to be different.

## Body Image

Puberty can affect how you feel about your body. Some people experience insecurities due to weight changes, skin issues, or physical development. Try to focus on what makes you strong, healthy, and confident rather than comparing yourself to others.



This stage of your life can sometimes be challenging. Everyone develops differently. If you ever feel uncomfortable, insecure or need guidance, don't hesitate to seek help from someone you trust—whether it's a parent, teacher, or health professional. Take care of your body and mind, and remember that puberty is just one phase in the journey to adulthood. You're not alone in this!

# Menstruation

"Everything you need to know about growing up and loving your body!"



## What is menstruation?

**Menstruation**, commonly known as your period, is a natural and normal part of growing up. It's when your body sheds the lining of the uterus (womb), which results in bleeding from your vagina. Periods usually start between the ages of 10-16, but it's different for girl. Understanding your menstrual cycle is important for your health and well-being, and it's part of becoming an adult.

Menstruation is often discussed with a lot of stigma, but it's essential to understand that it's a healthy process that every girl will go through. Let's break it down, so you can feel more confident about managing your period.

## What is the Menstrual Cycle?

Your menstrual cycle is the time between the first day of your period to the day before your next period. It typically lasts 28 days, but it can range from 21 to 35 days. The menstrual cycle involves several stages.

The menstruation (period) phase your Period), is the phase when you bleed. It typically lasts 3-7 days, depending on your body.

**Fun Fact:** While your cycle might be around 28 days, it's completely normal for your cycle to be shorter or longer.



## What Happens During Your Period?

When your period starts, you will notice bleeding. Here are some key points:

**Blood Flow:** The amount of blood varies. Some people have a light flow, while others have a heavier one. It's normal for the flow to change throughout your period.

**Cramping:** Some girls experience cramps before or during their period, which can feel like a dull ache or intense pain in the lower abdomen. This is caused by the uterus contracting.

**Mood Swings:** Hormonal changes during your period can affect your emotions. You might feel more irritable, sad, or energetic than usual.

**Other Symptoms:** Some people feel tired, have headaches, or experience bloating. This is all part of your body adjusting during your menstrual cycle.

## How do you manage your period?

Managing your period is important, and there are many options available to help you stay comfortable and confident. Here's what you need to know:

### 1. Menstrual Products:

**Sanitary Pads:** These are the most common and widely used. Pads come in different sizes, so you can choose one that fits your flow (light, moderate, or heavy).

**Tampons:** These are inserted into the vagina and are useful for active days like swimming or sports. They are discreet, but you need to change them regularly to prevent infections.

**Menstrual Cups:** This is a reusable option. The cup is inserted into the vagina to collect menstrual fluid. It's environmentally friendly, but you need to ensure you clean it properly after use.

**Period Underwear:** These are specially designed to absorb menstrual blood. They are comfortable and easy to use.

**Menstrual Discs:** Similar to menstrual cups, these discs collect blood but sit at the bottom of the cervix. They are also reusable and discreet.

**Extra tip:** When using a pad or tampon, make sure to dispose them properly (in a sanitary bin or wrapped securely in paper). Don't flush them down the toilet as it can cause blockages.



## 2. Dealing with Cramps:

**Heat Therapy:** A warm water bottle or heating pad on your abdomen can help relax your muscles and relieve cramps.

**Pain Relief:** If cramps are severe, over-the-counter pain relief medicine (like paracetamol) can help. Be sure to follow the instructions.

**Exercise:** Light activities like walking or stretching can also ease cramp pain by releasing endorphins, which are natural pain relievers.

## 3. Maintaining Hygiene:

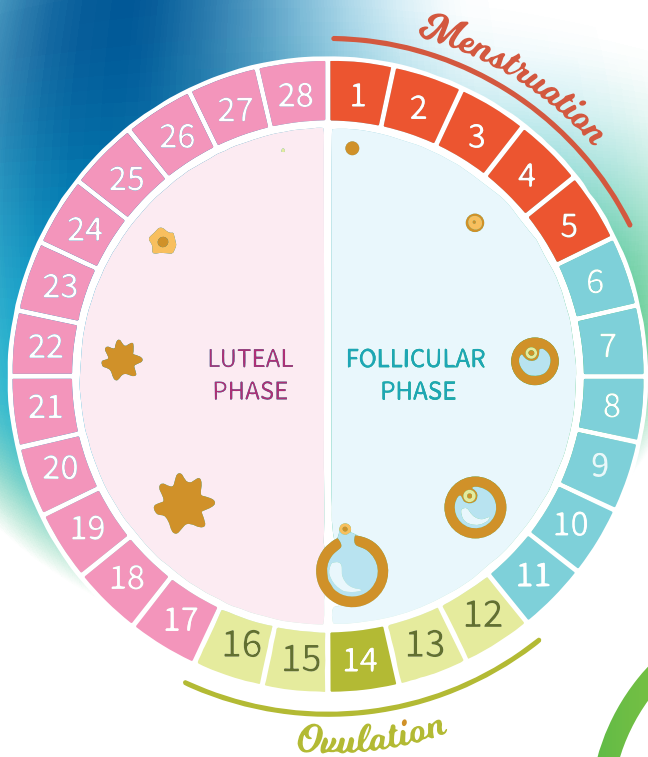
- Always change your sanitary product regularly (every 4–8 hours) to maintain hygiene and prevent discomfort or infections.
- Wash your hands before and after handling menstrual products.
- Wash your private area (vulva) with water daily. Avoid using strong soaps, sprays, or scented products in your private area, as they can cause irritation.

**Extra tip:** Always carry extra pads, tampons, panties and dry tissues, especially if you're in school or out with friends, so you're prepared for any changes in your cycle.



## 4. Period Tracking:

It's helpful to track your period using an app, calendar or even beads. This will help you understand your cycle better and prepare ahead of time. It can also help if you ever need to see a doctor for irregularities.



period tracker calendar

## Common Myths About Periods.

There are a lot of myths and misconceptions about menstruation. Here are a few to clear up:



### MYTHS

Girls can't get pregnant when on their period.

You can't go swimming during your period.

You can't exercise during your period.

You should not wash your body or hair during your period.

You should not wash your body or hair during your period.



### FACTS

Pregnancy can happen during a period.

You can go swimming! Using a tampon, menstrual cup, or period swimwear makes it easy to swim while on your period.

Exercise is totally fine during your period. In fact, physical activity can help relieve cramps and boost your mood!

You can bathe or shower during your period. In fact, good hygiene is very important.

Menstruation is a completely natural and healthy bodily function. It's important to normalize the conversation about periods and break the stigma around them.

**Note:** Even though it's less likely, sperm can live inside the body for several days, and if ovulation happens soon after the period ends, pregnancy is possible. Shorter or irregular cycles can make this even more likely.

## How to Stay Healthy During Your Period

**Eat Well:** Eating a balanced diet with plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and protein is important for overall health, especially during your period.

**Stay Hydrated:** Drink plenty of water to avoid bloating and dehydration.

**Rest and Relax:** If you're feeling fatigued, take time to rest. Avoid overexerting yourself, especially during your heaviest flow days.

**Talk to Someone:** If you're feeling stressed, confused, or in pain, don't hesitate to talk to a parent, guardian, teacher, or school nurse. It's essential to have someone to confide in and get support.



Eat Well



Stay Hydrated



Rest and Relax



Talk to someone

## How to Stay Healthy During Your Period

This stage of your life can sometimes be challenging. Everyone develops differently. If you ever feel uncomfortable, insecure or need guidance, don't hesitate to seek help from someone you trust—whether it's a parent, teacher, or health professional. Take care of your body and mind, and remember that puberty is just one phase in the journey to adulthood. You're not alone in this!

# PERSONAL HYGIENE



"Everything you need to know about  
growing up and loving your body!"



# Personal Hygiene

**Good hygiene** is essential for your overall health and well-being. As a teenager, maintaining personal hygiene not only helps you feel fresh and comfortable but also prevents diseases, boosts confidence, and improves your social life. During adolescence, your body undergoes a lot of changes, and hygiene becomes even more important.

## What You Need to Know

### Bathing and Showering

How often should you bathe?

It's important to shower or bathe regularly, at least once a day, to remove dirt, sweat, and body oils. This keeps your skin fresh and clean, helps prevent body odor, and removes bacteria that could cause infections. If you're involved in physical activities like sports, dancing, or even just walking long distances, a daily bath will help you feel good and stay healthy.

### Skin Hygiene

Keeping Your Skin Clear and Healthy

**What's happening with your skin?** During adolescence, your skin may become oily due to hormonal changes. This can lead to acne, pimples, and blackheads. Hormones like testosterone (for both boys and girls) increase oil production, which can block pores and lead to breakouts.

**How to manage oily skin:** Wash your face gently with a mild soap or facial wash twice a day - once in the morning and once at night. Avoid harsh scrubbing or using too many products on your skin, as it can irritate your skin.

**If you have acne:** It's common to experience acne, but it's important not to pop or pick at your pimples, as this can lead to scarring. If acne is severe, consider consulting a dermatologist or healthcare provider.

**Moisturizing/Oiling:** If you have dry skin, use oil to keep it hydrated. For oily skin, look for oil-free moisturizers or products designed for oily skin.



## Oral Hygiene

Good oral hygiene can boost your confidence and improve your smile. Poor oral hygiene can lead to gum disease, cavities, and other dental problems, which can cause pain, bad breath, and even tooth loss.

- **How often should you brush your teeth?** Brushing your teeth twice a day – once in the morning and before bed is essential. It helps remove food particles, plaque, and bacteria, preventing bad breath and tooth decay.
- **What you need:** A toothbrush, fluoride toothpaste, and dental floss. Don't forget to change your toothbrush every 3 months or when the bristles wear out.
- Drink water after eating sugary snacks or drinks to rinse your mouth.
- Avoid sugary foods and drinks like soda, as they can increase the risk of tooth decay.

## Body Odor and Sweat

- **Why do you sweat?** During puberty & adolescence, your body produces more sweat due to active sweat glands, especially under the arms and around your private areas. Sweat itself doesn't smell, but when it mixes with bacteria on your skin, it can cause body odor.
- **How to manage sweat:** Shower regularly and wear clean clothes to reduce body odor. Use deodorants or antiperspirants to keep body odor under control. Deodorants mask the smell, while antiperspirants reduce sweating by blocking sweat glands.

## Tips for Sweaty Feet and Hands

- Keep your feet clean and dry, and wear breathable shoes. Change socks often, especially if you're active.
- If you have sweaty hands, try using a hand sanitizer or wipe them regularly to stay fresh.

## Hair Hygiene

- **Why is hair hygiene important?** Your hair may become greasy or oily during puberty due to increased oil production in the scalp. Regular hair washing can help manage this and keep your hair fresh.



## Hand Hygiene and Why it Matters

Good hand hygiene can prevent the spread of germs, viruses, and bacteria that can cause illnesses like flu, cold, and stomach infections.

- **When to wash your hands:** Wash your hands before eating, after using the toilet, and after touching things that may carry germs (like your phone or money).
- **How to wash:** Use soap and clean water to wash your hands for at least 20 seconds, scrubbing all parts of your hands, including the palms, back of your hands, and under your nails.

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## Hygiene and Mental Well-being

Good hygiene isn't just about staying clean, it's also about feeling confident and comfortable in your own skin. When you take care of your body, it has a positive impact on your mental health, helping you feel more energetic and less stressed.

**Mental Health Tip:** Feeling clean and being neat can help boost your self-esteem, especially during puberty when you're still figuring out your identity.



# HIV

"Everything you need to know about  
growing up and loving your body!"



## HIV

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is a virus that attacks the cells in the immune system and reduces your body's ability to fight infections.

## AIDS

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) occurs when HIV severely damages the immune system, making it difficult for the body to fight off infections and illnesses. AIDS is the most advanced stage of HIV infection.

## Myths & Misconceptions about HIV

### You cannot get HIV from

- Hugging
- Shaking or holding hands
- Mosquito bites, flies, or insects
- Kissing unless there are open sores and wounds in or on the mouth
- Sharing of a pit latrine or toilet
- Sharing food or drinks
- Dancing or swimming
- Coughing or breathing

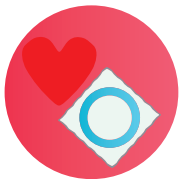
### How is HIV transmitted?

HIV can affect anyone regardless of sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, gender, age, or where they live.

HIV is transmitted through: -

- Unprotected sexual intercourse with person(s) of unknown HIV status.
- Mother to child while in the womb or during delivery or when breastfeeding.
- Using nonsterile needles for piercing or tattooing.

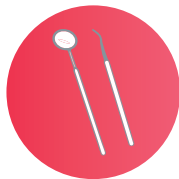




Unprotected sexual intercourse



Mother to child



Using nonsterile needles

## Quick facts

- People living with HIV can enjoy a long and healthy life by taking effective antiretroviral treatment, which is available for free to all.
- Testing for HIV is the only way to know your HIV Status.
- Antiretroviral Treatment stops HIV from replicating – i.e., from making copies of itself. This reduces the viral load to low levels. Your CD4 count then increases. The CD4 is type of white blood cells that plays crucial role in the immune system.
- Your immune system is like a soldier guarding your body against infections.

## Which body fluids contain the highest viral level?

HIV is found in pre-seminal fluid (“pre-cum”), semen (“cum”), blood, vaginal fluids and anal fluids, and breastmilk.

## How can I prevent myself from getting HIV?

- Abstinence is the only 100% efficient method of preventing HIV
- Know your HIV status

## Sexual Abstinence

### Why should I wait to have sex?



- Abstinence from sex is the only form of preventing pregnancy, STIs and HIV that is 100% effective.
- Teenagers who practice abstinence are much less likely to experience a physically or emotionally abusive relationship, drop out of school, engage in substance abuse, or feel pressured into having sex.
- Adolescence is already a time of emotional sensitivity. By abstaining from sex, it is a lot easier to figure out if a person or friendship is good for you, and reduces the likelihood of being hurt or exploited.
- Abstinence gives you time to grow, dream and decide what is best for you.
- Abstinence is the only way to completely prevent pregnancy. While contraception methods have some chance of failing, no matter how small, abstinence ensures zero risk of pregnancy.

## HIV Testing

Anyone above 15 years of age can get an HIV test without needing parental consent.

### Why HIV Testing Matters

- Testing for HIV is the only way to know for sure if you have HIV.
- Many people may not have any symptoms and can live for many years without knowing they have the virus.
- It allows you to get treatment early if needed, take care of yourself, and protect others.

### Where can I get tested for HIV?

There are easy, private, and reliable ways to get tested for HIV.

- HIV testing is available at Government and private health facilities.
- Self-testing is also an option to know your status, but any positive results should always be confirmed at a healthcare facility.



### What is Antiretroviral Therapy (ART)?

Antiretroviral treatment (also known as antiretroviral therapy oral ART) are the drugs that manage HIV. Current treatment for HIV is not a cure, but it can keep HIV under control very effectively.

## How does ARV work?

ARVs works by keeping the level of HIV in your body low (your viral load). This lets your immune system recover and stay strong. Keeping your viral load low also helps to prevent HIV being passed on.

## When should I start ART?

It is recommended that people living with HIV start antiretroviral treatment straight away.

## How does ARV work?

This means that the virus exists in such small quantities in their blood that it does not affect their health and there is zero risk of transmitting the virus on to others. But remember that if you stop taking your medication then your viral load will go back up again.

## Does antiretroviral treatment have side-effects?

As with all medication, starting to take ARVs can cause some side-effects, particularly in the first few days of treatment.

## Is there a cure for HIV?

There is no cure for HIV, but it can be managed through antiretroviral (ART) treatment.

ART can control the virus, meaning that people with HIV can live long and healthy lives.



## What if I am living with HIV?

### You Are Not Alone

Many teenagers around the world are also living with HIV. You are not alone, and there are people who understand what you're going through and are willing to support you.

### HIV Doesn't Define You

HIV is only one part of your life - it does not change who you are. You are smart, strong, kind, and full of potential. Your future is bright.

### Take Your Medicine Every Day

Your medicine helps your body stay strong and healthy. Taking it every day keeps the virus under control so you can live a long, healthy, and happy life - just like many other people living with HIV.

Even if you're feeling fine, it is important to keep taking your medication every day.

### Who Can I Talk To?

If you ever feel confused, sad, or scared, talk to someone you trust. This could be your doctor, a parent, a family member, a teacher, or a counselor. You don't have to deal with everything alone.



## You Deserve Love and Respect

HIV doesn't change your worth. You are valuable, lovable, and important. The right people in your life will care about you for who you are.

## Be Careful Who You Tell

You don't have to tell everyone about your HIV status. It's okay to keep it private and share it only with people you trust. You have the right to feel safe and supported.

## What if I feel judged or if people isolate me and treat me differently?

Your status does not define your worth. You deserve respect, love, and equal opportunities, just like anyone else.

You are strong, valuable, and capable of amazing things. Surround yourself with people who uplift and support you. And never be afraid to speak up or seek help when you need it.

You can still do amazing things - go to school, play sports, join school clubs, participate in social activities, and become anything you want. HIV should not stop your future.



Have  
**COURAGE**  
And Be  
**BRAVE**

## Facts about Stigma and Discrimination

**Stigma** is when people think badly about someone because they have HIV, for example, Believing only certain groups of people get HIV. Judging people who take steps to prevent getting HIV. Feeling people deserve to get HIV because of their choices.

**Discrimination** is when someone with HIV is treated unfairly or left out of things, like school activities or friendships.

Stigma and discrimination can be internalized (self-stigma), institutional (in schools, workplaces, healthcare), or social (by family or community).

- Myths and misinformation about HIV transmission and moral judgment tied to how people believe HIV is contracted, fuel stigma and discrimination.
- Stigma leads to fear, shame, isolation, and depression in people living with HIV.
- No one has the right to share someone's HIV status without consent. Confidentiality is a legal and ethical obligation.

## HIV & AIDS tribunal

Kenya's HIV & AIDS Tribunal helps protect individuals from discrimination and rights violations linked to HIV. It was created under the HIV and AIDS Prevention and Control Act of 2006.

The tribunal hears cases of HIV related stigma and discrimination. A person living with HIV or at risk of HIV infection and has faced stigma and discrimination can file a complaint at the tribunal. For Children, their parents or guardians can file the complaint on their behalf.

## Accessing the Tribunal

- Individuals can file a complain at the Tribunal office at reinsurance plaza - 12th Floor, along Aga Khan Walk and Taifa Road.
- The official HIV & AIDS Tribunal office line is 0770430083 or Email: [hivtr@court.go.ke](mailto:hivtr@court.go.ke)

# TUBERCULOSIS

"Everything you need to know about  
growing up and loving your body!"







Dave, a 17-year-old student in a boarding school, began experiencing fatigue, a persistent cough, mild fever, and weight loss over several weeks. Initially, he thought it was just stress and a common cold, and he was given medication, but when symptoms worsened, he was taken to the nearest hospital and was diagnosed with pulmonary tuberculosis (TB). He was started on TB treatment and advised to take daily medication for 6 months. Dave was given two weeks sick leave to recuperate and also reduce chances of transmission to other students.

The school ensured that all dormitories are well ventilated; Dave's cube mates and classmates were screened for TB and sensitized the school fraternity on preventive measures. Dave resumed school and continued with treatment for 6 months and he was cured completely.

## Let's clarify myths and misconceptions about TB

 <b>MYTHS</b>	 <b>FACTS</b>
TB is always deadly.	TB is curable with the right treatment. Completing the full course of medication (usually 6 months or more) is essential for recovery.
Once treated, TB can't come back.	TB can return, especially if treatment wasn't completed. Reinfection is also possible, especially in areas with high TB rates.
You can stop taking TB medicine when you feel better.	Stopping treatment can lead to drug-resistant TB, which is much harder to treat. Always complete the full treatment.

## What is TB?

**Tuberculosis (TB)** is an airborne disease caused by bacteria that usually affects the lungs – this is known as pulmonary TB.

However, TB can also affect other parts of the body, such as the kidneys, spine, or brain. This is called extrapulmonary TB. The only parts of the body TB does not affect are the hair, teeth, and nails.

TB is treatable and curable.

## How is TB spread?

TB is spread through the air when a person with infectious TB coughs, sneezes, speaks, or sings. When a nearby person inhales the TB bacteria, it settles in their lungs and they can become infected. It doesn't spread through handshakes, sharing utensils, or casual contact.

## Symptoms of TB

Persistent cough, chest pain, coughing up blood, fatigue, fever, night sweats, chills, loss of appetite and weight loss.

Other symptoms of TB are dependent on the parts of the body that are affected. For example, back pain for TB of the spine, headaches for TB meningitis, and urine in the blood for TB of the kidney.

## Diagnosis and Treatment

If one is suspected to have TB, they should visit a health facility where the healthcare provider shall undertake TB tests and provide the necessary support.

- TB is treatable with antibiotics over 6–9 months.
- **Multi-Drug Resistant TB:** A form of TB that does not respond to standard drugs and requires longer, more intensive treatment.

## Prevention

- Physical distancing.
- Ensuring effective air circulation in enclosed spaces.
- Early diagnosis and adherence to treatment.
- Use of masks.
- Ensure cough etiquette – cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, and throw used tissues in the trash (if you do not have a tissue, cough, or sneeze into your elbow, not your hands).
- **TB preventive therapy (TPT)** – medication taken to prevent the development of active tuberculosis (TB) disease in individuals at high risk of infection. It's a crucial part of TB control efforts and helps reduce the risk of TB in high-risk groups.

# ADOLESCENT PREGNANCY & ADOLESCENT FATHERHOOD

**"Big feelings, big choices - are you ready?  
Let's talk about adolescent pregnancy  
and adolescent fatherhood before life  
gets real, real fast.**



## What is Adolescent Pregnancy?

Adolescent pregnancy happens when a girl becomes pregnant before the age of 18.

While some teenagers think they're ready for adult decisions, becoming pregnant too soon can have lasting effects on your future.

### Some of the challenges include:

- Dropping out or pausing your education.
- Taking on responsibilities you're not yet ready for.
- Health risks for both mother and baby.
- Emotional stress, anxiety, or fear.
- Facing stigma or rejection from family, friends, or school.
- Increased risk of violence, exploitation, and early or forced marriage.

## Adolescent Fatherhood?

Adolescent fatherhood is when a boy becomes a parent before the age of 18.

Even though boys don't carry the pregnancy, becoming a father means taking responsibility — emotionally, financially, and socially — for the child and the well-being of the mother.

### This can lead to:

- Struggles with school or dropping out.
- Pressure to earn money or find a job early.
- Confusion about identity, relationships, and the future.
- Expectations to provide support without being prepared for it.

## Why Should You Delay Pregnancy and Fatherhood?

As a teenager between 15–18 years, you're still growing — emotionally, mentally, and physically. This is a crucial time to build your future, pursue your goals, and gain the knowledge and skills to make informed life choices.

Getting pregnant or becoming a parent too soon can interrupt your dreams, strain your relationships, and put your health at risk.

### Health Risks for Adolescent Mothers

- Teen pregnancy can increase the risk of:
- Complications during pregnancy or childbirth, like high blood pressure or severe bleeding
- Pregnancy related death or infant death, especially without proper care
- Mental health struggles, including depression or anxiety
- Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) — which can also affect the baby

### How Can You Prevent Adolescent Pregnancy?

**You have the power to protect your future. Some key ways include:**

- Choosing to delay sexual activity (abstinence) — This is the most effective way to avoid pregnancy and STIs.
- Understanding consent and boundaries — No one has the right to pressure you into sex or touch you in ways that make you uncomfortable.
- Speaking up and reporting abuse — If someone forces, threatens, or manipulates you into sexual activity, tell a trusted adult, teacher, healthcare provider, or report it to authorities.
- Getting accurate information — Learn about your body, your rights, and safe sexual choices from reliable sources.



# GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

"Everything you need to know about  
growing up and loving your body!"



# Gender Based Violence

Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) is a serious issue that affects many young people in Kenya and around the world. Understanding what SGBV is, how to protect yourself, and how to handle situations involving violence is very important.

## What is SGBV (Sexual and Gender-Based Violence)?

Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) refers to any harmful act directed at someone based on their gender or sexuality. It involves acts that are carried out against a person's will and can be physical, emotional, or psychological in nature. It includes sexual violence (like rape or sexual harassment), domestic violence, early or forced marriage, and other harmful acts.

## Forms of Gender Based Violence include:

- **Sexual assault or rape:** Any sexual act or behavior without consent.
- **Sexual harassment:** Unwanted physical or verbal sexual advances or comments.
- **Domestic violence:** Physical, emotional, or psychological violence in relationships (this can happen between intimate partners, family members, or others).
- **Female genital mutilation (FGM):** Harmful cultural practices like FGM that cause physical and emotional trauma.
- **Child marriage:** Being forced into marriage before you're legally able to make that choice.
- **Intimate Partner Violence**

SGBV is a significant problem, especially among young people. It is important to understand that NO ONE has the right to harm you. If you're experiencing violence, it's critical to seek help.

## What is Consent?

**Consent** is a voluntary, clear, and informed agreement to engage in an activity, especially when it comes to sexual activity. Consent means both people freely agree to participate in an action without any pressure, force, or manipulation.

### Key points about consent:

- **Age of Consent:** In Kenya, the legal age of consent is 18 years. If you're under 18, any sexual activity is considered illegal and cannot be consensual.
- **Freely Given:** Consent must be given without pressure, threats, or fear. It should never be coerced or manipulated.
- **Clear and Active:** Saying "yes" should be clear. It's not just about silence; both people should communicate and agree.
- **Informed:** Consent means you understand what's happening and agree to it.
- **Can be Withdrawn:** If at any point you or the other person decides they no longer want to participate, consent can be withdrawn. This is completely okay, and it's important that it is respected.

**CONSENT**  
IS A VOLUNTARY, CLEAR  
AND INFORMED AGREEMENT

**Remember:** Consent cannot be given if someone is forced, unconscious, intoxicated, or if they're under the age of consent.

## What is Assent?

**Assent** refers to the agreement or permission of a young person, often given by an adolescent, for activities that involve significant decision-making. In many cases, assent refers to agreeing to participate in something when you're not yet legally able to give full consent (as with the case of medical procedures or research).

**Example:** If you're a teenager, your parent or guardian may be the one to provide formal consent for some activities (like health treatments), but you may still give your assent (your agreement) to participate. This is a way to make sure that your voice is heard, even if you're not yet considered an adult.

### Why is Assent Important?

- It ensures that you are informed and that your feelings are considered, even if a guardian must give legal consent.
- It helps to protect your rights and well-being by making sure you understand what is happening and have a say in decisions that affect your life.

## Understanding Your Rights and Protection from SGBV

As a young person in Kenya, you have rights to live free from violence, abuse, and exploitation. You are entitled to safety, dignity, and respect.

Some of your key rights include:

- **Right to be Free from Violence:** This means you have the right to live without fear of being harmed, whether physically, sexually, or emotionally.
- **Right to Consent:** You have the right to decide what happens to your body. No one should touch you, pressure you, or force you into sexual activity against your will.
- **Right to Protection:** The Kenyan legal system, including laws that aim to protect young people from violence. If you experience SGBV, there are legal frameworks to support you.

## What Do you do if You Experience SGBV?

If you have been a victim of violence, it's important to take steps to protect your health, safety, and rights:

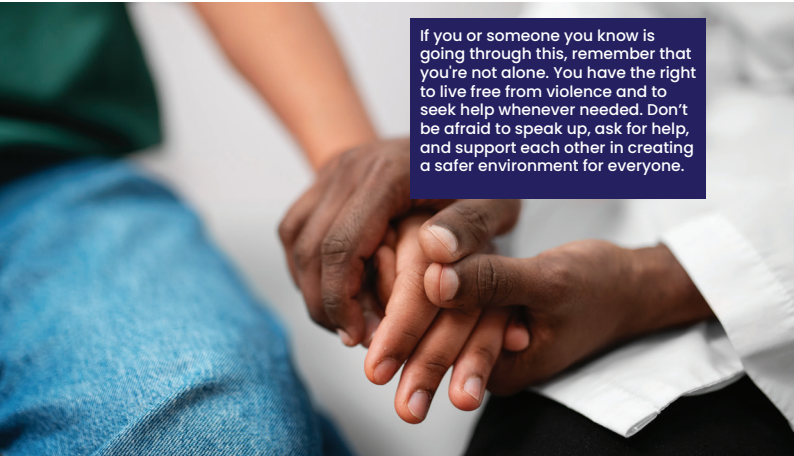
- Go to a safe place and call a friend, a family member, or someone else you trust who can be with you and give you support.
- Report the Incident: You can report the abuse to the police or a trusted adult, like a parent or teacher. There are special police units for dealing with SGBV cases, such as the **Gender Desk at Police Stations**.
- Try to keep all evidence of the assault. Don't shower, eat, or change anything until after a medical exam. Save the clothes you were wearing in separate paper bags, and don't touch or clean anything from where it happened.
- Get medical care as soon as you can—ideally within 2 hours, but no later than 72 hours. Even if you don't feel hurt, a medical exam can check for injuries, prevent infections or pregnancy, and collect evidence if you choose to report the assault.
- If you suspect that you may have been drugged, ask the hospital or clinic where you receive medical care to take a urine sample. Write down as much as you can remember about the circumstances of the assault, including a description of the assailant.
- After a sexual assault, you may have a lot of decisions to make—like getting medical care, reporting it, or telling someone you trust. It's normal to have questions or worries, especially about how it might affect you or how others might react. Talking to a trained counselor can help you cope with the emotional and physical impacts of the assault.



**STOP**  
**SGBV**

NB: Sexual abuse cases should be reported within 72 hours for the following reasons:-

- To prevent pregnancy.
- To prevent infection of HIV and sexually transmitted infections
- To ensure that evidence is preserved correctly
- To provide psychosocial support for the victim. Pregnancy.



If you or someone you know is going through this, remember that you're not alone. You have the right to live free from violence and to seek help whenever needed. Don't be afraid to speak up, ask for help, and support each other in creating a safer environment for everyone.

## Support and Helplines in Kenya

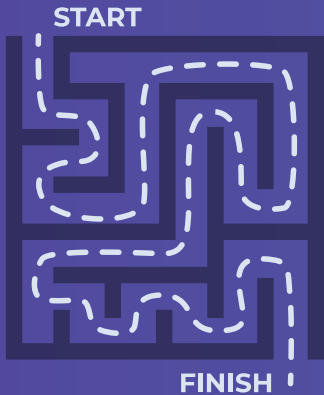
- **National Helpline (1195):** For immediate assistance related to SGBV.
- **Gender Violence Recovery Centre (GVRC):** Offers medical and psychosocial support for survivors of gender-based violence.
- **Local Police:** The police can offer legal support and investigation.
- **Kenya Red Cross:** Provides emergency assistance and relief.





# COPING WITH LIFE / LIFE HACKS

"Everything you need to know about  
growing up and loving your body!"



## Addiction

**Addiction** is when someone starts needing a substance (such as drugs, alcohol, or cigarettes), a behavior (such as gambling, social media use or gaming) so much that they feel like they can't stop, or they continuously must have it to feel good or normal – even when it causes problems in their life, health, school, or relationships.

When you first use a drug, drink alcohol, or do something that feels good (like gaming, gambling, getting many likes on social media), your brain releases dopamine, which is a chemical that signals “feeling good” and makes you happy. First use, in most cases, is out of curiosity and peer pressure




Repeated use of the drug or doing the activity over and over can cause your brain to start getting used to the extra dopamine. After some time, you may need more of the drug, substance or to do the activity more often just to feel the same happiness or even to feel “normal” at all.

At this point, stopping can feel very difficult. Your brain is tricked into depending on the drug, substance or activity.

## How do I know if am addicted to something?

- Your behaviour starts to change, such as reduced socialization, lack of motivation or being secretive
- You have an irrational fixation on a substance or activity, and use it in higher quantities and for longer periods
- You lose interest in school or hobbies
- You have unexplained weight gain or weight loss
- You have a messy physical image

There are a few questions that you could ask. Being brave and honest with yourself is important here.



*Am I hiding how much I use it from others?*

*Do I feel like I need it in order to feel normal or happy?*

*Have I tried to stop but couldn't? Perhaps told myself that "this is the last time?"*

*Do I keep using it even when it causes problems in my life?*



## What's addictive?

### Drugs and Substances

Drugs and Substances are chemicals that alter how your mind or body functions.

Some drugs are categorized as medicines that can help you get better when you are sick. Other drugs can be used in ways that can harm your health. However, medicines, when misused, can also be harmful to your health and lead to addiction.

Substances can include alcohol, cigarettes, cannabis (bhang/weed), glue & adhesives, prescription pills, and other things that people may use to change how they feel, think, or act.

### Did you know?

Drug and substance use is linked to risky sexual behaviour, and subsequently, HIV infection.

When one is under the influence of a drug or substance, their ability to make correct decisions is interfered with, which can lead to actions that put them at risk.

## Categories of drugs

- Depressants (downers) slow down your brain activity and give a feeling of being relaxed, sedated or drowsy. Examples are alcohol, heroin, morphine, codeine, Xanax, Valium, and prescription painkillers
- Stimulants (uppers) speed up brain activity, increase your energy, alertness, and give a sense of happiness. Examples are nicotine, caffeine, cocaine, ecstasy, weed/bhang, miraa/muguka

## Social Media

Apps like TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat and Facebook are designed to keep you scrolling and to keep coming back to them. By watching videos, looking at photos, giving and receiving likes and comments, your brain gets excited, and it feels like a reward. Repetitive use of social media can lead to addiction – for example, you might start to feel bored or left out when you've not opened an app or chase the feeling of getting more likes and comments.



### Things you can do to avoid social media addiction

- Spend more time with real people
- Participate in physical activities
- Regulate your use of social media by setting usage limits
- Clean up your feed and turn it to a positive space

# Pornography

Watching sexual content has a unique ability to trigger a powerful release of dopamine, the brain's "feel-good" chemical. By continuing to watch this kind of content, our brains begin to adapt, and we then need to watch more of it to feel the same level of excitement or satisfaction.

Addiction to pornography can lead to real consequences, including shame and isolation.



## MYTHS

Only banned drugs can cause addiction.



## FACTS

Some legal substances and drugs like alcohol, cigarettes and prescription medication can be very addictive.

If you struggle with any of these, or any other addiction, help is always available.

## Bullying

Bullying is when someone hurts you and embarrasses you intentionally. This can be physically through actions or through words. For example, they could fight you or damage something you own, insult or threaten you, or embarrass you in public. It can also happen through technology such as social media, through calls and text messages, or other online platforms you may be on – this is called cyberbullying.

Bullying is always more about the bully than it is about you. It is important to remember that it is not your fault if you are bullied.



**STOP  
BULLYING**

### What should I do if I am bullied?

- Talk to someone you trust, such as a teacher or other adult
- Keep evidence to make it easy for action to be taken (in cyberbullying, you can take screenshots, save messages, etc.)
- Stay safe and surround yourself with friends. It is important to protect yourself and avoid the bully if you can.

# Friendship and Relationships

Friendship is a close relationship between people characterized by mutual affection, trust, support, and understanding.

A relationship is the way two or more people are connected, or the way they behave toward each other.

Relationships are necessary in life and give you a chance to share your successes, hopes and challenges with people you can trust. At this point, you are interacting with many of your peers and meeting new people. It is important to learn how to connect with them and build healthy friendships and relationships.

## In a healthy relationship...

- You feel supported
- You are not pressured to do things you wouldn't want to do
- You are respected
- You are accepted as you are



## In an unhealthy relationship...

- You feel pressured to change who you are
- You are controlled, for example, in how to act or who to hang out with
- You are blamed for everything and made to feel bad about yourself

# Feelings and Romantic Relationships

As you grow, it's normal to develop strong feelings for someone – this could be someone of the opposite sex. These feelings might go beyond friendship, and that's completely okay.

What's important is that your relationships are healthy, respectful, and make you feel happy and safe. Everyone experiences relationships differently, and it's okay to take your time to understand your own feelings.

## Building healthy boundaries

Boundaries are the limits that you set regarding various things about yourself. They determine what is okay and what is not okay, and protect you physically, emotionally and mentally.

## What healthy boundaries can sound like

*I need some  
time alone*

*I don't want to talk  
about other people*

*If you borrow my  
things, please  
return them when  
you said you would*

*I don't want to  
be touched*



## Setting boundaries

- State your boundary clearly and respectfully
- Be consistent and remain firm even when the boundary is not understood or when there is pressure for you to change it

## My boundaries are not being respected

- Remind them of your boundary
- Distance yourself from them
- Talk to an adult you trust about the situation

## Peer pressure

Peer pressure is when the people around you pressure or influence you to do something you wouldn't normally do. This could be something positive or negative.

### Usually, one will give in to negative peer pressure:

- Remind them of your boundary
- Distance yourself from them
- Talk to an adult you trust about the situation

This can have some bad outcomes, such as doing drugs, taking alcohol, bullying others, dressing a certain way, as well as risky behaviours like having sex.

### How can I cope with peer pressure?

- Set boundaries and stick to them
- Have some basic values about what you can and can't do
- Be with friends who share similar values as you. Having a friend stand with you against peer pressure makes it easier to resist
- Say "No". This doesn't make you a weak person, and you shouldn't have to explain yourself.

# Benefits of education

In Kenya, every child has the right to free and compulsory basic education, and for good reason. School isn't just about passing exams. It is about preparing you for life.

Education opens doors and gives you access to more opportunities for success. Even when you haven't decided what you want to do yet, having an education gives you more choices later on when you're ready.

## School gives you a chance to:

- Build your social skills and gain new friends.
- Learn life skills, including how to solve problems and make good decisions.
- Discover your interests by participating in different activities.
- Have better chances at a good job and a higher income in the future.
- Learn how to cope with challenges and have a good foundation to navigate life.

## Feeling exam stress or academic pressure?

Find ways to prepare that work for you. In such moments, it is also important to take breaks to avoid getting exhausted. Study groups with positive friends are also a good way to learn.

## Fear about your future?

While it is great to think about your future and career path, it is important to know that it is okay to not have everything figured out right now. Be open to the growth and change that will happen to you over time.



# Exploring Your Career Path

Your future starts now—and it's okay not to have it all figured out yet! This is the perfect time to start thinking about what you enjoy, what you're good at, and what kind of work you might want to do one day.



## 1. Discover Your Interests

Ask yourself:

- What subjects or activities do I enjoy most?
- Do I like working with people, solving problems, building things, or being creative?
- Would I prefer a job that's hands-on, flexible, stable, or adventurous?

Use free online career quizzes or talk to a school counselor and teachers to explore more.

## 2. Learn About Different Careers

There are so many options! Here are just a few examples:

- **Health** – Nurse, doctor, lab technician, counselor
- **Technology** – Software developer, web designer, IT support
- **Creative** – Photographer, graphic designer, writer, music
- **Skilled Trades** – Electrician, mechanic, welder, carpenter
- **Business** – Entrepreneur, accountant, marketer
- **Public Service** – Teacher, police officer, social worker
- **Sports** – Football, Basketball, Tennis, Rugby

You don't have to choose now, just explore!

## 3. Build Skills Now

You can start building skills for the future:

- Take school seriously – it helps with whatever path you choose.
- Join clubs, volunteer, or try a part-time job to gain experience.
- Practice time management, communication, teamwork, and problem-solving.

## 4. Plan for What's Next

You can start building skills for the future:

After high school, you can choose from different paths like:

- College or university
- Technical or vocational training
- Internships or apprenticeships
- Starting a business

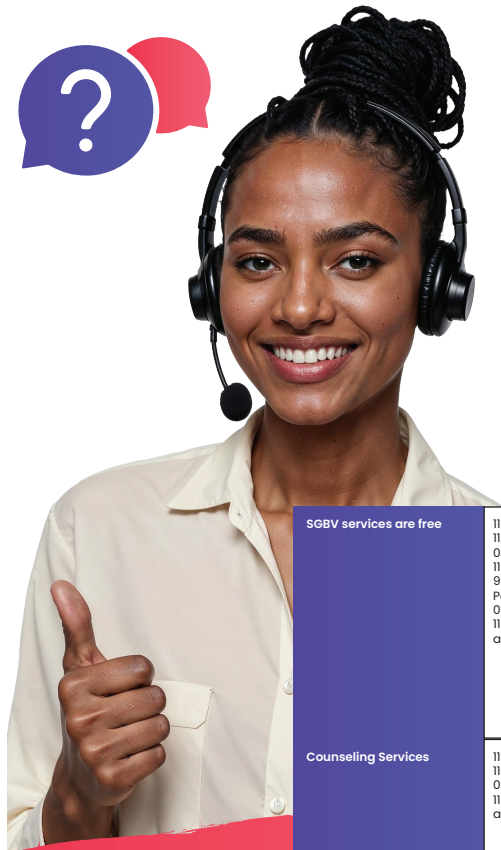
Talk to people in different careers to learn from their journeys.

## 5. Keep an Open Mind

It's okay if your interests change. Many people change careers more than once. What matters is that you keep learning and growing.

**Remember:** There's no one "right" path. The best career for you is one that matches your skills, interests, and values. Take your time, stay curious, and don't be afraid to ask questions.





# WHERE TO SEEK HELP

## SGBV services are free

1195-Domestic and Sexual Violence  
1190-LVCT Health  
0800720501-FIDA  
116-Child Abuse  
999/ 911/ 112/ 0800722203-Kenya  
Police  
0900620800-Nisikize  
1199/ 999-Kenya Redcross Society  
and Ambulance Services

## Counseling Services

1190-LVCT Health  
1195-Healthcare Assistance Kenya  
0900620800-Nisikize  
1199/ 999-Kenya Redcross Society  
and Ambulance Services

## Drugs and Substance Abuse

1192 - NACADA toll free number  
0700395395 - NMS Kenya Red Cross  
Society  
0700460546- MSF Ambulance  
Visit the nearest health facility to be  
linked with a mental health specialist

# Get In Touch



**NATIONAL SYNDemic DISEASES  
CONTROL COUNCIL**



**For more information visit;**

**[www.nsdcc.go.ke](http://www.nsdcc.go.ke)**

National Syndemic Disease Control Council  
Maktaba Kuu Building, 1st Floor, Ngong Road, Upperhill  
P.O Box 61307-00200 Nairobi, Kenya

- Phone: **+254 20 2715109, +254 20 2715144**
- Email: **[communication@nsdcc.go.ke](mailto:communication@nsdcc.go.ke)**