SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS (STIs) PREVENTION & CARE

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Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are infections caused by bacteria, viruses & parasites transmitted through sexual contract, including vaginal, anal & oral sex. Some STIs are transmitted through skin-to-skin sexual contact or through non-sexual means e.g. from mother to child during pregnancy & childbirth.

There are more than 30 known bacteria, viruses & parasites that cause STIs.
STIs among adolescents are an important problem: Although there is a lack of data on the incidence or prevalence of STIs in adolescents at the global level, where age-disaggregated surveillance systems exist, a substantial proportion of STI incidence occurs in adolescents.

Adolescent girls have greater biological susceptibility than adult women to some STIs due to the immaturity of the cervical mucosa & increased cervical ectopy: Adolescent girls have a greater biological susceptibility. They are also at greater susceptibility because social norms prevent them from being well prepared to have safe sex & to refuse unsafe (or unwanted) sex. Adolescent boys on the other hand susceptible because they are under pressure to have multiple partners because of stereotypical masculinity norms. Among both boys & girls, specific groups are more susceptible because of their sexual practices.
▪ **STIs among adolescents have major health consequences**: STIs can immediate effects such as discomfort and pain. They can also have serious consequences beyond the immediate ones.

▪ **Prevention & management services for STIs have been shown to be effective**: Proven approaches to prevent STIs, to accurately diagnose them and to cure some STIs and effectively treat others are available.

▪ **Design & implementation of prevention strategies & access to & provision of good-quality services need attention**: Effective STI prevention & management services are an urgent need for adolescents including scale-up of STI case management and provision of HPV vaccination.
States have obligations to ensure care & treatment of STIs to adolescents, as part of a package of SRH services.

States are obliged to ensure that STI services are accessible to adolescents, & are free, confidential & nondiscriminatory.

States are also obliged to remove barriers such as third-party consent requirements.
KEY CONCEPTS TO CONSIDER

- Adolescents lack knowledge & understanding about STIs & STI prevention & management services: Adolescents should be informed about STIS when they interact with the health system & through educational outreach. Also HPV vaccination strategies offer opportunity for educational outreach.

- STI prevention & management services often do not reach adolescents. If they do, they are often not adolescent friendly: STI prevention strategies need to be tailored to reach & meet the needs of adolescents. Further, efforts are needed to ensure that adolescents know where and how to seek care for STIs, if & when needed. Finally, STI management services must be adolescent friendly.
- WHO guideline on syphilis screening and treatment for pregnant women (2017).
- Consolidated guidelines on HIV prevention, diagnosis, treatment and care for key populations: updated version (2016).
- Consolidated guideline on sexual and reproductive health and rights of women living with HIV (2017).
- Responding to children and adolescents who have been sexually abused (2017).
- Brief sexuality-related communication: recommendations for a public health approach (2015).
Clinic confidentiality policy

I'm very scared! I don't want everyone to know about this problem.

It's OK. We will not tell anyone.

But I advise you to talk to someone you can trust.