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FAQ
Frequently Asked Questions
For Adolescent Boys & Girls

FOGSI & ADOLESCENT HEALTH COMMITTEE, FOGSI
2019-21
“To God, whose eternal blessing &
divine presence helps us to fulfil all our goals”
This book is dedicated to all Adolescents.

Dr Girish Mane
Chairperson
Adolescent Health Committee, FOGSI
Dear Youngsters,

I wish to greet you on behalf of FOGSI.

Term Adolescent is derived from Latin word, Adolescere. It means to grow, to mature. India has almost 25% population of this age group. India is said to have highest youngsters in the world. Youth are the pillars of our country, and it is always wise to invest in their future health for the betterment of future of our India. Adolescence is a tender period of life. They are confused with self-acquired knowledge, information, misunderstanding and curiosity. This is a turning point and a proper guidance becomes very essential at this stage to both boys and girls. There are physical as well as mental changes at the verge of this age, which are natural and essential too. But most of the parents find it difficult to cope up with many aspects. May be physical, mental, social or spiritual. Even many young ones are confused on many issues.

We had a nationwide program for youth of India on ‘Preventable Adolescent Healthcare Education’ on the occasion of International Youth Day on 10th August 2020. Almost 1,21,000 youths attended it on line throughout India. In the same program we received almost 10000 questions by the viewers. Because of time constrain it was not possible for us to answer the questions.

So herewith presenting this compilation of selected questions with the answers by the renowned doctors of India, for all girls, boys, parents, teachers, doctors, social workers and educationalists.

I hope this is going to be a path finder for many of you. We have tried to answer the questions in non technical way. Please go in detail of every question and inform everyone around you about this book.

I thank Dr. Ragini Agrawal (Vice President, FOGSI) for her cooperation. And special thanks to Dr. Girish Mane (Chairperson Adolescent Health Committee, FOGSI) for the compilation and creation of this book. I also extend my sincere thanks to the Authors for their contribution for this book.

And it will be unfair if I don’t thank you all, for whom this work is done. My best wishes to you, your family and for your bright future. Please take care.

DR. ALPESH GANDHI
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Federation of Obstetrics & Gynaecological Societies of India
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Hello every one

Greetings from Dr. Ragini Agrawal,

Dear young ones, you are the backbone and future of our country. Your physical and mental health is important for your future. Adolescent Health Education is my all time passion. And I am really happy to be part of this venture. Adolescent Health Committee FOGSI, under the able leadership of Chairperson DR. GIRISH MANE is doing amazing job. The whole adolescent fraternity is thankful to him and all the active members of this committee.

Dear students and parents please go through this book thoroughly. These are the queries raised by either children or parents some or the other time. The expert doctors in this field, from various part of India have answered these queries at their level best. I would appeal to all the parents and students to go through the FAQs together.

I once again bless you all with a bright future. Please take care of yourself and your family. Above all be a good human being.

I also extend my thanks to visionary President FOGSI Dr. Alpesh Gandhi, for his all time cooperation. And my special thanks and appreciation to hard working Dr. Girish Mane, Chairperson, Adolescent Health Committee FOGSI.

Dr. Ragini Agrawal
Vice President FOGSI
Hello Boys, Girls & Caring Parents,

Regards from Dr. Girish Mane.

As an editor, I feel immense pleasure in presenting this very useful book for you. Adolescence is a very dramatic change from irresponsible childhood to the responsible adulthood. There are several natural physical, psychological, spiritual and social changes in the kids. There is no rocket science for these changes. Many things, for example the family atmosphere, family’s educational status, the peer group, genetics and many more things play a very important role in deciding the complete future frame of the adolescent boy or a girl. Some times there are un-expected changes in some of the developments. The physical growth can end up in physical disorders, the mental change can end up in psycho-social problems, the growth spurt can end up in increased nutritional demands and so on.

In this journey the boys, girls, parents and teachers too, are not aware of the answers to practical questions arising in the upbringing of their loved one.

We had an online celebration of International youth day on 10th August 2020, in the form of webinar for young population of India. Around 1,21,000 students through out India joined this program. We received near to 10000 questions from the viewers. It was not possible for us to answer so many questions. So we decided to come with this compilation of FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS with their ANSWERS by the renowned Gynaecologists of India. They have tried to explain the things in simple manner and in non scientific terms. The answers and the views are solely those of the authors. in case of any query you can mail your question to "ahcfaq@gmail.com". Our experts will love to answer to you.

I must express my sincere thanks to visionary President of FOGSI Dr. Aspegh Gandhi, who is the real inspiration and motivation for this program. It's his promise and care for adolescents of India which reflected through this program. Also I am thankful to Vice President FOGSI Dr. Ragini Agrawal for her constant support and encouragement. I am thankful to Dr. Chandan Kashru and Dr. Rajal Thaker for their constant support. I take an opportunity to thank the Stalwarts from all over the India who contributed their answers to these FAQs. Many thanks to Zuventus Pharma for supporting this cause. I am also thankful to all of you for reading this book, Many thanks to my family members, specially my kids Vrinda and Chaitanya who inspired me to come up with this book. My biggest thanks to the Almighty who made me capable of doing this job for the pillars and future of India.

A small request on behalf of my team to recommend this book to everyone around you. Best wishes to all of you for your health and future...

Take care of yourself, your family and Our country.

Yours sincerely

DR. GIRISH MANE
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If you have any query, you can mail your question to
ahcfaq@gmail.com
Our experts from Adolescent Health Committee FOGSI
will love to answer you.

Adolescent Health Committee, FOGSI
Que.: What is a balanced diet?
Ans.: Balanced diet is a key to stay healthy. Follow the "Healthy Eating Food Pyramid" which guides you to eat the right food in the right amount. Grains should be taken as the major dietary source. Eat more fruits and vegetables. Have a moderate amount of meat, fish, egg, milk and their alternatives. Reduce salt, fat/oil and sugar. The food pyramid suggestion for an adolescent is as follows:
Grains: 4 - 6 bowls (1 bowl = 200g of cooked rice, bread 2 slices, noodles 250 gms)
Vegetables: At least 3 servings (cooked vegetables, 1/2 bowl, raw vegetables, 1 bowl)
Fruits: At least 2 servings (1 serving of fruit is equivalent to: medium-sized apple, 1 piece, kiwi 2-piece, fruit cuts 1/2 bowl)
Meat, fish, egg and alternatives: 150- 250 grams of meat, egg, 1 piece, silky tofu, 1 piece
Milk and alternatives: 2 servings (low-fat milk, 1 cup (240ml), low-fat cheese, 2 slices, low-fat plain yogurt, 1 pot (150ml)
Fat/oil, salt and sugar: minimum
Fluid: 6 - 8 glasses (200ml/ glass)

Que.: What is the healthy way of eating?
Ans.: Every meal should be a balanced diet with the following components
- Vegetables and whole fruits – 1/2 the plate
- Complex carbohydrates - 1/4th of the plate
- Proteins – 1/4th of the plate.
- Oils and ghee in moderation.
- Water 6-8 glasses per day.
- Vitamins, minerals, probiotic food.

Que.: What are the foods to be avoided to stay healthy?
Ans.: Refined Carbs like white rice, bread, pasta, noodles, sugary food like candy, pastries, cookies, potatoes, fried items, , juices, alcohol, aerated drinks, hydrogenated fats like vanaspati.

Que.: Mention the food items which are healthy and essential?
Ans.:
- Complex carbohydrates: Quinoa (Kangni / Thinai ), whole wheat bread, and brown rice, millets (koden/ varagu, kutki/ saamai, bajra/ kambu, nachani/ raagi/keghvaragu),fruits and vegetables (not in juiceform), red and yellow peppers, carrots, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, spinach and apricots; &
legumes such as dals, beans & peas.
- **Proteins:** Lean meat and poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds and legumes/beans, milk, yoghurt, cheese and/or alternatives (mostly reduced fat) group.
- **Healthy Fat:** Whole eggs, nuts, fatty fish, cheese, paneer, dark chocolate, coconut, avocados.
- **Vitamins:**
  - *Vitamin A*- tuna fish, liver, cream and feta cheese, butter, eggs, mackerel etc.
  - *Vitamin B*—whole grains, milk, cheese, eggs, liver and kidney, meat, such as chicken and red meat, fish, dark green vegetables such as spinach and kale
  - *Vitamin C*- amla, citrus fruits, broccoli, cauliflower, papaya, strawberry
  - *Vitamin D*(sunshine vitamin)- exposure to sunlight at least 30 min per day.
  - *Vitamin E*- nuts like almonds, peanuts and broccoli.
  - *Vitamin K*-green leafy vegetables, brussels sprouts, broccoli, cauliflower, and cabbage.
- **Probiotics:** yogurt, buttermilk, kefir, etc. are probiotic-rich foods.
- **Minerals:** Minerals include calcium and iron amongst many others and are found in meat, cereals, fish, milk and dairy foods, fruit and vegetables green leafy, nuts, dates. Rich source of zinc is found in chickpeas, beans, seeds like pumpkin and sunflower seeds.

**Que.: What diet would you recommend for a person who is planning to start dieting? What's the best diet?**
**Ans.:** The best diet is one that is low in processed food, added sugars and is high in vegetables, fibre and has enough lean protein to prevent muscle breakdown and loss.

**Que.: Are there foods that aid weight loss?**
**Ans.:** These are mainly whole foods like whole egg, fish, lean meat, vegetables, greens, fruits, nuts, seeds and legumes.

**Que.: Are there any foods that increase metabolism?**
**Ans.:** Eating more frequently can help you achieve a faster metabolic rate. Increased intake of water at least 2 glasses or more increases metabolism by 30%. Whole egg, green tea, ghee, cinnamon, lentils, yoghurt, dark chocolate, apple cider vinegar, carrots etc can increase metabolism.

**Que.: Should I avoid carbohydrates for weight loss?**
**Ans.:** No. Keep in mind that it is more important to eat carbohydrates from healthy foods than to follow a strict
diet limiting or counting the number of grams of carbohydrates consumed. What is most important is the type of carbohydrate you choose to eat, complex carbs and not refined carbs.

**Que.: What is the diet I can eat in plenty without putting on weight?**
**Ans.:** A balanced diet for your breakfast, lunch and dinner along with healthy snacking on plenty of fruits, nuts and proteins.

**Que.: How do we maintain a healthy diet?**
**Ans.:** Commitment to stay healthy rather than a temporary figure consciousness will help in maintaining a healthy balanced diet.

**Que.: Should I count calories if I want to maintain my diet?**
**Ans.:** This is not essential. Rather being more mindful about what you eat and why you're eating can help with weight management.

**Que.: What is the safe amount of coffee that can be consumed per day?**
**Ans.:** To keep caffeine at safe levels in the body, doctors recommend limiting intake to no more than 200 mg per day. 300 ml of coffee contains about 200 mg of caffeine.

**Que.: How effective is intermittent fasting?**
**Ans.:** There is evidence that intermittent fasting can be beneficial for weight loss, lowering blood sugar, improving heart health, reducing inflammation, and reducing your risk of chronic diseases.

**Que.: What kind of food should be consumed during intermittent fasting?**
**Ans.:** Water, coffee and tea (consumed without added sugar, milk, or cream) diluted apple cider vinegar, healthy fats, coffee containing MCT oil, ghee, coconut oil, or butter during their fast, bone broth.

**Que.: Can I plan a quick weight loss programme?**
**Ans.:** Losing weight too quickly can negatively impact your health. Rapid weight loss can affect your kidneys, liver etc. You should lose weight in a healthy, sustainable, continual fashion where you are getting adequate nutrition and yet maintaining healthy habits.
**Que.: What's one food item or ingredient you advise people to avoid?**
**Ans.:** No food should be considered "off limits." Try to eat foods that are minimally processed and have little additives on a regular basis. Home cooked balanced diet is the best for your health.

**Que.: What is Body Mass Index (BMI) and what value is considered obese?**
**Ans.:** BMI values between 18.5 and 24.9 are considered to be “normal” or “healthy” weight. BMI values between 25 and 29.9 are considered “overweight,” while BMI values of 30 and above are considered “obese.” BMIs above 25 are unhealthy and have been shown to increase the risk of certain chronic diseases. BMIs under 18.5 are considered “underweight.”

**Que.: Which is more important, diet or exercise?**
**Ans.:** Neither is more important than the other, rather they complement one another. Diet without exercise will leave the body absent of shape and tone. Exercise without proper nutrition is counterproductive because for the body to repair itself, the nutrients and elements used must be replaced. When these elements or nutrients are not replaced the body will use muscle tissue and bone minerals as a substitute.

**Que.: How does exercise influence diet?**
**Ans.:** Both are complimentary to each other. Neither of them can be beneficial singly.

**Que.: Do I have to drink milk to get calcium?**
**Ans.:** Yes. Calcium is an essential mineral. You require about 1,000 to 1,200 milligrams of calcium per day. Dairy products such as milk, cheese and yogurt are a great and easy source of calcium, with about 250 to 350 milligrams per serving. Other sources: fortified plant-based beverages (such as those made from almonds, oats, cashews, etc.) have 300 milligrams of calcium per cup, foods such as kale, almonds, white beans, and tofu have about 100 milligrams of calcium per serving, and broccoli has 40 milligrams per cup. You can take any of these if you cannot have milk.

**Que.: I am obese, can I take sugar-free or diet foods?**
**Ans.:** The advice is to stay away from processed foods because they have several chemical additives which are harmful. Some artificial sweeteners can cause intestinal cramping and long-term usage may lead to cancer. Take a balanced diet with regular exercise.

**Que.: What are the snacks/brain food to be consumed during a study session?**
**Ans.:** Almonds, dark chocolate, air popped popcorn, fruit salad, yoghurt, grapes, coffee, tea, roasted chick
peas, veggies with hummus, mixture of dried fruits, nuts and seeds which you fancy.

**Que.: Does diet have any role in acne formation?**
**Ans.:** Those who eat foods with added sugars and refined carbs have a 30% higher risk of getting acne. Foods rich in fibre, complex carbohydrates, vitamins A, D, E, antioxidants, probiotics and zinc prevent acne.

**Que.: What kind of food can reduce period cramps?**
**Ans.:** Drink more water. Hydration is key to fighting cramps. Others are dark, leafy greens, bananas, pineapples, kiwi, oats, eggs, ginger, dark chocolate, peanut butter along with whole grains and legumes. Foods to be avoided are refined carbs, sugar, salt, coffee, alcohol, spicy foods, red meat and foods that you generally don't tolerate well.

**Que.: What kind of food helps in PCOS?**
**Ans.:** Diet has to be low glycaemic index which can be achieved by taking complex carbohydrates and high-fibres, more proteins, healthy fats, and spices, such as turmeric and cinnamon.

**Que.: What are the remedies for bloating?**
**Ans.:** Ginger, peppermint, chamomile tea, papaya, bananas and probiotics as mentioned, bland carbohydrates and clear liquids.

**Que.: Is it okay to skip meals?**
**Ans.:** No. Many adolescents think that skipping a meal especially breakfast helps in weight reduction. It is not only wrong but a great mistake. It is important for us to have 3 main meals and 3 snacks, a balanced diet to stay fit and healthy.

**Que.: What is a Paleo diet?**
**Ans.:** Paleo or keto or LCHF diet is one in which your carb intake is limited to less than 5–10% of your total daily calorie intake. This allows your body to enter ketosis, a state during which the body switches to using fat instead of carbs as its primary fuel source, and ketones are produced in the liver. The reduced carb intake is usually made up by increasing fat intake to around 70–90% of calories. Protein intake is moderate, usually around 20% of calories.
**Que.: How does keto diet work? Is it safe to take?**

**Ans.:** The weight loss effect in a keto diet is a result of reduced calorie intake. This is due to changes in satiety signals reducing hunger levels associated with high fat, very low carbs in the diet. There is also reduction in body water composition adding to the weight loss. However, its long-term safety is yet to be proven. It is not recommended for adolescents.

**Que.: Is there any relationship to food and psychological wellbeing?**

**Ans.:** Research points out that those who consume more unhealthy food are also more likely to report symptoms of either moderate or severe psychological distress than their peers who consume a healthier diet. Increased sugar consumption has been found to be associated with bipolar disorder and consumption of foods that have been fried or contain high amounts of sugar and processed grains have been linked with depression.
**Topic 2: Exercise & Fitness**

**Que.: How can regular exercise benefit me?**

**Ans.:** It makes you more fit. You will also sleep better. Your bones and muscles get stronger and your stress reduces significantly.

**Que.: How much exercise do I need?**

**Ans.:** 30-60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity is needed every day. At least three days a week, you may include exercises that strengthen muscle and bones, such as sit ups, lunges and squats.

**Que.: What constitutes 'moderate intensity' activities?**

**Ans.:** This includes activities like brisk walking, skate boarding, dancing etc.

**Que.: What constitutes 'vigorous intensity' activities?**

**Ans.:** Any activity that makes you puff enough so that talking in full sentences between breaths becomes difficult. This includes fast team sports such as football, basket ball etc as well as jogging, aerobic (cardio) exercises, fast cycling and speed walking.

**Que.: How important is the role of sleep time, in maintaining fitness?**

**Ans.:** Children at this age need at least 8 hours of sound sleep. Compromising on their sleep time leads to feeling of tiredness and easy fatigability.

**Que.: How can parents help, to make fitness a part of their child's life?**

**Ans.:** Walking to and from school, if located at a walkable distance, taking their pet dog for a walk in the evenings, replacing a family car trip with a family walk, are ways of easily doing this.

**Que.: I have physical education classes twice a week. Isn't that enough?**

**Ans.:** No. Daily physical activities are must, that too at least 5 days in a week.

**Que.: I clean my room, every weekend. Can that be counted as a physical activity?**

**Ans.:** No. These activities do not raise the heart rate as much as an act of jogging or speed walking. Hence it cannot substitute exercise.
**Que.: I am unable to motivate myself to go for jogging every day. What should I do?**
Ans.: Easiest way is to involve yourself in a team sport, especially one that is competitive like a football, basketball or badminton.

**Que.: Why do I feel so good immediately after an exercise?**
Ans.: Exercise leads to release of certain chemicals called endorphins in the body. It is a ‘feel good’ chemical.

**Que.: Does regular exercise prevent diseases for the future?**
Ans.: Yes, it does help to prevent diabetes, hypertension, hypercholesterolemia, and obesity.

**Que.: Does exercise help my bones?**
Ans.: Yes, it strengthens your bones and also prevents osteoporosis.

**Que.: What is compulsive exercise?**
Ans.: It’s a disorder of mindset seen in teens where
You get upset when you miss a day of workout
You exercise, even when you are unwell
You feel that you will gain weight if you miss exercise for a day
You prefer to workout, rather than hanging out with friends

**Que.: Give me some tips for workout in a gym?**
Ans.: Never workout without the guidance of an instructor. Bad posturing and wrong techniques, especially while doing weights, can result in serious injuries.

**Que.: How can parents set an example about fitness?**
Ans.: Be a role model for your child. Telling your child to exercise, when you are relaxing in a couch may not be effective at all. Make fitness, a family activity.

**Que.: What prevents teens from exercising?**
Ans.: Excess of screen time is the most important reason. Restricting the screen time to a specified time of the day, for around 1-2 hours helps the cause.
**Que.: Can exercise improve mental health?**
Ans.: Yes, very much. Regular exercise helps the teens to let go their frustrations and remain happy. Being involved in a sport, helps them not to be affected by failure, and creates a mindset to attempt for a win, at the next given opportunity.

**Que.: Can I exercise at home in recent time of Covid-19?**
Ans.: There are easy work out plans available, which you can do at home and doesn't require any sophisticated equipments. Take your parents' help and get started.

**Que.: How important is ‘warming up' before a sport game?**
Ans.: It is of utmost importance to stretch your joints and muscles, before you start any fitness activity, especially a competitive sport. It helps to prevents injuries.

**Que.: My gym mate offers me a magic supplement, so that my muscles can take form soon. Can I take it?**
Ans.: You should rather not. Many of these so called 'magic powders and capsules' contain banned substances like steroids. Though it might give you some short term improvement, it will eventually hurt your body.
**Topic 3: Mental & Physical Changes**

**Que.: What are the normal physical changes that occur in adolescent girls?**

**Ans.:**
- Rapid growth spurts
- Body changes like breast development, pubertal & axillary hair growth
- Fat deposition, curvy body
- Menstruation
- Oily skin/acne/skin blemishes
- Menses

**Que.: What are the normal physical changes that occur in adolescent boys?**

**Ans.:**
- Voice change
- Beard & moustache development
- Axillary & pubertal hair growth
- Muscular changes
- Aggressive behaviour
- Penile erection/night falls

**Que.: Is it normal for my child to be inclined towards spirituality at this young age?**

**Ans.:** It's absolutely normal. During adolescence, the child develops curiosity about different cultures/religions/faiths. Let them explore, but at the same time guide them how to maintain balance between spiritual & practical lives. Help them develop a fair understanding of it, as this also teaches discipline to the child.

**Que.: My child is having mood swings/aggressive behaviour. Is it normal?**

**Ans.:** It's normal for the child to behave like this at her/his age. The sex hormones which are developing cause these changes. They might get anxious/curious or might behave aggressive/arrogant too. Maintain your calm & avoid over reacting to it. In fact, talk to them & resolve the matter rather than retaliating.

**Que.: Is being attracted to the opposite sex normal at this age?**

**Ans.:** It is natural for the adolescent children to develop attraction towards the opposite sex. Parents should educate them, guide them about controlling their emotions & wisely acting upon the situation. It's also
important to teach them to accept rejection or a negative response from the opposite sex. Teach them to respect other's reaction. They should also know that most of the times it's only an attraction.

**Que.: How can I talk to my child about puberty, sex & dating?**
Ans.: Be patient in hearing to your child. Create a comfortable environment for the child to open with their feelings. Make the child comfortable by giving them the confidence that you can understand them. Do not over-react. Educate them about the physical & mental changes occurring in them. Teach them to contain their desires & exercise restrain.

**Que.: My child is very quite/secretive nowadays. What should I do?**
Ans.: Give your child some private space. Do not interfere much in their personal lives. At the same time, keep a check on their activities by observing their behaviour patterns, choices, friends & habits.

**Que.: My child is suddenly not obeying me. What should I do?**
Ans.: It's not disobedience. At this age children develop their own choices & ability to make a decision. Encourage your child to do so. Let them make mistakes, and learn. You should be always supportive. Be friendly with your child & make them comfortable.

**Que.: My child is losing interest in studies, what should I do?**
Ans.: Counsel your child about the importance of education. Do not scold/shout/order them. Be patient & explain. Try to be friendly & guide them to maintain a balance between studies & other activities. Guide them how education will benefit them in future & also in personality development. Assure them that they can do their own thing once they grow up.

**Que.: Suddenly my daughter has changed preferences in eating habits. She skips meals/starves to look thin. What should I do?**
Ans.: It's normal for an adolescent to be conscious about her looks. She wants to care about her appearance & look good/desirable/more acceptable. Educate her about eating a balanced diet & exercise to remain fit. Encourage her to maintain her looks, at the same time avoid getting obsessed over it. Teach her to maintain a balance in everything. You can take help of a dietician/gynecologist to educate her about importance of eating a balanced diet.

**Que.: Is my son's interest in gymming/exercise normal?**
Ans. Boys in the growing age tend to follow their role models. They develop a desire to build muscles/body.
It's absolutely normal. Support him in remaining fit but not over doing things. Guide him not to injure themselves by doing things wrongly.

**Que.: My son/daughter wants to spend more time with friends. Is it normal?**

**Ans.:** It's ok for adolescents to feel more comfortable with their friends at this age as they can discuss their issues more comfortably with them as they have similar concerns. They can relate more to their peers. Do not resist or stop them. You should only keep a watch on the people they hang out with & be vigilant of their activities.

**Que.: I found my child watching explicit material/porn on internet. What should I do?**

**Ans.:** During adolescence, children develop sexual feelings/desires. Due to easy accessibility of all kinds of material on web, children do get attracted to such things. It's important for the parent to talk to them, without scolding or anger. Educate them about prioritising things in life. Assure them, that they should not relent to these desires. It's important to concentrate on other things like education, sports, personality development right now. Guide them to wait for the right time in life to explore such things.

**Que.: How do I counsel my child about preventing addictions?**

**Ans.:** It's common for adolescents to fall prey to addictions like smoking, alcohol, drugs. Educate them about harmful impact of these substances on their bodies & mind. Teach them how to contain their habits & think wisely. At this tender age, it's important to talk to your children rather than giving them orders.

**Que.: How to cope with my child's freedom?**

**Ans.:** It's very important for the parents to be supportive & adaptive with the changes your child is going through. Please try to be a friend with them & make them comfortable to discuss their anxieties & curiosities. Give them their personal space / freedom to make their choices, to take decisions on their own. Guide them to take decisions wisely & support their choices instead of dictating yourself.

**Que.: My son compares his physical changes with his friends like, beard, moustache, increase in height. How should I tackle this?**

**Ans.:** Every child's body is different, & the growth patterns are also different. Counsel them about this & support them to be more accepting of the changes. Tell them that these are hormonal changes responsible for the development of hair on the face/pubertal region, muscular growth, voice changes. In case you feel that there are delays in their growth, please see a doctor at the earliest.
**Que.: My child enquires a lot about our culture & religion. Is it normal?**
Ans.: Yes, during adolescence, children develop their own independent thought process, so they are bound to ask questions & think differently. As kids, they follow their parents, but with growing age, they grow curious & question everything. Let them develop their own understanding rather than following things blindly.

**Que.: My child is growing lazy, playing on video games indoor all the time. He has no interest in sports/outdoor activities. How do I encourage her/him?**
Ans.: Educate your child about the importance of outdoor activities & exercise. Guide them to follow a regime to remain fit. Accompany them for outdoor games/sports/walking to inculcate these habits. Be a role model for them. Educate them about maintaining a balance between outdoor & indoor activities.

**Que.: My daughter is scared/embarrassed of the physical changes happening in her body. How to deal with this?**
Ans.: Explain to her that these are normal changes that happen in every woman's body due to the hormonal changes. Counsel her and tell her that these are normal attributes about being a woman. Do not shy away from discussing her fears/anxieties. If required, take her to a gynecologist/psychologist for counselling.

**Que.: My child has a desire to feel superior & important. How to deal with this?**
Ans.: As a child, parents pay full attention to their child's needs. As children grow, they develop an individuality which makes them different & exclusive. Teach them to respect other's individuality as well as limitations. It's important to counsel them to be more flexible/adaptable/adjusting to the society. Teach them that nobody is inferior in any way. It's a privilege that your child is better off with things that have more material value smarter but this does not make them superior in any way.

**Que.: My child wants to do things alone. Should I let them do so?**
Ans.: Of course, encourage decision making of your child. It's natural for young children to feel independent. Respect them & value their way of doing things. This will enhance their personality & add to their self-confidence.

**Que.: My child is more interested in friends & wants to spend more time with them. This creates anxiety in me, how to tackle?**
Ans.: It's important for parents to accept that their child is growing up. They will no longer be following what they are asked to do. They feel more comfortable with their peers as they can discuss their issues/queries more easily. Children are hesitant to discuss with parents. Be more friendly with your child. Instead of
questioning or condemning their queries, be more educative & treat them as young individuals. Also, be ready to hear what they have to say/think, so that you can correct them where they go wrong.

**Que.: My child has a desire to participate or be a part of a particular group of friends. Is it ok?**
Ans.: It’s alright to let the child make his/her own choices. They gel well with peers of same ideology & feel more comfortable with them. Also, teach your child to respect other group of people too, even though they do not relate to certain ideas of theirs. Keep a check on their company of friends and make sure they are not indulging in wrong activities.

**Que.: My child is not willing to meet relatives like before. They always want to be with friends. What to do?**
Ans.: Please try to find out the reason for not meeting relatives/cousins. Is it certain verbal/physical behaviour which makes the child uncomfortable, like, always comparing with other children, asking too much about their personal choices/education/activities, certain sexual abusive behaviour which makes your child uncomfortable. Enquire the reason rather than simply imposing yourself. Solve their problem or explain to them. Do not ignore your child's decision, they might be valid.

**Que.: My child fears being judged. How to counsel them?**
Ans.: Make your child understand that everybody is different & they have their own opinions. There will be people at all phases of life who would agree/disagree with them. Guide your child to be more adaptable & acceptable to the society & people. Teach them not to form judgements quickly & also, form their own opinions rather than following others blindly.

**Que.: My child copies film stars/sports stars. How do I check their influence on my child?**
Ans.: It’s perfectly ok for children to be inspired by film stars/ sports stars. Guide them to recognize what they should follow. Its fine if the influence adds to their personality. Teach your child to adopt good habits from role models. Also help your child accept their imperfections and at the same time, support them in bettering their own self.

**Que.: How to tackle lack of confidence in my child?**
Ans.: Appreciate your child's every little effort, even if they failed. Motivate them to try new things. Encourage them to improvise every day. Support them in all their decisions & instil confidence in them to take the plunge.
**Topic 3: Mental & Physical Changes**

**Que.: How do I tackle the 'fear of being rejected' in my child?**
Ans.: Encourage your child to try & experiment everything in life. Give them the support they need to stand up & do it better the next time after a failure. Guide them about success & failures being two sides of the same coin. Instill confidence by giving them your examples or even examples of handwork done by role models to overcome their failures.

**Que.: My daughter has a lot of Anxiety about pubertal changes & menstrual hygiene. What should I do?**
Ans.: Educate your daughter beforehand, by telling her about pubertal changes, beginning of menses, and developmental changes that are going to happen in them. Tell her that these are normal & happens with every girl at this age. Teach her about maintaining good hygiene & cleanliness from the very beginning.
Que.: How do I know if I’m just sad or if this is depression?

Ans.: Sadness is for short time. Can be carried away by change in the situation. Depression doesn’t have a same size, it looks different on everyone.

Is your sadness or anxiety affecting your ability to go to school, get your school work done, participate in your favourite activities, or be in friendships/relationships that feel satisfying? Do things that used to give you pleasure not give you any pleasure anymore? Have you been thinking about harming or killing yourself? Do you feel like your weight has decreased, or increased, or that you do not have the same appetite you had previously? Or do you feel like your sleep pattern has changed?

If this has been going for more than two weeks at least, then you are in depression and let somebody know so that you can take a step to get some support.

Que.: Do I need medication for my anxiety or depression? (and when can I stop it?)

Ans.: This is different for everyone. There is no “right” way, but we do know that medication helps when anxiety or depression is severely impacting your life. It’s okay to take a little help, and remember that taking medication is not a character flaw. You may be surprised by how much it helps you.

Do not feel ashamed in taking medication to support you through what may feel like a difficult time. Take the time to decide what’s best for you, have open conversations and ask your doctor the questions to clear your queries.

With regards to stopping medication, again, it is best to ask your psychiatrist. Remember, you may need to take it as long as it is helpful, so don’t set a time limit on that. Mental health is a day by day thing!

For both starting and stopping medicines, remember to consult a qualified psychiatrist.

Que.: If I’m already taking medication for my depression, do I need therapy? What does therapy consist of?

Ans.: Think of therapy as one more way to help heal. Therapy involves speaking to a professional who can be trusted, is non-judgemental and maintains confidentiality. You can talk about your concerns, the ways you cope, etc. A therapist is trained in recognizing and helping with any underlying issues.

Therapy provides a kind of crutch or support that will help you not just through this phase but even through life. Everyone should get therapy, whenever needed!

Que.: Will anti-depressant medicines make me a zombie?

Ans.: Antidepressants do not necessarily make you void of emotions. One can feel the highs and lows of the day even while on medication. The symptoms of depression will naturally make someone look lost, tired or zoned out.
“Emotional numbing” is a side effect seen with some antidepressants but not others, characterized by a kind of inertness, or an emotional blunting. As mentioned, they don't occur with all antidepressants, and there are ways to clear it.

It is also sometimes possible to feel a kind of “brain fog”, impairing your ability to think clearly, but it is a temporary side-effect that goes away with time.

**Que.: Does exercise help my depression?**

**Ans.:** A lot of people say things like, “Go for a walk, you will feel better! Try yoga!” This stems from the understanding that exercise releases endorphins, or “happy hormones”.

Now remember that depression isn't so cut and dry, so exercise is not a fix or a solution. But on the flipside, remember that mental health and physical health are linked inextricably. We do have studies suggesting that exercise in conjunction with professional help works.

So you can discuss exercise with your psychiatrist/therapist to come up with a plan that best suits your individual means and needs — simple stretches, yoga, a walk in the park; they're not going to 'cure' you but they're going to help you for early cure.

**Que.: How do I cheer my friend up? How do I support my friend who is struggling with depression?**

**Ans.:** Offer them a space to listen, without being judged. Let them know that you are there for them. Be present.

Ask them how you can help and give them space if that's what they require.

Sometimes when friends are struggling, they may push you away. Be patient. Let them know you love them unconditionally. It might be hard, but be there for them.

You can say things like. “I might not be able to fix your problem but I am here for you”, “You are not alone in this, we will get through this together”, “You can talk whatever is on your mind, if you want to.”

Make sure that they're getting the help they need, even if it means relying on an adult.

**Que.: How do I tell somebody that my friend is depressed or struggling, without making them hate me?**

**Ans.:** If they are comfortable telling you about their mental health, it means that they trust you. It's understandable to feel overwhelmed by the weight of what they are telling you, and it is better to be safe than sorry. Go to a trusted adult and make sure your friend gets the help they need.

Your friend may get angry at first but remember that things will get better in the long run. Once they get help they will feel much more relieved. It may take time, but if that's what they need, it's worth it.
Que.: My friend is telling me she wants to kill herself / my friend is posting suicidal things on social media – what should I do?
Ans.: Suicides can be preventable. If your friend is talking about or posting about self-harm, it's important to get them the support they need right away. Don't ignore these signs. Reach out to them, and let a concerned adult or mental health professional know.
Ask directly if you think your friend is in distress. You might feel that asking about it will make things worse or encourage them but it's not true. Talking about suicide does not make it any more likely for someone to act on those thoughts.
Be non-judgmental, let them know your concern for them.
Encourage them to contact professionals or counselling help lines.

Que.: With NEET coming up soon, I cannot focus on my studies, and I cannot remember anything. I'm feeling really stressed, what can I do?
Ans.: It's normal to feel stressed in such situations. Research says that stress can even be beneficial to performance! But that's only true up to a certain point. Beyond that, stress may actually hurt your performance. It's important to recognize that and do something about it.
Allow yourself the liberty to feel. It is valid.
Take breaks from studying, using things such as the Pomodoro technique, changing up the places you study, or “chunking” your study in parts.
Make sure you have a balanced diet, good sleep, and the rest will follow.

Que.: My boyfriend tells me he will attempt suicide when I try to break up with him. What do I do?
Ans.: Relationships are a tough thing to navigate. It can be easy to feel swept up in relationship drama, and things that you feel you must do for the sake of other people's peace.
But remember that your emotional health comes first. It's necessary to recognize the signs of emotional abuse, which may be threats like above. Emotional abuse make you feel empty, lose self-esteem, feel detached, become hopeless, and worse.
Direct your boyfriend to resources to help with his suicidal thoughts, but this should not come at the expense of your own mental health. If necessary, involve an adult or a mental health professional.

Que.: My friend died due to COVID-19, and I’m struggling with my grief. What do I do now?
Ans.: The loss of a loved one, especially one that is unanticipated, hurts all. We say that grief comes in waves, that it lessens with time, but it is still a painful thing that not everyone can process.
It's important that you stay connected with your loved ones, tough as it may be physically nowadays. At
stay connected with them via calls.
Sometimes, grief tends to be traumatic or complicated, which may lead to post-traumatic stress disorder or major depression.
Research has studied the use of expressions of creativity such as writing, storytelling, drawing, or journaling in counselling helps us work through trauma.

**Que.: These past few months I feel my mood, my tension, is out of my control, and I can't stop worrying, What do I do?**
**Ans.:** Anxiety is a common experience to us all. Normally it works as an 'alert' system. Sometimes it's helpful, but beyond a point if it's uncontrollable, it's not helping you.
It's not your enemy either. But it's easy to slip into that cycle where you have anxiety, then have anxiety about having anxiety, etc until it's a spiral you can't come out of. We call this 'generalized anxiety disorder'.
There are ways to interrupt this loss of control, such as practicing deep breathing, or using grounding techniques such as taking a shower, getting a cold glass of water, imagining a comfortable place, the 5-4-3-2-1 technique, etc.
It's also important to try and focus on things you can control. Distract yourselves from thoughts that are only causing you worry, that may take the form of journaling, or art, or anything that requires expression.

**Que.: Sometimes I suddenly get the urge to cry or feel my heart thudding, and I can't control it. I get the overwhelming feeling that I'm going to die. What is this?**
**Ans.:** That sounds like a panic attack. A panic attack is a sudden rush of intense fear or discomfort, and you might get a lot of physical symptoms with that – tight chest, difficulty breathing, palpitations. But don’t worry, it doesn’t mean you’re going to die.
Panic attacks are very common. They only become a “problem” if you are regularly worried about more attacks, or if you are afraid something bad will happen. It may lead to a spiral of more, and sometimes unexpected attacks.
But remember, this is treatable! Meditation, relaxation training, stress management, therapy, and medication a lot of options exist for this.

**Que.: Whenever I go to the canteen I feel like people are staring at me, so I avoid going there unless I'm with a friend. Is that unhealthy?**
**Ans.:** Many people are shy or afraid of at least some social situations, such as public speaking. You may have felt your palms get all sweaty and feeling all 'blank' when the teacher suddenly asks you to get up in front of the class. That's what we call performance anxiety.
When it starts extending to other aspects of your life, like you have an anxiety in situations where there are a lot of people, feeling like you're going to be judged or be embarrassed, then it looks like social anxiety. It's a disorder when you start avoiding these situations, or taking a friend's help to get through them, or if it causes you to feel overwhelmingly distressed. Social anxiety and performance anxiety both can be worked through in therapy and with the help of medication.

**Que.: Sometimes I feel sad, sometimes I feel happy. Does that make me bipolar?**

**Ans.:** We tend to, very casually, say things like “to bipolar hai”. The ups and downs of bipolar disorder are very different from common mood swings. People with bipolar may have extreme changes in energy, activity, and sleep that are not typical for them.

The symptoms may include being rash, getting irritable over the smallest of things, talking constantly, feeling as if they are on top of the world, etc.

Even Selena Gomez has bipolar disorder! Just because it's a mental illness doesn't mean you can't work. Medication, proper diet, regular routine, good sleep, and supportive family/friend network can help keep the disorder under control.

**Que.: If I keep washing my hands all the time, does that mean I have OCD (obsessive compulsive disorder)?**

**Ans.:** A lot of people think OCD is just “cleaning and arranging things all the time.” There's more to it than that. OCD is an anxiety disorder characterized by uncontrollable, unwanted thoughts and repetitive behaviors you feel you have to perform. The thought could be anything from a fear of losing control to fear of having an illness to fearing having bad things happen to other people.

To quote a tweet: “It's like getting a song stuck in your head, but instead of a song, it's your worst fears on repeat”

You may end up doing or even thinking things over and over in a bid to make it stop – called compulsions. The cycle of thoughts and compulsions is a vicious cycle, because while the thoughts may disappear momentarily, they tend to come back worse.

If you're experience these symptoms, remember, you are not alone. Help is out there, whether it be medications or therapy or both.

**Que.: Seeing everyone on Instagram have skinny bodies makes me feel awful about my own weight.**

**Ans.:** Remember that social media is very often an illusion. There is a lot of unnaturalness going on in what
you may think is natural. Unfortunately, they tend to impose on us goals which a lot of us may never achieve. We all tend to have some or the other issues with our body. Maybe you want to be taller, or shorter, or have thicker hair, etc. It's important to remember that your worth is not based on the way you look, and there is more to you than just your body.

Body dysmorphic disorder (BDD) is a condition in which you may experience thoughts regularly about an imperfection that you perceive in your body. It may lead to constantly checking it out in the mirror, or asking family and friends for assurance that it is ok, and it may even lead to avoidance of social interaction. It may also lead to a lot of unnecessary plastic surgery.

There are many types of help available for people suffering from BDD, such as “cognitive behavioural therapy” to help with the unwanted beliefs regarding your appearance, and medication to help with any super-added depression or anxiety.

**Que.: My friend, who used to be bullied about her weight, is eating very less lately. I think she's trying to get an ED, what should I do?**

**Ans.:** Eating disorders are not a ‘choice’. They are complicated illnesses that stem from a feeling of loss of control.

EDs come in many sizes and shapes: anorexia nervosa, which is an illness entailing an intense fear of gaining weight, with the person being typically underweight but refusing to accept it; or Bulimia which involves a greater loss of control such that someone may keep eating in 'binges' and then compensating by enemas or diet pills etc. Binge eating is just that—eating a large amount and feeling guilty about it.

It's rather common these days to indulge in 'keto' diets or 'detox' diets that shows up on Instagram as innocuous ads. This is not healthy. “Avoidant-restrictive food intake disorder” is the term we use for these fad diets that tend to be unhealthy on the body and lead to growth problems or problems with nutrition. Obsessive mirror-checking, excessive exercise, and frequent "do I look okay" remarks, leaving the table immediately after a meal, excess weight loss, efforts to cover up one's body; all of these are signs that you may need to intervene.

It's important to be empathetic and avoid blame. Express support, but also let them know you're concerned. Tell them that there are treatments available. Recovery is possible, and since EDs are actively harmful to your physical health, getting in touch with a mental health professional immediately may be very important.

**Que.: I spend hours online, how do I stop?**

**Ans.:** We are all very addicted to social media these days. It's still a phenomenon that is very much under research, but as netflix documentaries may have you know, it may be quite by design. The internet offers approval, fuels FOMO, helps relieve boredom, makes you feel less lonely – whatever is causing it, what we do know is that it may be as hard an addiction as drugs or alcohol, and it's not very good for us either. It can cause
depression, anxiety, lead to isolation, etc. While treatment options are limited, we are not without options. Therapy and medication is both being utilized for internet addiction.

**Que.: How do I cope with isolation?**

**Ans.:** There's a lot of things happening in the world right now, and it's a struggle for a lot of us. Structure and setting goals may help in this situation where everything seems unsure. Create a to-do list of essential tasks as well as tasks to help around the household. Reach out to friends and distant family. Learn a new thing, or do old things that you have liked, keep yourself busy even if it's not productive.

**Que.: When I tell people (family/relatives etc) am suffering from mental illness, they either outrightly reject the idea saying “Aisa Kuch hota Nahi hai” or offer their own solutions based on religion or habits or food cures or yoga/exercise. How do I respond?**

**Ans.:** Unfortunately, stigma does exist in our society. Because mental illnesses are not so apparent as physical illnesses, and because there's no objective measurement saying it exists, people may tend to dismiss it as “laziness” or “made up” or give unscientific cures from quacks. Support from our family or caregivers or friends can be crucial in managing our mental health needs. Often, a positive and supportive reaction can go a long way during tough times. Remind your friends and family that mental illnesses are just as real and just as debilitating as physical illnesses.

There are resources available online to help educate about common mental health problems. Social media offers multiple peer support to talk about mental health. Talk to someone you trust or talk to a mental health professional. It's important to remain firm in your belief and remind yourself that your feelings are valid.

**Que.: Does having a mental illness mean I am going to go crazy?**

**Ans.:** Having a mental illness does not make you “crazy”. Remember, not all mental illnesses are the same, just as how all physical illnesses are different. There are some mental illnesses which are seen more commonly and hence more “validated”, like depression. They can be treated. There are some illnesses which can have symptoms of psychosis, like hallucinations (seeing, hearing, smelling and feeling things that others don't), or delusions (feeling that every little thing is connected to you, or is a sign that is meant for you, or that someone is controlling you), or withdrawing from relationships, drastic
mood swings, etc. These symptoms can also be treated!
We tend to demonize the latter group of symptoms; thinking it is “bad” or that it is associated with criminals.
This is just not true in present day and age. Psychosis is also treatable, just as any other mental illness.
Remind yourself that having mental illness does not define who you are.

**Que.:** My teen is getting very irritable lately and doesn't listen to what I say. He seems moody and never wants to confide his problems with me. Should I approach a mental health professional for help?

**Ans.:** It is normal for adolescents to behave a bit erratically – they might look like little adults, but their brains are still developing. This means that they may be a little impulsive and bull-headed, a little less sensitive and a little more self-centered. Hormones are ruling the roost here, so their irritability and moodiness are just a phase.

Give it some time and have patience. If you feel that you may need some help with your teen, counsellors are available in schools to talk.

**Que.:** What is the difference between a counsellor, psychologist and a psychiatrist?

**Ans.:** A clinical psychologist or a “therapist” addresses mental health concerns usually through “talk therapy”. That includes “behavioural therapy”, “cognitive behavioural therapy”, “family therapy” etc.

A counselling psychologist is usually similar to a clinical psychologist, except they work with people who have less severe mental health problems such as adjustment with relationships or at school. They tend to work at institutions.

A psychiatrist is an MD doctor that work with a spectrum of mental health issues and can also prescribe medication. They are also qualified to do therapy.

**Que.:** How to talk to adolescents about their mental health?

**Ans.:** It is very important that you talk to your teen about their mental health. Adolescence is a starting point for a lot of emotional troubles, rebellion, and sometimes mental illnesses.

If you are concerned about your child's mental health, it is best to sit with them and let them know your concern. Create an environment where they can open up.

Ask open ended questions rather than asking yes/no questions. Be attentive.

Remind them that you are there for support.

Do not jump to give advice, do not react immediately. If your teen says they don't want to talk, allow them that as well.

It always helps to do your research on mental health issues as well.
Broach sensitive topics (drugs, sex, etc) with tact and gentleness.

**Que.: How does conflict in the family impact adolescents?**

**Ans.:** The relationship between parents tend to have a heavy impact on the minds of a teen. The absence of a parent, divorce, or frequent tensions between parents, including but not limited to domestic violence, verbal abuses, conflicts with in-laws, or even lack of communication between parents is perceived very presciently by the child.

 Teens tend to blame themselves for this behaviour. Parents sometimes also involve their teens in the conflicts, force kids to take ‘sides’ etc.

 It sets an example for intimacy in future relationships in their minds and predisposes to future relational issues.

 Depression, anxiety, low self-esteem are common outcomes.

 It is very important that communication between parents be healthy and transparent.

**Que.: If a parent is mentally ill, what are the chances of mental illness in an adolescent?**

**Ans.:** This differs from disorder to disorder. Lot of mental illnesses are heritable, yes, but there may be environmental factors at play.

 Psychiatric illnesses do not work on a yes/no dichotomy or in a linear fashion. Bipolarity may be heritable in up to 50% of people, and so may schizophrenia. Depression a little less so.

 It is best to consult your psychiatrist for further counselling regarding the disorder and chances of your adolescent having any psychiatric illness.

**Que.: How to deal with sibling rivalry at home?**

**Ans.:** Sibling rivalry is an issue that is frequently seen at homes. The older child who was once the ‘leader’ and the prime recipient of affection now finds himself at second place. It is a natural transitional period where he feels less attended to and may act out. Less mature kids may be more vulnerable to this.

 Sibling rivalry tends to continue through childhood.

 Remember not to play favourites and divide your attention equally. Try not to compare them. Plan fun activities for the family. Be fair to both children.

**Que.: If my child is mentally ill does this mean he needs to be admitted? Will he be able to marry anyone?**

**Ans.:** Mental illnesses comes in all flavours. The need for hospitalization depends on a mental health professional assessing whether there is a risk of harm to himself or to others, or if there is a danger of his
survival. Admission up till 18 years of age requires a guardian's consent, and mental health review boards are being set up over the country to look over this process. Your child being mentally ill does not mean that he does not have the same rights as all. The Mental Health Care Act makes sure that rights of the mentally ill are upheld the same way as everyone else's are. That means, yes, they can marry. There are support groups available online for the same.

**Que.: How to handle a teen's struggles about their sexuality?**

**Ans.:** The teenage years are the time when your adolescent tends to start exploring his sexuality. It is an ideal and indeed valuable time to initiate conversations about sexual health including genital hygiene, sexual health, and use of contraceptives. A lot of problems in adulthood stem from the lack of sexual health education in schools and among families. Teens may tend to adopt less desirous options such as the internet or peers for educating themselves about sexuality. Teenage pregnancies, STIs, and unsafe behaviours are now on the rise. So leave the awkwardness behind and have honest conversations with your children. Lead them to the proper online resources if necessary. Do not guilt trip. Teenagers may also be at the crux of exploring different sexualities or even alternate gender roles. Educate yourself with available online resources such as from the American Psychiatry Association. Learn to be accepting and open. If necessary, you can both sit down with a counsellor or a mental health professional and work together to figure it out.

**Que.: My child was certified as mentally retarded years ago. Is there any medication that will make him smarter?**

**Ans.:** The term now is "intellectually disabled" instead of "Mentally retarded" Mental development tends to stunt at a particular level depending on the level of intellectual disability. So even someone certified with "mild intellectual disability" will not learn further than a child in 6th standard. Think of it as a hand that has lost a finger; there is no medication that will help that finger grow back. But your child can learn to live with it. There are special education schools and rehabilitation centres available. A teen with ID may still be able to hold jobs as per his capacity and around the household. Medication, if necessary, is only for disruptive behaviour.

**Que.: If a teen is suffering from dyslexia, what resources are available for them?**

**Ans.:** Specific learning disabilities (SLDs) are a heterogenous group of conditions with deficit in writing,
reading, processing language, comprehension, calculation, etc. The government allows certification and special concession for children suffering from any of these conditions.

The child's IQ should be above a certain level and other disorders ruled out. Government health authorities can guide you here.

Special educators can help teens with SLD with specific educational strategies. Accommodative strategies such as audio books, individualized assessments to help teens, remedial education (including repeated revision), and technological aids such as recording devices and smart apps are on the rise.

**Que.: What to do if your child is lazy and gets into trouble with teachers often? They always complain that he barely pays attention.**

**Ans.:** These may be signs pointing towards ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder). There are signs that may be present since before they were twelve such as:

- Being restless, fidgety.
- Interrupting conversations, speaking constantly
- Losing things easily, or daydreaming all the time
- Trailing off while talking
- Having problems sticking to goals, routines, etc.

ADHD is quite often under recognized. There are resources available online to educate yourself, and have your child assessed for ADHD by a qualified mental health professional.

Getting treated for ADHD may be quite life-changing for a lot of kids. Medication options are available to get not just their emotional regulation under control but also help focus.

**Que.: What are the options for adolescents who feel less interested in school and want to drop out?**

**Ans.:** There may be a lot of reasons for adolescents wanting to drop out of school. It may be due to being bullied or having a lack of teacher-support at school, getting in with 'the wrong crowd', practicing risky behaviours like drugs, dissatisfaction with the educational system or a lack of comfort with academic education.

It is best to sit down with your adolescent and give them an open environment to discuss their school absenteeism.

Do not push them to take one decision or another, and if necessary, consult a mental health professional trained in child and adolescent issues to explore options.
**Que.: Can school-related tension cause nausea or stomach aches?**

**Ans.:** The relationship between the gut and brain is well-known. Studies have linked emotional stresses to symptoms such as nausea, abdominal pain, diarrhoea, etc. Stress from school may also lead to your teen taking regular leaves or coming back from school early. To combat any school-related stress, teach mindfulness or meditation practices. Make sure they have balanced meals and good sleep. Reach out to your teens, and help create space for activities apart from educational ones.

**Que.: An adolescent start acting uneasy and paranoid, thinks innocuous calls are about him, stays home all day, doesn't talk to his friends anymore. Is this normal?**

**Ans.:** Social withdrawal, paranoia, and feeling that things are referencing him may be signs of psychosis. For young males, especially, adolescence may be the time that psychotic disorders start to present themselves. If your teen is exhibiting signs such as cutting off all contact, talking to himself, saying he ‘hears voices’ or other generally odd things, it may be a cause for concern and may need to be evaluated by a mental health professional. The earlier the intervention for potential psychotic disorders, the better will be the prognosis.

**Que.: How to help an adolescent grieving a parent's death?**

**Ans.:** Grief after a parent's death can be difficult for a teen to go through. Adolescents tend to lack the maturity of an adult and may act out in ways that may be difficult for newly-single parent to handle. It could lead to a child regressing to behaving like a kid, or lashing out emotionally at the parent. It could also lead to a moody teen, or a teen who does not stay at home or barely interacts. Make sure that both you and your child get the right counselling post death of a parent. Remember that this is a traumatic time for both of you and it is not wrong to ask for time and support to heal.

**Que.: What are the signs of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder in a teen and how do I help?**

**Ans.:** PTSD tends to occur after following exposure to “extreme psychological trauma”. This traumatic event could be something like witnessing death, injury, being assaulted (physically or sexually), being in an accident, or a natural disaster. Symptoms could be as vast as having nightmares, flashbacks, not sleeping, feeling guilty, anxious, hopeless, or numb. They may tend to self-destructive behaviours. PTSD, especially that following abuse, tends to be hidden away by the child and not expressed to families, disguised as depression or as physical complaints. It is important to keep an open mind and contact mental health services. Treatment for PTSD ranges from
therapy to medication that will help your adolescent.

Que.: My child has been fainting frequently since the past two months. She seems to be stressed out by her nearing exams, but she won't tell me. Is this normal?

Ans.: Make sure to rule out any sort of epileptic seizures with a neurologist.

Functional Neurological Disorders (FNDs) tend to follow stressful life events (although not always), and are usually distinct from neurological disorders in that there are no discernible structural issues and an inconsistent clinical picture.

It used to be called “hysteria”. People can experience tremors, seizures, weakness, pain, or lose the ability to speak.

We know that FNDs may lead to a poor quality of life and constant issues if not intervened early. So get them to a mental health professional as soon as is possible.

Que.: I have seen my child pull out her hair and bite her nails when alone. How do I stop this?

Ans.: Pulling out hair, picking skin, biting nails, chewing cheeks, etc. are part of “body focused repetitive behaviours”. This is an umbrella term for self-grooming disorders including trichotillomania (hair pulling) and excoriation (skin picking disorders).

It may lead to damage such as patchy hair loss or scarring to the skin.

These behaviours don't tend to stop by “just telling them to stop”, and may cause guilt and anxiety in the teens. Teens may already be suffering from shame and self-consciousness due to these intrusive behaviours. What we do know is that for most, these behaviours feel good and self-soothing. Injury to the self is not intentional, but a consequence of the behaviour.

These behaviours are hard to overcome, but therapists can use strategies to manage these behaviours as well. Medication that is helpful for OCD may also help with this condition.
**Que.: What is the normal duration of menstrual cycle?**

**Ans.:** Menstrual cycle may occur every 22 to 35 days with an average of 28 days. Normal Menstrual flow can last from 2 to seven days.

**Que.: I get period every 25 days while other girls get it every 30 days. Does that make me abnormal?**

**Ans.:** If you get menses after a fixed interval ranging between 22 to 35 days then you are normal. Cycles can be irregular for first 2 years of starting menses as the hormonal axis takes time to mature.

**Que.: I get menses every 45 to 60 days. What is wrong with me?**

**Ans.:** Menses are considered delayed when they occur after more than 35 days, persisting beyond 2 years of starting menses and needs to be investigated. Consult your gynecologist to rule out endocrinological problems like hypothyroidism, diabetes, polycystic ovarian syndrome etc.

**Que.: I am 15 years old but not yet got my menses. All my classmates have started getting their periods. Do I have a problem?**

**Ans.:** Primary amenorrhea is defined as the failure of initiation of menses by age 14 in the absence of secondary sexual characteristics or the absence of menarche by age 16 regardless of the presence of normal growth and development of secondary sexual characteristics like breast development, growth of axillary and pubic hair etc.

Primary amenorrhea is generally caused by anatomical defects, hormonal imbalance or gonadal dysgenesis which includes most commonly Turner syndrome.

If secondary sexual characteristics have started developing, you can wait up to 16 years age for periods to start. Beyond that it is best to get yourself evaluated by a doctor.

**Que.: I get severe cramping pain during menses and sometimes miss school due to it. Please advise.**

**Ans.:** Dysmenorrhoea or menstrual pain is common among adolescent girls. It usually starts a day or two prior to menses and is maximum on day 1 or 2 of menses. The pain usually declines after that. Primary dysmenorrhoea usually gets better after marriage or birth of the first child.

You can reduce dysmenorrhoea by having a balanced diet, exercise and by avoiding smoking and caffeine.
**Que.: Do I need to be investigated for painful menses. What medications can I take for the same?**

**Ans.:** Painful periods are common in teenagers and typically occurs 1 or 2 days before onset and peaks on day 1 or 2 of menses after which it declines.

If the pain peaks at the end of menstrual flow or persists well after menses stops, or interferes greatly with routine activities, it needs evaluation. A sonographic evaluation of pelvis for conditions like endometriosis, pelvic inflammatory disease, pelvic masses etc is advisable.

Mild anti spasmodic anti-inflammatory drugs like Cyclopam or Meftal spas can be taken to relieve symptoms. However, it is prudent to take medication under medical supervision and avoid self-medication.

**Que.: I get lots of pimples especially just before getting my periods. Can you suggest a quick fix?**

**Ans.:** Acne, or pimples as they are commonly called, are a common occurrence during teenage. They occur due to over activity of androgens which is a physiological change during Adolescent age. There are no quick fixes but the following tricks usually work.

Wash your face with mild face wash 2 to 3 times a day. Avoid using oil-based creams and make up. Make sure to get your dandruff treated as it may worsen the pimples. Never pick at the pimples or burst them as that may leave permanent scars. Do consult a doctor if they are persistent or develop pus discharge.

**Que.: I have excess hair on the moustache and chin area causing lot of embarrassment to me. How do I deal with it?**

**Ans.:** Excess facial hair or hirsutism is caused by overactive androgens. It is usually caused by hormonal imbalance, commonly polycystic ovarian disease but genetic predisposition also plays a role. You can consult a gynecologist and get yourself evaluated. Treatment is in the form of hormonal therapy and cosmetic treatment like laser, electrolysis, waxing etc.

**Que.: Is it ok to have white discharge especially just before periods?**

**Ans.:** White discharge is a common occurrence in young girls. It is normal to have sticky clear or mucous discharge similar to nasal discharge. It usually starts immediately after menses and disappears after a few days. It may reappear 3 to 4 days before the next menses. If however the discharge is colored, offensive smelling or makes your private parts itchy, it indicates presence of infection and needs to be treated.

**Que.: My daughter is now 10 years old. Is there any way for presumption of the first period?**

**Ans.:** Girls between the age of 9-11 years usually develop certain physical changes in their body over the time. These include slight increase in the breast size and appearance of body hair in the armpits and the private parts. These changes usually start about 2 years before the first period. Also, there may be increased
vaginal discharge just before the first period. Sometimes, crampy pains may be associated before the bleeding appears.

**Que.: What do we tell our daughter about the first period and when?**

**Ans.:** This is an especially important and relevant question. It is important that the parents (mothers usually) choose a quiet, free time to explain to their daughters about what to expect. This can happen anytime from the age of 8-9 years of age (i.e., about 3-4th standard). This subject can be broached even when questions pop up in the girls’ minds, for e.g., while seeing an ad on TV about sanitary pads.

It would be prudent to tell her about the changes that the body undergoes in terms of breast development, hair growth, increase in height, change in the body shape and emotional changes etc. Regarding the first period, it would be important to tell her to expect some bloody discharge on her panties or in the toilet and reassure her and say it is a normal phenomenon of growing up and is an important event in her development towards a mature woman.

Showing her pictures of the uterus and ovaries (in her biology textbook) would help her understand better.

**Que.: My daughter is having pain in the lower abdomen for a few months. Should I be worried?**

**Ans.:** The uterus is the organ in the lower abdomen which has a lining (womb/ baby bed) that develops due to hormonal changes occurring during this age. When there is a certain change in the levels of these hormones, the lining is shed as a period. There may be pain associated with this as the muscle in the uterus contracts and the small arteries in the uterine muscle get squeezed. This usually happens during the flow.

However, if there is only pain and no external bleeding every month, this needs to be evaluated by a gynaecologist to rule out any obstruction to the flow.

**Que.: The first period was very light, almost like staining the panties. Is that normal?**

**Ans.:** The first period is always very variable. It may be like just a brownish stain on the panty or like a light flow. It also may be a very heavy one in some girls. However, the flow will tend to normalise over the months and years to come.

**Que.: After the first period, my daughter has not had a period at all for 3 months. What should I do? My daughter's cycles are very irregular since the first period. Should I be worried?**

**Ans.:** The hormone signalling from the brain to the ovaries and the uterus takes some time to mature. Hence the cycles during the first 2 years following the first period (menarche) may be irregular. They usually normalise to a regular cycle lasting anywhere between 21-35 days over time.
However, if the girl is gaining a lot of weight during this time, or develops excessive facial hair and pimples, she may need to be evaluated by a gynaecologist.

Que.: The flow is always very less and she soaks only half a pad. Is that ok?
Ans.: The flow during periods is again subjective to many factors such as individual pattern, obesity, stress, diet and exercise. Also, the amount of blood loss is estimated subjectively. If there is 2-7 days of flow, there is usually nothing to worry about.

Que.: My daughter did not have periods for 3 months and now she is bleeding continuously for the last 10 days?
Ans.: This can happen during puberty when the HPO (Hypothalamo-Pitutary-Ovarian) axis is still immature. The bleeding that happens after a long gap can be heavy associated with clots that can make her anaemic.
If the flow is very heavy or prolonged, it would be best to evaluate her clinically by a gynaecologist, look for anaemia and treat the heavy flow with medicine.

Que.: The flow is very heavy with big clots and she is feeling very tired. What should we do? The pain and the cramps are so severe that she misses school for 2-3 days every month. How do I manage this?
Ans.: If the flow is associated with clots, it usually will be heavy. In general, the entire menstrual flow is about 20-50 ml. If it exceeds 80 ml, it is defined as heavy. Since menstrual blood flow cannot be measured, a rough guide would be to look for:

- Soaking a large pad completely every 2 hours or
- Passing clots,
- Flooding in the toilet,
- Staining bed linen,
- Feeling tired and
- Also feeling exhausted or
- Having palpitations (hearing one's own heart beat)

If this is the case, it would be prudent to check for any underlying causes of heavy bleeding such as

- Bleeding or coagulation disorders
- Thyroid problems
- Anaemia (low Hb) etc

An evaluation by a gynaecologist is essential for necessary investigations and treatment.
Some girls may experience severe debilitating pain while some may not have any pain at all. If the pain is mild to moderate i.e., on a pain scale of 1-10, about 2-6, simple stretches, exercises and some yoga asanas might help. Also, hot water bag fomentation, massage or lying in certain positions may help. If severe in intensity, some simple painkillers may be prescribed to improve quality of life and avoid missing school. However, these medications must be prescribed by a doctor and not bought over the counter.

**Que.: What are the specific measures to be taken towards hygiene during periods?**

**Ans.:** Personal hygiene must be emphasised to girls of this age. Other than daily bath, washing in the private areas and armpits with mild soap and water, washing scalp and hair at least twice a week, trimming nails and keep hair lice-free, brushing teeth twice a day, rinsing with sufficient water and wearing clean undergarments and clothes; it is important to have a regular schedule with meals, sleep, study, play and exercise.

Menstrual hygiene includes the following:

- Wearing sanitary pads or cloth pads after a shower with a fresh pair of cotton panties (avoid synthetic material)
- Changing the pad as soon as it is soaked towards the edges or completely or in 4 hours whichever is earlier
- Wash the private area thoroughly during shower and if possible, during every change with the faucet
- Use tissues or a designated soft towel to wipe off the excess water before putting a new pad on.
- Soak cloth pads in plain water until the stain dissolves and then wash in warm soapy water, rinse and dry in bright sunlight until completely dry and moisture-free
- Dispose disposable sanitary pads in an air-tight plastic bag or in a newspaper and dispose in the designated air-tight bin
- Use of re-usable sanitary napkins is recommended to avoid the hazards of bio-medical waste.

**Que.: Are disposable sanitary pads okay to be used?**

**Ans.:** Disposable sanitary pads have been used for many years now for the convenience and effective protection they offer. However, they are non-bio-degradable and made of various chemicals and plastics to improve appearance and absorbability.

- These pads may cause local skin reactions, chafing and certain infections if not changed regularly.

- The huge amount of sanitary waste produced also has several environmental implications. Burning them at sub-optimal temperatures releases harmful toxins into the atmosphere. They make landfills that attract insects, rodents and animals. If disposed in sewers, they clog sewers, and the sanitary workers are exposed to the bad odours and infections upon handling them.
• In the recent times, there has been a massive drive towards sustainable options of menstrual hygiene such as reusable cloth pads and menstrual cups.

Que.: Are cloth pads better for period hygiene?
Ans.: Cloth pads are available in various types. Most of them are made up of good quality cotton with many layers to improve absorbency. They are also designed to offer comfort similar to the disposable pads, with wings and buttons to secure to the panty.
They offer a hygienic way of managing periods as they are body and skin friendly and do not cause chemical related reactions.
Having 3-4 pads would help recycle them during the period and drying them completely after a thorough hand wash would keep them ready for the next period.

Que.: Can menstrual cups be used? If so, when and what are the advantages?
Ans.: Menstrual cups are inert, silicone-based, well-designed cups available in 2-3 different sizes and are a very convenient and comfortable way of managing periods in adults.
However, in young children with an intact hymen, it would be better to avoid them.
Once the young girl grows into an adult and wishes to make her own choices for menstrual hygiene, she may start using them.
Advantages include-
• Inert material, safe for vaginal use
• Easy to use as one learns to insert it with the right technique
• No odour as no contact of blood with air
• Liberating feeling as one can go about all the routine activities including exercise, running, sport etc
• Cost-effective as one cup lasts for nearly 5-8 years and costs around INR 300-1000
• Eco-friendly as reduces use of several disposable pads

Que.: How should my daughter change pad in the school?
Ans.: 
• Carrying 2-3 pads to school during periods would be prudent.
• The change of pads should be done once in 4-6 hours depending on the flow. Leaving it longer than 6 hours may lead to bad odour, itching, burning and discomfort and sometimes infections.
• The school toilets must be kept clean and have closed bins for disposing sanitary waste.
It would be ideal to carry some newspaper and tissues to school for disposing and wiping respectively.
- Cloth pads may be rolled up and kept in a small plastic bag and kept in a specific compartment in the school bag and soaked in plain water as soon as she reaches home.

**Que.: She is very conscious of herself during periods as she had stained herself once and her classmates made fun of her?**

**Ans.:** Periods are a natural event in a girl's life. All the girls in schools should be sensitive to each other's needs. They must be able to talk freely about their problems and support each other. Teachers may also sensitise the boys in the class about these monthly cycles in girls and their importance in reproductive life. Parents also have a responsibility of building tolerance and sensitivity towards menstruation and not treat periods as taboo.

If the girl does stain herself, she may talk to the teachers and request for a change or be allowed to go home early if required. Many girls carry their sweaters, jackets to school during these times to tie them around their waist and conceal the stain.

**Que.: I am having a lot of rashes and itching in my inner thighs and private area after every period. What should I do?**

**Ans.:** Rashes and itching on the inner thighs can happen due to chafing, friction by the edges of the pad on the skin. Over time, there may be reddish lines or rashes and even cuts, if not taken care of.

Changing pads regularly, avoiding certain activities which may increase chafing may help. Also, application of plain coconut or olive oil, vaseline or nappy creams can help soothe the area and prevent them from getting worse. Exposing that area to air to keep it dry will also help by avoiding moisture and sweat causing further burning and infection.

**Que.: I have terrible mood swings before every period for the last 6 months and don't know what to do about it. It affects my studies and college work too?**

**Ans.:** Mood changes leading on to the periods are common in many girls and women. If they occur regularly for more than 6 months, they may need to be evaluated.

This may include feeling low, lethargic, sleep disturbances, bloating, headaches, emotional liability and feeling emotional.

Many a times, they are mild and can be coped with. Diet changes such as avoiding high fat, sugar and spice can help. Exercises and certain yogaasanas can help.

However, if the symptoms are very disturbing, an evaluation by a gynaecologist should be done to rule out certain other disorders. Certain vitamins and medicines may be prescribed after a thorough evaluation.
**Que.: Is there any special diet during periods that I need to follow?**

**Ans.:** During periods, it becomes more important. The menstrual diet includes eating at regular intervals, drinking plenty of water, avoiding sugary and fizzy drinks, avoiding HFSSS foods (high fat, sugar, salt, spice), eating plenty of greens and citrous fruits, taking an iron rich diet (dry fruits, greens, millets etc).

**Que.: Is exercise during periods okay? If so, is there any specific regime to follow?**

**Ans.:** Yes, exercise during periods is okay to carry on. Walking and swimming are good exercises to indulge in.

In fact, there are some advantages of doing light and moderate level of exercise during these days to improve mood and flexibility and relieve cramps.

Yoga, pilates, stretches are very good in relieving cramps and improving mood especially in the days leading up to the period.

**Que.: I tend to get severe headaches during my period. They are really debilitating. What do I do?**

**Ans.:** Both estrogen and progesterone hormones are at the lowest during the menstruation. Hence energy levels may be low.

Also, some girls and women experience menstrual headaches, abdominal migraine or even severe mental health issues like depression and premenstrual syndrome and premenstrual dysphoric disorder which may need to be evaluated by a gynaecologist or even a psychiatrist and treatment may have to be initiated on an individualised basis.

**Que.: My daughter has not had her first period yet. She is already 15 years of age. I am worried.**

**Ans.:** Menarche or the first period usually happens between ages 11-14 years of age. Most girls have their first period at the age of 12-13 years.

The body undergoes changes such as breast development and hair growth around 2-3 years prior to the first period. Hence, if these changes have occurred by the age of 13 years, waiting until age 15 or 16 for the first period is recommended.

However, if there are no such changes by the age of 14 years and if no period by age 16, a gynaecologist needs to be consulted.

**Que.: My daughter who is only 9 years old has had her first period. Is it not too early?**

**Ans.:** This would be considered an early menarche. If there are no concerns with short stature, this can be treated as normal.

If a girl attains her first period before or at the age of 8, it is considered a precocious puberty and further
evaluation is required.
The optimal height may not be reached due to early fusion of the bone epiphyses and hence a gynaecological and paediatric endocrinologist consultation is recommended.
Also, precocious puberty may be associated with other endocrinological disorders and tumours.

**Que.: My grandmother says that I should stay out of the kitchen during my periods. Why does she say that?**
**Ans.:** Unfortunately, there are lot of myths associated with menstruation. Girls are not allowed into religious places and functions during these days. They are also not allowed to participate in rituals during periods.
Girls are considered impure and unhygienic during the periods and are not allowed into kitchens and not allowed to touch food items as they may spoil them.
These myths and superstitions are slowly disappearing from our society. We need to build awareness amongst girls, parents, and the society at large about menstrual hygiene and bust these myths which may lead to emotional and social problems amongst girls and women.

**Que.: Is it safe to postpone periods for some important functions etc?**
**Ans.:** It is not uncommon to extend the period around an important function, exam or interview or even wedding.
Many girls wish to postpone or advance their periods. In general, letting the cycle be as natural as possible is recommended. Using hormonal medications to postpone periods may affect the cycle and cause unnecessary disturbances in the cycle and other hormonal disturbances.
Hence, as far as possible, it is better to avoid using medications to change cycle patterns.

**Que.: I have irregular cycles. I am gaining a lot of weight and developing pimples and excessive thick facial hair on my face. What should I do?**
**Ans.:** Irregular cycles associated with acne (pimples) and unwanted thick facial hair can be an indication of a hormonal and metabolic disorder called polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS).
Weight gain may also be associated with PCOS.
If these symptoms are present, a gynaecologist evaluation is recommended

**Que.: Can a girl become pregnant as soon she starts menstruating?**
**Ans.:** The menstrual cycle is a physiological cycle that happens inside the body, and is visible externally as bleeding. It is called commonly as a period.
The egg grows inside one of the ovaries every cycle and is released in the middle of the cycle. The period or shedding of the lining of the womb happens exactly 14 days after the egg release (ovulation).

Pregnancy happens when the sperm from a male fuses with the egg during or around the ovulation. Hence, pregnancy is possible as soon as a girl starts menstruating because ovulation may take place.

**Que.: Is it safe to be sexually active during periods?**

**Ans.:** Any girl or young lady who is sexually active needs to be careful about avoiding sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancy and hence needs to consult a gynaecologist for contraceptive options.

If one is having a regular cycle, the period from the first day of the cycle up to 7 days is usually a safe period for sex as ovulation doesn't happen until the mid-cycle. However, it is always better to use protection in the form of condoms to be sure and to avoid an infection during the periods.

Also, some women may have pain whilst having sex during periods.

**Que.: What are the ways a young girl can reach out for help regarding her period issues?**

**Ans.:** A young girl or woman can reach out to her parents, teachers as the first source of help.

A paediatrician who she has been consulting all this while can certainly help guide her.

Also, an adolescent health specialist (either a gynaecologist or a paediatrician) can certainly be of help to manage the period-related and other issues.

Some genuine and informative websites also may be looked up such as these:

- [https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/periods/period-problems/](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/periods/period-problems/)
- [https://www.healthline.com/health/menstrual-problems](https://www.healthline.com/health/menstrual-problems)

**Que.: What should boys know about girls' periods?**

**Ans.:** All parents who have two children of different sex should explain about the monthly periods to the brother as well. So that he understands his sister's cycles.

Even boys without sisters need to understand that girls of a certain age will start having periods every month during which time they may need to be treated with, kindness and compassion.

They also need to understand that periods are important for the reproductive health of girls/women.

Biology lessons in schools usually help them understand the basis of menstrual cycles.

Parents should take this opportunity to sensitise their children about periods.
**Que.: What is anemia?**
Ans.: Anemia means there are not enough red blood cells in the body. Red blood cells are filled with hemoglobin, a special pigmented protein that makes it possible to carry and deliver oxygen to other cells in the body. The cells in your child's muscles and organs need oxygen to survive, and decreased numbers of red blood cells can place stress on the body.

**Que.: Why adolescents are more prone for anemia?**
Ans. Because there is rapid growth when a child becomes an adolescent. That is why there is increased demand of all nutrients and especially iron, for production of hemoglobin. So anaemia is common in adolescents.

**Que.: Why girls are affected more than boys?**
Ans.: Because the girls start menstruation when they step up in an adolescent age group. So there is potential loss of blood. And as compare to the boys, especially in India, the diet of girls is compromised. So anaemia is common in girls. Almost 7 out of 10 girls are anemic in India.

**Que.: What are the common reasons for anemia?**
Ans.: If your child's body
- Does not produce enough red blood cells. This can happen if she does not have enough iron or other nutrients in her diet (e.g. iron-deficiency anemia).
- Destroys too many red blood cells. This type of anemia usually happens when a child has an underlying illness or has inherited a red blood cell disorder (e.g. sickle-cell anemia).
- Loses red blood cells through bleeding. This can either be obvious blood loss, such as heavy menstrual bleeding, or long-term low-grade blood loss, perhaps in the stool.

**Que.: What are the common signs and symptoms of anemia?**
Ans.:  
- Pale or sallow (yellow) skin  
- Pale cheeks and lips  
- Lining of the eyelids and the nail beds may look less pink than normal  
- Irritability  
- Mild weakness  
- Tiring easily, napping more frequently  
- Children experiencing red blood cell destruction may become jaundiced (yellowing of the skin or eyes)
and have dark tea or cola-colored urine
• Children with severe anemia may have additional signs and symptoms:
  • Shortness of breath
  • Rapid heart rate
  • Swollen hands and feet
  • Headaches
  • Dizziness and fainting
  • Restless leg syndrome

Que.: My child eats non-foods, why is so?
Children with anemia caused by very low levels of iron in their blood may also eat strange non-food things such as ice, dirt, clay, paper, cardboard, and cornstarch. This behavior is called “pica”. Pica often occurs in children who are low in iron and can cause constipation. In these children, the pica usually stops after the anemia is treated with iron supplements.

Que.: What can be effects of Anemia on my child?
Ans.: Even a low level of anemia can affect your child's energy, focus, and ability to learn. Chronic iron deficiency anemia can result in long-term, permanent impairment of development. In most cases, a simple blood count can diagnose anemia.

Que.: My girl is having low hemoglobin values. How can I prevent my child from becoming anemic?
Ans.: Iron-deficiency anemia and other nutritional anemias can be prevented by ensuring that your child eats a well-balanced diet. Talk with your doctor about any specific dietary restrictions in your household as your child may require a nutritional supplementation to prevent anemia. Iron rich food items like Garden Cress seeds, Cow Pea leaves (Chawali), Matki, Sesame seeds, Turmeric powder, Spinach, Dates, Apple, Jaggery and many more. You should supplement ample of proteins along with iron supplement in the form of eggs, Paneer, Soyabean, Fish, Non-Veg food.

Que.: My daughter is anemic. We are planning for her marriage. What can be the problems further?
Ans.: You should consult the doctor and treat her anemia. The cause can be different than nutritional anemia. For eg. she can have some disease like sickle cell anemia, or Thalassemia, or any other one. But if she becomes pregnant in anemic condition then this can be problematic not only for her health, but to the health of her baby also. She can land up in lots of complications.
**Que.: What Causes Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS)?**

**Ans.**: Polycystic ovarian syndrome, is the result of hormonal imbalance, with increased resistance to the actions of insulin and increased blood levels of androgens (male hormones). This imbalance leads to menstrual irregularities along with other symptoms like excessive & abnormal hair growth and acne.

**Que.: Is PCOS a hereditary disease?**

**Ans.**: PCOS has hereditary origin. This can be proved by the fact that, the patients of PCOS are found in families, especially in close relatives.

**Que.: Which are the types of PCOS?**

**Ans.**: There are 4 types of PCOS, namely insulin resistance, pill induced, inflammatory & hidden. Proper history, examination and investigations would lead to proper diagnosis and further management.

**Que.: Which can be the symptoms which may suggest that a girl has PCOS?**

**Ans.**: A teenage girl with PCOS may present with various symptoms. She may have combination of symptoms which may include irregularity in menstruation, majorly prolonged duration with lesser flow, unwanted hair growth over chest, back, arms, legs and face, acne, patches of dark skin, also known as “Acanthosis Nigricans”, hair may get thinner and weight gain. Presenting with just symptoms is not sufficient to label the girl having PCOS. Having patience till the cause can be identified so as to treat the real problem is must rather than getting apprehensive abruptly.

**Que.: How can PCOS in adolescence be diagnosed?**

**Ans.**: Around 6 to 18% of adolescent girls have PCOS across the world, and incidence may vary according to region and other factors. Majorly two symptoms, which are present in ABSENCE of any other explanation, are given consideration for diagnosing PCOS in teenage girls, namely-

1. Abnormal uterine bleeding, which may be abnormal for her age and persistent for 1-2 years
2. Evidences of increased male hormone levels in the form of abnormal hair growth or acne or increased level of male hormone in the blood tests.

**Que.: When can I label my daughter's menstrual cycles to be irregular?**

**Ans.**: Irregular menstrual cycle can be defined according to the period following menarche.

- Don't consider it irregular for first two years.
- If cycles are less than 21 days or more than 45 days: 3 yrs after the start of cycle.
- If less than 21 or more than 35 days: From 4 yrs to Perimenopausal age. OR
- Less than 8 cycles per YEAR.
- More than 90 days cycle even for ONCE 1 yr after menarche.
- No menses by the age of 15 yrs or > 3 years post breast bud development.

**Que.: What causes irregular menstrual cycle?**

**Ans.:** Normally, Pituitary gland sends signals in a pulsatile manner to ovaries. Ovaries in turn responds by releasing ovum. Fourteen days after ovulation, menstruation occurs. In case of PCOS, signal from pituitary gland gets deranged, leading to delayed or non-ovulation, thus contributing to irregular menstrual cycle.

**Que.: I am 15 years old and have been diagnosed to have PCOS. My major concern is acne, I want to know why acne happens in this condition?**

**Ans.:** Normally, every female has testosterone, but at a minimum level, not having visible cosmetic effects. In PCOS, girls have high levels of testosterone. Glands in skin and hair follicles are extremely sensitive to testosterone thus causing acne and hirsutism in these girls.

**Que.: I am a girl of 16 years, having PCOS. Do I need to get checked for thyroid disorder as I also have weight gain?**

**Ans.:** Yes, in patients with primary hypothyroidism, increase in ovarian volume along with cystic changes have been noted. Thyroid disorders are more common with girls with PCOS as compared to girls without PCOS.

**Que.: What is insulin resistance? I have been hearing this term in relation to my PCOS?**

**Ans.:** When target cells of insulin action starts responding to insulin to lesser and lesser extent, blood sugar rises, which in turn, leads to increased insulin levels. This rise in insulin, in long run, leads to development of diabetes mellitus, as there is resistance to this Insulin. As previously discussed, this is associated with dark patches on neck or other parts of body (acanthosis nigricans) as well.

**Que.: Why this term “Polycystic ovarian syndrome”?**

**Ans.:** In this disorder, ovarian follicles are formed, but the ova are rarely released, leading to formation of enlarged ovaries along with many cysts, mainly at the periphery, along with thickened ovarian wall. A syndrome is a term used to describe existence of many symptoms and signs together, as is the case with polycystic ovarian syndrome.
Que.: Can stress be attributable to PCOS?
Ans.: Girls with PCOS usually have anxiety and may undergo depression due to their physical appearance. There is an association of mental problems with PCOS as shown in some of the studies. We are living in a world where PCOS and depression both are rising consistently independently. Their combination is getting more common and needs to be focused while managing any case of PCOS, specially so in these teenage girls.

Que.: Can there be temperament issues with PCOS? As my daughter is getting more and more angry, from the time we were told that she has got PCOS?
Ans.: Temperamental issues are attributed to hormonal changes and body image. There are times when cosmetic problems are mocked at, due to immaturity of peer groups. In such a case, lending a listening ear, along with psychological and emotional support, meditation and yoga are helpful in addition to medical management.

Que.: I am 15 years old and recently been told that I have PCOS. Can there be problems with my height due to this disease?
Ans.: Studies focused on effect of PCOS on height have concluded that, this syndrome does not have any detrimental effect on height gain of patients, as compared their healthy counterparts.

Que.: What are long term consequences of PCOS?
Ans.: PCOS in long run, may lead to development of many diseases. Diabetes mellitus, hypertension, obesity, cardiac diseases, high cholesterol levels, abnormal uterine bleeding and cancers of uterus, intestine, kidney etc. have been found to occur in patients with PCOS. PCOS is also associated with negative impact on emotional health, disorders related to eating and infertility.

Que.: One of my friends is diagnosed to be having PCOS. I think I too might have similar symptoms. Which speciality consultant should I consult?
Ans.: It is better to consult a gynaecologist for any doubt/suspicion of PCOS. An endocrinologist would help in case of hormonal imbalances not controlled with routine medications. Role of dermatologist is needed specially in cases of acne and hirsutism, which may need local treatment. Dietician is preferred to be consulted for proper guidance on composition and frequency of diet keeping in mind physical activity and exercise. In cases of anxiety and/or depression, counselling sessions and in severe cases, consultation with psychiatrist is to be taken.
**Que.: What is the treatment in brief for teenage girls with PCOS?**

**Ans.:** PCOS management is multidisciplinary. Various lifestyle changes in form of regular aerobic exercise, curbing high sugary drinks/diet, avoidance of smoking is very important. Counselling sessions may be required as needed. Medicines in form of hormonal combined oral contraceptive pills regulate menses and hormones, along with reduction in acne and hirsutism. Metformin helps in alleviating insulin resistance, increases insulin sensitivity, decreases androgens and improves cardiovascular health. Metformin has been found to be the preferred agent over combined oral contraceptive pills. Anti-androgen medications may take several months for eliciting their effects.

**Que.: I am tired of acne, abnormal hair growth and weight gain after being diagnosed with PCOS. What should I do?**

**Ans.:** In addition to medications prescribed for PCOS, you can consult a cosmetologist for local treatment of acne. Various management options which may be offered are: bleaching, waxing, depilatories, electrolysis, and laser treatment. Anti-androgen like spironolactone may be prescribed, but it may take 6-8 months for showing its effect.

Regular exercise along with yoga, meditation and proper small frequent meals will help in reducing weight. Insulin is a growth hormone, it naturally promotes weight gain, so along with treatment having patience and faith with positive mindset is all you need to have!

**Que.: What can help me in having menses normally?**

**Ans.:** In addition to routine pharmacological treatment, yoga, regular exercise, meditation, a holistic approach through inclusion of ginger, cinnamon, apple cider and pineapple can be tried.

**Que.: At what age combined oral contraceptives be started?**

**Ans.:** Combined oral contraceptive pills are recommended to be started around 12-16 years, but it is preferred to defer starting pills at least till the age of 14 years. Low dose combined pills are recommended in adolescent girls with menstrual irregularity, and if needed, insulin sensitizer like Metformin can be added. Long term usage of combined oral contraceptive pills is not recommended for the fear of epiphyseal fusion leading to stunting of the teenage girls.

**Que.: How long can Metformin be taken?**

**Ans.:** Metformin has been found to be highly effective in reducing body mass index and Insulin resistance. But, there has been no evidence of sustained effect after prolonged use of Metformin. Most of the studies recommend usage of 6 months, and some up to 24 months.
**Que.: What is the role of diet control in girls with PCOS?**

**Ans.:** Nutritious diet with high fibre carbohydrate, avoidance of high sugary carbohydrate diet/drinks, with balanced portions of protein, carbohydrate and fat is the proper diet for girls with PCOS. It is recommended to have small frequent meals, rather than binge eating. Low glycemic index diet consists of whole grains, nuts, legumes. Anti-inflammatory diet consists of green leafy vegetables, extra virgin olive oils. Omega 3 fatty acid have shown to decrease insulin levels along with reduction in triglycerides. Keeping glycemic index low may lead to severely limiting carbohydrate diet, which in turn may lead to craving for carbohydrate with binge eating and weight gain. So, proper counselling of these girls is must for following proper food habits.

**Que.: Why have I been advised to do Aerobic exercise?**

**Ans.:** Aerobic exercise has been found to regulate insulin levels, along with preventing weight gain. It improves waist hip ratio and metabolism thus contributing to wellness.

**Que.: Is there any role of Yoga in lives of teenage girls with PCOS?**

**Ans.:** Yoga has been found to reduce anxiety and has been associated with prevention of long term diseases like cardiovascular disease, diabetes mellitus. It is an important adjunct to medical therapy. There are studies indicating superiority of yoga over physical exercises in girls with PCOS. Modulation of sympathetic activity and reduction in anxiety are proposed mechanisms. Along with bringing calmness to the mind it brings better and clearer perception to external stimuli, and gradual control over thought process, thus leading to better coping and lesser negative emotions.
**Que.: Why should adolescent sexuality be a concern?**

**Ans.:** Unchecked adolescent sexuality can have serious consequences such as unsafe abortion and unwanted pregnancies. They both can have important health and psychological impact on the teens. In addition, it can also result in sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and may lead to damaging effects on lifelong health and fertility.

**Que.: What do you mean bisexuality?**

**Ans.:** Sexuality is about your sexual feelings, thoughts, attraction and behaviour towards other people. You can find other people physically, sexually or emotionally attractive. Sexuality is diverse and personal, and it is an important part of who you are. Your sexuality can be defined as your sexual orientation, your sexual activity and your capacity for sexual feelings. Homosexual or heterosexual are examples of your sexuality.

**Que.: What is mature sexuality?**

**Ans.:** Mature sexuality is defined as a 'comfort with oneself and the ability to enter into a relationship in a giving and mutually trusting way'.

**Que.: How does sexuality develop?**

**Ans.:** Sexuality develops gradually. In the early teens, one is awkward and conscious in the company of the opposite sex. As they grow they tend to focus on their sexual attractiveness, like to explore their body and indulge in masturbation. Gradually feelings of tenderness, love and passion may also develop. They also learn to be concerned about the feelings and well-being of their partner although possibility of abusive behaviour remains even at this age.

**Que.: What is sexual orientation?**

**Ans.:** Sexual orientation includes the individual's sexual preferences for relationships with members of the same and/or opposite biological sex.

**Que.: When does homosexuality develop?**

**Ans.:** Though it can start at a later stage, it is usually during adolescence that sexual identification with homosexuality and/or bisexuality begins. The adolescents may feel isolated or may fear sharing their true feelings. This has significant implications for adolescent sexual and mental health and for helping adolescents to develop life-affirming health behaviours.
**Que.: What exactly is homosexual behavior?**

**Ans.:** Being gay is when a boy is emotionally and sexually attracted to other boys. Being a lesbian is when a girl is emotionally and sexually attracted to other girls. Bisexuality is being attracted to both sexes. Many boys and girls are attracted to members of their own sex during puberty. Holding hands with a friend of the same sex, looking at or touching each other's genitals, might make them wonder if they are gay or lesbian. These activities are normal in teens. But some may discover that they are gay, lesbian, or bisexual during these years.

**Que.: Is my sexual orientation, a choice that I make?**

**Ans.:** No, human beings cannot choose to be either homosexual or otherwise. Although we can choose whether to act on our feelings, psychologists do not consider sexual orientation to be a conscious choice or something that can be voluntarily changed.

Some people may have a hard time talking about being gay or lesbian. Some may not be accepted by their families and friends. This may lead to feeling lonely or depressed. Some people may even consider suicide. If you think you might be gay, lesbian, or bisexual and feel confused or unhappy, talk to an adult you can trust. If you cannot talk to your parents, ask a teacher, doctor, or school counsellor for help.

**Que.: Can sexual orientation be changed, by therapy?**

**Ans.:** No, it cannot be changed either voluntarily or by therapy. Many a times homosexual or bisexual people seek help to change their sexual orientation, usually coerced by their family members. Homosexuality is not an illness and doesn't require treatment. Majority of them would not want to change their orientation but they may seek psychological help in dealing with the societal pressures and prejudices that they may be living with. Most of them go into therapy for the same reasons and life issues that bring other people to mental health professionals.

**Que.: What is gender identity?**

**Ans.:** Gender identity is your sense of being a boy, a girl, or ‘other’ gendered. Some teens feel that their gender identity, how they really feel about themselves is different from their physical bodies. A girl may feel that she is really a boy, trapped in a girl's body and vice versa. Others may feel that they belong to neither gender or belong to both genders. People who feel that their gender identity is different from the sex they are born as, are described as transgender. It is often difficult for parents or schoolmates to accept that a person is transgender. Transgender teens may face bullying or discrimination. Some may feel scared and alone. If you are feeling confused about your gender and it is causing you distress, or if you are being bullied or mistreated, talk to a trusted adult or a counsellor.
**Topic 8 : Sexuality in Adolescents**

**Que.: What are gender stereotypes so far as sexuality is concerned?**
**Ans.:** Gender stereotypes and role expectations often put you at serious health risk.

Very often adolescent boys are taught that being sexually active is an especially important part of being a “man”. They might be ridiculed for not being sexually active, teased for being homosexual; they might be encouraged to have sex without using condoms; and sexually transmitted infections may be regarded as a “rite of passage” for masculinity.

Female adolescents on the other hand are tutored to be non-aggressive, and to abstain from sexual activity until marriage. They receive positive reinforcement for being quiet, innocent and unaware of sexual matters. They can imbibe that sex is a dirty thing which can have a negative impact once she is married or into a relationship.

**Que.: What happens during puberty?**
**Ans.:** With the onset of puberty, the brain sends signals to certain parts of the body to start growing and changing. These signals are called hormones. Hormones make your body change, grow and start looking more like an adult's. They also cause emotional changes and sexual feelings.

**Que.: What emotional changes happen during puberty?**
**Ans.:** During your teen years, hormones can cause you to have many types of feelings, including sexual feelings. Thinking about sex or wanting to hear or read about sex is normal. It is also normal to want to be held and touched by others.

**Que.: How can you express your sexual feelings?**
**Ans.:** There are many ways, out of which sexual intercourse is merely one way. It can be through expressions, talking and/or touching each other. It also includes masturbation.

**Que.: How can I decide when I should have sex?**
**Ans.:** It should always be your choice. A person who cares for you will never pressurise you to have sex with him. He should also learn to take your ‘NO’ as ‘NO’ and not force you. Ask yourself what your feelings are about sex. Are you really ready for sex? If you are dating, do you know how the other person feels about sex? Make up your own mind about the right time for you. Do not have sex just because your friends are doing it or

- You think it will make you more popular
- You get forced/emotionally blackmailed into it
- You are afraid the other person will break up with you
- You feel that it will make you a ‘real’ woman
**Topic 8 : Sexuality in Adolescents**

**Que.: What should I do if someone pressurises me to have sex?**

**Ans.:** If you have decided to wait, think about what you will say ahead of time if someone pressurises you to have sex. The following examples can work for you:

- "If you love me, you will have sex with me."

  Answer: "If you really love me, you will not pressure me."

- "You are the only one I will ever love."

  Answer: "Good, then we will have lots of time later."

- "If you don't want to have sex with me, I will find someone who will."

  Answer: "That's your choice. My choice is to not have sex."

**Que.: What can I do if someone touches me inappropriately?**

**Ans.:** You should always be cautious of anyone touching your body in an inappropriate way or at places where they should not do, even if that person is your closest family member, relative or friend. If he or she makes you uncomfortable, report them to a trusted family member. Do not feel guilty about it. It is not your fault. If you cannot talk to your family member, you can report them to your teacher or any other trusted relative or friend.

**Que.: How can I prevent rape?**

**Ans.:** Although rape is not the victim's fault, it is better to be cautious and know how to react. Avoid situations that might put you at risk. Avoid walking alone, especially dark stretches. Limit alcohol and drug use. If you are in a party, then do not leave your drink unattended. Avoid mingling with strangers, preferably go to parties with a friend and keep checking on each other. Make sure you have told your parents or somebody responsible in the family or close friend about your whereabouts. Never leave without your friend and never leave with a stranger.

**Que.: What is intimate partner violence?**

**Ans.:** This type of violence occurs between couples in same-sex or opposite-sex relationships. It can involve physical violence, sexual or emotional abuse. Even threats of violence are considered intimate partner violence. If you are in an abusive relationship, it is important to know that it is not your fault and you should immediately take help. Please confide to your parents, teacher, or any other responsible adult in the family/close friend circle.

**Que.: Why is it important for parents to talk to their children about sexuality?**

**Ans.:** There is a major deficiency in Indian families where discussion on sexual issues is a taboo. They are forced to learn about sexual issues from their peers or from the social media which has sexually explicit
material.
The suppressed needs of adolescents often lead them to do things undercover. Suppressed desires have dire consequences, reflected in the rising graph of sexual crime and violence. It is important to teach responsible sexual behaviour at this age as the behaviour in adolescence sets the pattern for the rest of an individual's life.

**Que.: How can I have vaginal sex and avoid pregnancy?**
**Ans.:** If you have vaginal sex and do not want to get pregnant, then you need to use a reliable birth control method every time. Birth control can reduce the chance of pregnancy occurring.

**Que.: What are the methods of contraception?**
**Ans.:** There are several methods. The natural methods such as safe periods, or withdrawal method have high failure rates. It is important to use a safe and effective method such as birth control pills to prevent pregnancy plus an additional method such as condoms to prevent STIs and pregnancy both. Using the 'dual method' is the method of choice for young girls and adolescents.

**Que.: Can I use an emergency contraceptive pill every time I have sex?**
**Ans.:** Emergency pill has become a very commonly used contraceptive these days because of its easy availability. They have high doses of hormone progestrone and should be used only in exceptional emergency circumstances like rape, slipping of condoms. It should not be used every time you have sex as it can lead to adverse effects.

The contraceptive effect of ECPs is transitory and return of fertility is immediate. It will not protect in case you are having regular sex. Hence you should always be on a regular method of contraception. The pills do not interrupt a pre-existing pregnancy, cannot be used as an abortion pill and do not prevent STIs.

**Que.: I have been told STIs are a common thing to have with sex? Why should I be bothered about it?**
**Ans.:** STIs are common, once you are in a sexual relationship. Generally these are mild and can present as itching and vaginal discharge. But sometimes, especially when you or your partner are not in a monogamous relationship it can cause a pelvic inflammatory disease, infecting your tubes causing tubal blockage. This can lead to infertility later in life.
**Topic 8 : Sexuality in Adolescents**

**Que.** My male partner doesn't have any symptoms and blames me for the infection. What should I do?  
**Ans.** You have to explain to him that girls generally develop symptoms. However, the male partner may not be symptomatic but a silent carrier who can keep spreading the disease. Hence it is important to get both, you and your partner treated as soon as you suspect you have an infection.

**Que.** Are there any other STIs besides HIV?  
**Ans.** HIV is just the tip of iceberg. There are many more other than HIV, which can have serious consequences. They are generally fungal infection, though it can also be chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis, trichomoniasis besides many more. Cervical cancer is again by a virus that is transmitted vaginally. Hepatitis B infection can also be transmitted sexually.

**Que.** If I use a condom every time I have sex, will it make me absolutely safe from STIs?  
**Ans.** It is important to understand that condoms, other contraceptives and vaccine cannot make all sexual behaviour risk free. Condoms cannot give 100% guarantee to protect you from any STIs. Hence it is especially important to follow a responsible behaviour. Sounds like a cliché but ‘if you do not take a detailed sexual history of your partner on your date, you do not know him well enough to have sex’. And ‘safe sex is sex with your faithful partner’.

**Que.** How can I prevent sexually transmitted infections in both myself and my partner?  
**Ans.** You can use a barrier method, which is generally a male or female condom in the right way to prevent pregnancy and protect against STIs. It is preferable to use a double method – condoms plus any other method that prevents pregnancy for example, birth control pills, to provide protection from both. You can further reduce your chances of STIs by being in a monogamous relationship and avoiding risky behaviour. You should also maintain a good perineal hygiene, at all times even during menses.

**Que.** What are the high risk factors for developing sexually transmitted infections?  
**Ans.** The high-risk factors are those with  
- Multiple sex partners  
- Early initiation of sexual activity  
- Poor knowledge of contraception  
- Hesitation in using barrier method by male partners  
- Low socio-economic status with poor access to health care services, including Pap tests
• Prostitutes, prison inmates, drug addicts, and those attending STI clinics
• Smoking, low immunity status like HIV, use of birth control pills for > 5 years, being younger than 17 at the time of first delivery, multiparity i.e having 3 or more children.

Que.: Why are adolescent girls at higher risk for getting pregnant and developing STIs?
Ans.: Young women and adolescents with little contraceptive knowledge and experience are especially at high risk of an unwanted pregnancy. They are more susceptible to STIs compared to their male counterparts because of their biological characteristics. During puberty and young adulthood, specific cells (columnar epithelium) are especially sensitive to invasion by certain sexually transmitted organisms.
Women and female adolescents may also find it more difficult than men to implement and impose protective behaviour especially on their male partner, partly because of the power imbalance between men and women.

Que.: What is Pap smear and when should I take it?
Ans.: Pap Smear is a test for screening cervical cancer. It is a simple, inexpensive, and efficient test. Cervical cancer is caused by human papilloma virus (HPV) and spreads sexually. HPV can also cause genital warts, in both boys and girls. Once you are sexually active (21-65 years of age), you should do it at least every 3 year (even in those previously vaccinated with HPV vaccine), or combine it with HPV testing every 5 years ( >30 years of age).

Que.: What is HPV vaccine?
Ans.: HPV vaccine prevents cervical cancer. It can be given between 9-45 years, though the target age group is adolescent girls between 9-14 years. It is most effective at this age and before the initiation of sexual activity
• For girls less than 15 years, only 2 doses (0, 6 months) are recommended.
• For those girls more than 15 years of age or immuno compromised, 3 doses are recommended (0, 1-2 and 6 months schedule).

Que.: Can HPV vaccine be given to boy?
Ans.: Though the vaccine is effective in preventing HPV infections such as genital warts in boys, currently there is no recommendation for using it in boys in India.

Que.: If I have been vaccinated with HPV vaccine should I still get a Pap Smear?
Ans.: Even if you have undergone a full course HPV vaccination, it is still essential to do a Pap Smear as per the national schedule.
It is also important to continue using barrier contraceptives (condoms) and to ensure a responsible behaviour despite vaccine.

**Que.: What are the reasons of teenage pregnancy?**

**Ans.:** In the rural India, early marriages and traditional gender roles are to be blamed primarily, while in the urban areas maximum teenage pregnancies occur out of unplanned sexual activities. The societal control on women sexuality, lack of comprehensive sex education, poor access to contraceptive services by adolescents and youth, removal of sanctions against premarital sex are some of the reasons for this unprecedented rise.

**Que.: Why is pregnancy at this age more dangerous?**

**Ans.:** Adolescent pregnancies have higher mortality and morbidity. These are due to various factors, such as

- Poor care during pregnancy and delivery
- Obstructed and prolonged labour due to an undeveloped pelvis
- Higher incidence of medical complications such as anaemia, haemorrhage and hypertension
- The chance of dying in the first year of life is more than 60% higher for babies born to those under-18 than for those born to older mothers.
- Higher incidence of unsafe abortions
- Psychological manifestations of pregnancy at this age.
- Malnutrition
- Sexually transmitted infections and cervical cancers

**Que.: What are the social implications of a teenage pregnancy?**

**Ans.:** Unmarried young women who become pregnant are often stigmatised. A history of abortion before marriage can make her a social outcast. They might be considered a bad influence on other girls and may be forced to give up school.

A pregnancy at this age may preclude social, educational development and useful employment of the girl as she gets burdened with a precocious motherhood. She loses the ability to achieve full status in society. This leads to a spiral of low self-esteem, further pregnancies and poverty.
**Que.: What is unsafe abortion?**

**Ans.:** An unsafe abortion is defined as “a procedure for terminating an unintended pregnancy carried out either by persons lacking the necessary skills or in an environment that does not conform to minimal medical standards, or both.

Unsafe abortion is strongly associated with complications such as haemorrhage, sepsis and trauma, which can lead to maternal death.

**Que.: How is abortion carried out?**

**Ans.:** An abortion can be done both by medicines and by surgical method. You shall have to visit a qualified doctor who shall confirm the pregnancy and advise you the best method, depending on the duration of pregnancy. An abortion has minimal serious problems if done by a qualified person and at a place, registered for carrying out abortions.

**Que.: Is abortion a painful procedure?**

**Ans.:** An abortion that is done by medicines, especially in early pregnancy (before 9 weeks) induces contractions that expels the foetus. It can cause some pain, that might be like your menstrual pain or may be a little more. You can do this at home but at any time if the pain is severe or the bleeding becomes excessive, you will have to visit the hospital. In case you have excessive bleeding you might need to undergo a surgical method that shall empty the uterus of the abortus or pregnancy contents and stop bleeding.

Abortions between 9 to 12 weeks are done by emptying the uterus under anaesthesia by a skilled doctor in a registered hospital.

The abortions that are done later, usually from 12-20 weeks, require admission. They are generally with medicines that induce contractions and are like mini labour.

**Que.: Do I need to go again to the doctor after my abortion?**

**Ans.:** After 2 week of taking the medicine, you must visit your doctor again. You shall be asked to get an ultrasound to check if the abortion is complete or not. If at any time you bleed in between or do not have menses 4-6 weeks after having an abortion, you must visit your doctor.

**Que.: Why are adolescents more at risk of unsafe abortion?**

**Ans.:** Poor, young and unmarried women are more likely to delay abortion because they are often poorly informed. They may not understand the signs of pregnancy, legality of obtaining the abortion and the location of safe services. Termination at advanced stages of pregnancy is fraught with dangers especially when done by an unqualified person.
After 20 weeks of pregnancy, the MTP act in India does not allow termination of pregnancy. Hence if delayed beyond that time, one needs permission from the court.

**Que.: If I am under the age of 18 years, can I get an abortion?**

**Ans.:** If you are under 18 years of age, then the doctor will have to report it to the police. Sex with a minor girl is a punishable offence. The consent of a girl less than 18 years is not valid as per law and hence is reported as rape to the police.

Both the girl and the parents must be aware of this and ensure protective and responsible behaviour to prevent any future harassment and undesirable situation.

**Que.: How to deal with the undesirable consequences of adolescent sexuality?**

**Ans.:**

- Marriage of girls at right time.
- Allow completing the education of girls.
- We need to talk to your children, learn to share and win over their confidence.
- Responsible behaviour needs to be taught as well as shown to them. As they say charity begins at home.
- Encouraging protective behaviour through use of contraceptives.
- Always maintaining a good perineal hygiene.
- Always consult a qualified person for abortion.
**Que.: What Is Masturbation??**
**Ans.:** Masturbation is the sexual stimulation of one's own genitals for sexual arousal or other sexual pleasure, usually to the point of orgasm. The stimulation may involve hands, fingers, everyday objects, sex toys such as vibrators, or combinations of these.

**Que.: Is it ok not to masturbate?**
**Ans.:** It's completely up to the individual. It's a personal choice and there is nothing wrong in either not doing or doing it.

**Que.: Is masturbation bad for us ?**
**Ans.:** Not at all. It is actually good for our body. It helps you to understand your own body and sexuality in a better and healthy way. Also masturbation has various benefits over your physical and mental health.

**Que.: Can I catch an STD, while masturbating?**
**Ans.:** Absolutely not. It's completely safe.

**Que.: Is there any danger in Masturbation?**
**Ans.:** No there is no danger, it will not harm your body in any way.

There are numerous rumours among teens about MASTURBATION like:-
- You will become mentally ill
- It will stunt your growth
- You will grow hair or warts on your palm
- You will not have a normal sex life with another person.
- You will run out of sperm and wouldn't be able to have a child
- Other people will know just by looking at you.

These are myths and are completely untrue.

**Que.: How often can I masturbate?**
**Ans.:** It's up to you. It's very normal. You can do as many times as you want so long it doesn't disrupt your normal day to day activities. You should not get addicted and keep thinking about it.

**Que.: Will my virginity be lost on doing masturbation??**
**Ans.:** Not at all. Virginity is not something physical or medical. It's a cultural idea, which many people have different definitions of and opinions about. Concepts of virginity are sometimes linked with the idea that your vaginal opening is covered by a membrane that is 'broken' by vaginal sex. Just because you masturbate it doesn't mean you're not a 'virgin'.

**Que.: Is doing masturbation shameful or immoral??**
**Ans.:** Not at all. It's a way of exploring one's own body. And it's a way of connecting to one's sexuality. So don't feel "guilty" “dirty” or “ashamed” of it.

**Que.: What is masturbation addiction??**
**Ans.:** When masturbation becomes a method or way of escape like a form of self medication to deal with stress or trauma so much that it gets an addictive pattern. Addiction makes intimate relationships difficult and hinders people from seeking out intimacy.

**Que.: What is compulsive and binge masturbation?**
**Ans.:** Binge masturbation involves spending several hours masturbating while watching porn or fantasizing situations or people. Compulsive masturbation is a form of masturbation which usually lacks intimacy and often leads to a lot of shame.

**Que.: How can I find recovery from masturbation addiction?**
**Ans.:** A period of abstinence is recommended under supervision of a trained therapist. The important thing is to track the problem, stop the unhealthy behaviour and develop healthy alternatives to fulfil sexual needs.

**Que.: How will I control my high sex drive if I stop masturbating ?**
**Ans.:** In some cases it is a biological imbalance, which can be managed with medication. Often fear or anxiety motivate the need for masturbation as a controlled release for the excess sexual energy. Treating the underlying issue with skilled therapist is the best option.

**Que.: Do women masturbate?**
**Ans.:** Yes women of all ages masturbate and it is absolutely normal. Research shows that 89% women masturbate. Out of them 29% of the women admitted to masturbating daily.

**Que.: Does masturbation count as cheating?**
**Ans.:** Masturbation is erotic stimulation of one's own genitals and this quite clearly means it's done alone, so it
is not counted as cheating.

**Que.: Is there something wrong in me if I don't have an orgasm while masturbating?**
**Ans.:** Not reaching an orgasm doesn't necessarily mean something is wrong with you. It just means that whatever you are doing isn't quite working for you.

**Que.: Can masturbation make the vagina less sensitive?**
**Ans.:** No masturbation doesn't have an impact on sensitivity of vagina or clitoris.

**Que.: Can you masturbate during your periods?**
**Ans.:** Yes you can masturbate during your period. It doesn't have any harmful effects rather it helps to relieve cramps, but one has to take a few extra precautions about hygiene as there is high chance of infection during periods.

**Que.: Is there something wrong with me if I don't want to masturbate?**
**Ans.:** There is nothing wrong with not masturbating as long as one is ok with it. It's completely a personal choice.

**Que.: Is masturbation beneficial?**
**Ans.:** Masturbation is said to have some benefits like, it helps relieving stress, improves sleep, helps treating sexual problems, improves body image and strengthens pelvic and anal muscles.
Some studies says it helps in releasing pelvic engorgement. They might communicate with partner more easily, enjoy sex more and also avoid sex related psychological problems.
Frequent orgasm helps to reduce risk of prostate cancer. It also reduces the likelihood of phimosis.

**Que.: Why does my penis become long and hard at times? Do girls experience something similar?**
**Ans.:** The penis becoming long and hard is called erection. It is the result of sexual excitement and starts happening as you grow up from a child to a man. This is a part of the maturation process for a boy. This cannot really be controlled, and it is better to understand and stop worrying about it. The hormones plays a role in this act.
Yes, an expression of sexual excitement as part of the maturation process does occur in the girls, but as the girls have no penis, the experience is different.
**Que.: Why do I feel attracted to girls or women? Why are some boys attracted to other boys?**

**Ans.:** Attraction for persons of the opposite gender, that is girls or women in case of boys, is quite normal at this age. A child converts to an adult one at a certain age, and that stage is called as adolescence. There are two major changes in child. Physical, means structural changes in the body and the other is mental change. These changes happen because of secretion of sex hormones. Girls are influenced by estrogen and boys are influenced by testosterone. One of the major mental change is “attraction towards opposite sex”. This is natural and there is nothing wrong in this. However, the behavior must be controlled especially when the attraction is not acceptable to the girl or woman.

Some boys do get attracted to other boys. For some, it may be a passing phase, when they are attracted to both girls and boys. Some remain attracted to other boys even later. This is called a different sexual orientation or preference, and the usual term used is a gay person. This is also a natural phenomenon and should be accepted and respected by the others as that person’s choice.

**Que.: Why do the others call masturbation bad? Why should it be done secretly?**

**Ans.:** There were some misconceptions about masturbation, and traditionally, it was not encouraged. Some people still believe it as bad. Masturbation, like many other actions, is not considered appropriate in public. For example, when we pass urine or stools, we go to the toilet and close the door. We do it privately, because it is not considered polite or clean to do it publicly. Similar considerations make masturbation an activity which should not be done in front of others.

**Que.: I know some boys who regularly see porn sites. Is it bad?**

**Ans.:** Porn sites are available for viewing, and the present use of smart phones has made them easily accessible to all. The government has banned some sites, but a lot of them are still only a click away. A lot of teenagers regularly visit such sites.

Visiting a porn site may be considered a manifestation of natural sexual curiosity, but one must consider the negative aspects, too. Some boys consider these visits as a sign of their manliness. It is nothing of the sort. Here, we will not consider the moral aspects, but focus on more objective features.

- The wastage of resources is significant. Money for the data usage is much less now, but some sites involve actual money payments.
- The time spent on these sites is a major drain on your daily time. The time spent on this is totally unproductive.
- The energy that you put in this is a waste and another loss.
- Visiting the porn sites is an addiction and time spent doing that may go beyond limits.
- The things shown on these sites are like way films are made. A lot of them are exaggerations and show what is not practically possible. In an action movie, the hero fights with 10 strong man and still wins, but
you know that in real life that is not possible. What you see in the film, is created for you, and the hero does not really beat these men. The events that are shown in the porn sites are also created artificially.

• Research has shown that many people seeing these sites believe what they see and start expecting the same in real life. When that does not happen, they get disappointed and depressed. The disappointment can become a major source of emotional problems later.
• Some boys get tempted to perform the scenes shown on the porn sites, and may try these with girls in their family, neighbourhood, or school. This is positively harmful and must not happen.

Que.: Is sex wrong? When can I do sex?
Ans.: Sex is not wrong, but human beings are social beings, and the sexual activity is restrained by social or cultural norms. These norms are developed keeping the welfare of the society in mind and are for their overall good outcome. As an adolescent, this is certainly not the age for experimenting with sex. Because it is a responsible act.

Que.: The girls in my class have periods. What is that?
Ans.: A girl during the maturation stage starts having bleeding episodes from her uterus. These happen usually once in a month. These episodes are called periods and they are not bad or abnormal, but the girl needs some extra care during these days. This is a natural and normal thing, and it is wise to avoid commenting on it.

Que.: Is kissing a good thing? Should I do it?
Ans.: Kissing is an expression of love, and is not always sexually motivated. Parents kiss their babies. Kissing is also a manifestation of sexual attraction. As an action on its own, it may not have any bad results, but quite often it may progress to further sexual actions and experimentation. At your age, these are not appropriate.

Que.: I sometimes wake up in the night and find white liquid coming out of my penis. What is it?
Ans.: This is often termed as nightfall, and is considered as wrong. It is like an involuntary masturbation during sleep and thus, a release of sexual excitement. It is not a disease or a problem. It is not under the voluntary control. That means a boy cannot stop it, even when he tries. So the only action required is to understand and accept it. It is not at all harmful or a disease.

Que.: I am experiencing that my voice has changed. I can’t sing well anymore. What do I do?
Ans.: As a boy matures, his voice assumes a lower frequency or pitch, which is typical of men. Prior to this maturation, the voice is high-pitched and hence different. It is called the breaking of voice and is a part of the natural process of maturation. For a short time, the singing voice becomes awkward and hence, singing becomes difficult. As the process completes, it becomes easy once again, but the adult voice is not the same
as that of the child. With this new deeper voice singing needs to be adjusted, but the sense of music and singing talent do not change. Your music teacher may explain the adjustments in singing that you need.

**Que.: What is VD? What is HIV?**

**Ans.:** VD is the short form of venereal diseases. The presently used term is sexually transmitted infections. These are diseases that spread through sexual relations. HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) is one of these diseases. It should be remembered that there are other methods of transmission for these diseases as well.

**Que.: I think my penis is small. My friends tease me about it. What can I do to increase its length?**

**Ans.:** The length of the penis is variable. There is no standard length. The function of the penis is not dependent on its length when it is not erect. The long penis as a sign of manliness is a stereotype, often strengthened by the porn sites or literature.

The penis lengthens as it becomes erect. Leaving aside a small number of men, a shorter penis is not a problem. Moreover, there is no known remedy to lengthen the penis, whatever the advertisements claim.

**Que.: My penis is very small and curved. My friends tell me I need to have a long thick straight penis. Or else I would have a problem when I get married?**

**Ans.:** The size of the penis is not important at all. The penis is usually curved and looks bent when erect. This is very normal. And the size of the penis is not important to achieve sexual satisfaction. The penile size cannot be increased by exercise massage or medication. So don't worry.

**Que.: I think a girl in my class loves me/ I think I love a girl in my class. What should I do?**

**Ans.:** Attraction towards opposite sex is normal at your age. Love is a much deeper and mature term, and most of the times, the attraction does not last long. Often, it is not constant, and you may feel it for other girls. This attraction is sometimes termed as a crush. There is nothing wrong in this and there is no need to feel guilty. However, the adolescence or teenage is not the age for sexual experimentation, and such actions are better avoided. These create problems more often for the girls and so should be kept under control. If not, theses can become problematic and even criminal.

**Que.: I have a steady boyfriend for the past 2 years and now he's insisting that we should take our relationship to the next level. Is it safe for us to have sex?**

**Ans.:** Although decision to have sex or not is an individual choice, you must understand the responsibilities and hazards attached to it. Unprotected intercourse can expose you to sexually transmitted illnesses like gonorrhoea, chancroid, herpes, syphilis and even HIV-AIDS. Also, some of these infections can have a
lasting effect on the internal organs leading to infertility, that is inability to conceive later in life. Another possibility after unprotected sex is an unwanted pregnancy which can seriously jeopardize your health. Often young unmarried pregnant girls seek illegal abortion which can result in sepsis and is a leading cause of death in the teenage group. Pre-marital sex is best avoided. If you must, take contraceptive advice and use adequate protection in the form of condoms. Also, your boyfriend can be punished under the POCSO act if you are below 18 years of age.

**Que.: I am a 16-year-old girl. I feel attracted to another girl in my class. All my friends are attracted to boys but I like girls. I am worried that if others find out, they will outcast me. Am I abnormal?**

**Ans.:** Sexual orientation and inclination are individual preferences. Some individuals feel attracted to the same sex individuals. This type of behavior may be transient phase in adolescence but it may persist into adult life. Although social unacceptance is a real problem, you need not to ashamed of yourself. You can seek help from group of people with similar inclination or from counsellors. Eventually you and others will learn to accept you for what you are.

**Que.: What is semen? Is it true that a drop of semen is formed out of fifty drops of blood?**

**Ans.:** Semen is the sticky whitish substance that comes out of the penis. It contains sperms and other substances like sugars and proteins. It has nothing to do with blood. The amount and quality produced varies from man to man.

**Que.: My undergarments get stained very often. And I feel very weak because of this. Why?**

**Ans.:** This is something called “wet dreams” or “nightfall” or “nocturnal emissions”. They are a common occurrence during growing up. It is nothing but the semen coming out of your body. Semen in the body cannot be stored and hence comes out. It is nothing to worry about and won't make you weak or tired. You will soon outgrow it.

**Que.: What is ejaculation?**

**Ans.:** The discharge of semen in spurts during a sexual act is called ejaculation.

**Que.: I am a boy, but I have what looks like a girl's breasts. Why is this happening?**

**Ans.:** This is a normal part of growing up due to hormonal changes. It will usually go away by the time you are 18.

**Que.: What are testicles? Do girls have them?**

**Ans.:** Testicles or “balls” are a part of your reproductive system where sperms are produced. Girls don't have
them. They have ovaries instead, which are placed inside the body.

**Que.: I am not tall and muscular. My friends make fun of me saying I will not be able to get a girlfriend. Do I need to go to the gym and start taking supplements?**

**Ans.:** No. What attracts girls is your personality and attitude. So don't worry needlessly. But you should eat healthy and exercise.

**Que.: Is sex bad or a sin?**

**Ans.:** No. It is the only natural way of reproduction in any animal. Wanting to have sex is perfectly normal but what is important is that you are not placing yourself or anyone else at risk. It has to be a well thought decision.

**Que.: Why am I discouraged from talking about sex if it is not bad?**

**Ans.:** That is because inherently in our culture sex is considered obscene and vulgar before marriage. So, our parents are not comfortable discussing it. They think that you will go out and indulge in sexual activities if they give you information which worries them. But if you can gain their trust and make them understand that you just want correct information they will feel more comfortable talking with you.

**Que.: What is a virgin?**

**Ans.:** A virgin is anyone (male or female) who has no experience of intercourse.

**Que.: Is it necessary for boys to get an experience of sexual intercourse before marriage?**

**Ans.:** No. In fact, it can be a problem at times as broken relationships without mutual trust can leave long lasting mental scars. Also if you have not practiced safe sex it can leave you with diseases, the most frightening one being AIDS.

**Que.: What can go wrong if I have sex without thinking it through?**

**Ans.:** There can be physical, emotional social and consequences. The 2 most worrying physical consequences are an unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. Emotionally if you are not fully mature it can drain you and make you feel vulnerable and exposed. Society may shun you or judge you as someone without character.

**Que.: What is safe (safer) sex?**

**Ans.:** Safer sex is mainly about protecting yourself and your partner from sexually transmitted infections. The most common method is using a condom. Also not having sex with multiple partners is another effective
method.

**Que.: What is a condom? How is it used?**
**Ans.:** A condom is a thin rubber sheath to be worn over the penis to prevent the semen and ejaculate from coming into contact with the partner's body. You put it over an erect penis. There are female condoms also.

**Que.: What is an orgasm?**
**Ans.:** The peak of sexual pleasure is called orgasm. For men it is usually ejaculation. For women it's many different sensations in their body. It is different for each person and both partners don't have to experience it at the same time.

**Que.: Is it true that a girl cannot get pregnant if a boy withdraws his penis before ejaculation?**
**Ans.:** Incorrect. The liquid called “pre cum” that is secreted before ejaculation also contains sperms. So a girl can get pregnant by the boy putting his penis inside the vagina.

**Que.: How do I know that my relationship is ready for sex?**
**Ans.:** Remember ABC:
Are you AWARE of your options and consequences of being sexual?
Are you BALANCING all aspects of your life in your decision, including your present desires and future goals?
Make a CONSCIOUS (not emotional) choice.

**Que.: Is it true that people stop having sex as they grow older or after they have children?**
**Ans.:** False. Sex is one of the keystones to a healthy relationship. There is no upper age limit for having sex.

**Que.: A friend of mine told me that the child is born from the naval (belly button). Another friend told me that the child is brought from the hospital. Which is true?**
**Ans.:** None of these is true. The child is born from the passage in between the two thighs of the mother, called vagina. Doctors and nurses help the process of delivery in the hospital.

**Que.: Do people have babies every time they have sex?**
**Ans.:** No. 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.
Que.: What is the meaning of homosexual?
Ans.: 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 those of their own sex are called homosexual. Women homosexuals are called lesbians and male homosexuals are called gay.

Que.: I am a boy and I feel that I am in the wrong body as I am attracted more to boys. Am I normal?
Ans.: You have nothing to worry about. These feelings are transient sometimes. If you are sure about your attraction to boys talk to a trusted adult who will help you understand and clear your confusion.

Que.: Is homosexuality a disease and can it be cured?
Ans.: N. Homosexuality is not a disease. But it is not the way one can reproduce. It is just a sexual preference like being right or left handed. So there is no question of curing it. All people whether they are heterosexual, asexual, homosexual, gay, lesbian or bisexual, have a right to live with dignity keeping with what they feel.

Que.: What is homophobia?
Ans.: Homophobia is fear or discrimination against people with different sexual preferences. Making fun of them, stereotyping them (like all gays are effeminate), isolating them and sexually abusing them are forms of homophobia.

Que.: I think that porn is harmless and will not affect the priorities I have in life?
Ans.: Wrong. Pornography is highly addictive and mind altering. It changes the composition of the brain in a manner similar to the effects that drugs have on the brain. You will begin to find yourself wasting hours in front of the computer or television and spending large amounts of time, energy and money supporting the addiction. You may be able to start out by occasional viewing, but in time, you will begin to neglect school work, spending time with family and friends and putting off other things in favour of viewing pornography. And for the students, definitely it is going to distract from academics.

Que.: I love sexting. Is it unsafe?
Ans.: Sexting can have a negative impact on your life. You can be humiliated, bullied: both actual and cyber-bullying or blackmailed. The images can end up on the internet and in the hands of wrong people like paedophiles. Even the apps which say the image/message self-destructs can cause problems as these messages or images can be saved and used wrongly.
Topic 10: Counselling In Adolescents

**Que.: What do you mean by counselling in adolescents?**

**Ans.:** Counselling in adolescents should be in such a way to enhance their emotional intelligence, cognitive development and boosting their self-esteem and promoting interpersonal relationship. It also helps them to understand their physical changes and to cope up with the changes and manage their issues with the opposite gender.

**Que.: Does every adolescent girl/boy need counselling?**

**Ans.:** Counselling is not mandatory, yet it helps not only in dealing with the problems faced by the adolescent but it also helps them to identify their potential.

**Que.: What are the aspects of dealing with adolescents?**

**Ans.:** The adolescence stage shows rapid change and development in the distinct domain such as physical, cognitive, psychological and moral. All these aspects should be dealt with multi-disciplinary approach.

**Que.: What is the role of parents in counselling an adolescent?**

**Ans.:** Understanding of parents about their children and not comparing the other adolescent kids with their own is very essential for the holistic development of the adolescents.

**Que.: Is there any difference in approach of counselling an adolescent boy/girl?**

**Ans.:** Counselling for girls and boys may differ as they face different issues regarding their physical, emotional and cognitive functioning.

**Que.: What should be the preferred age group for counselling? Why?**

**Ans.:** Adolescence age is the reservoir of energy. Appropriate guidance, valuable presence and understanding of the problems will bring the best outcome if counselling starts after 13 years of age.

**Que.: Does a counselling session with a psychologist/psychiatrist affect "IMAGE" in the society?**

**Ans.:** This is the stage where individuals form their self-image, the integration of ideas about oneself, and the opinion of others about oneself. If necessary initiation of counselling should be done by parents to facilitate adolescents well-being.
**Topic 10: Counselling In Adolescents**

**Que.: Do the teachers have a role in supporting the parents in the counselling programs?**
**Ans.:** Teachers should try to understand the core issues facing by the adolescence, their unique potential and at any point never label any student and embarrass them in front of others.

**Que.: What is the aim of 'counselling' an adolescent girl/boy?**
**Ans.:** Proper counselling can positively influence the life of the adolescents.

**Que.: What output/result do you expect after a successful counselling session?**
**Ans.:** Optimum level of appropriate attention and appreciation would enhance the positive outcome in the individual. It will reflect in the child's attitude towards self and the society.

**Que.: What are the disadvantages of the counselling?**
**Ans.:** Counselling may also have disadvantages if it is mishandled by the counsellor, parents and the society.

**Que.: Is it mandatory that adolescent boys are counselled by a male psychologist/psychiatrist? If so why?**
**Ans.:** Gender of the client and the counsellor may not always be the same. It depends on the client's preference and on the issue.

**Que.: What are the symptoms you should expect for attending a counselling session?**
**Ans.:** Any kind of abnormal behavior in the context of the adolescent should be observed and addressed to counselling.

**Que.: Do the parent need counselling before the child is exposed for a counselling session?**
**Ans.:** The parents should be counselled if there is any serious issue between adolescent and parents. They may need counselling for learning the proper way to handle the adolescents.

**Que.: Is it important to have this aspect of counselling as part of curriculum in school/college?**
**Ans.:** It is important to have life skill training as the part of the curriculum as it is the basic factor for the betterment of the future.
**Topic 10: Counselling In Adolescents**

**Que.: Is counselling advised for abnormal behaviour in adolescent?**
**Ans.:** Adolescence is the period of dramatic developmental changes in physical, cognitive, and social emotional capacities. Hence, they should be handled with utmost care to bring them back to normal activities.

**Que.: What is the minimum number of sessions required to get my child back to normal activities?**
**Ans.:** Number of sessions in counselling depends upon the personality of the clients and the severity of the issue faced by the adolescents.

**Que.: When should I contact the counsellor?**
**Ans.:** If the child is not performing his/her routine and showing abnormal behaviour, first the parents need to talk to them and if it is above their threshold to handle then it is advisable to utilize the service of the counsellor/Psychiatrist.

**Que.: As a parent how can I avoid the negative outcomes in my child?**
**Ans.:** A child reflects what they are experiencing about themselves. So, it is mandatory to provide a positive environment. Over gratification and under gratification both are hazardous for the child and their proper psychological development.

**Que.: Who should not go for counselling?**
**Ans.:** It is not mandatory for all the children to attend counselling unless they are facing difficulties to cope with their emotions and handling stress.

**Que.: How should I manage my child if she/he is not willing for a counselling session?**
**Ans.:** Take time, listen to them and give them some opportunity to think about your advice.

**Que.: What are the common issues addressed in a counselling program?**
**Ans.:** It depends on the needs of the individual. Some common issues are health related issues, sexual issues, menstrual problems, social media, substance abuse, school related problems etc.

**Que.: If my child does not attend a counselling session at this age, will he/she face problems at a later age?**
**Ans.:** Not necessarily. It is important to watch the child's day to day activities. If you find any sudden gross
change, it's better to approach a good counsellor.

**Que.: Is Group Counselling Useful?**
**Ans.:** Group counselling gives the student a safe and comfortable place where they can work out their problems and emotional concerns.

**Que.: My child is doing her routine school activities and she is good in her studies, but she gets terribly upset if she is questioned for any of her activities. Does she need counselling?**
**Ans.:** If a child is getting upset beyond the optimum level for questioning her activities, it is essential to engage her in counselling to identify her hidden emotion and improve her self esteem.

**Que.: My son Ramesh is 16 years old. He goes out with his friends, plays football every day after school. For the past one week, he prefers to stay at home, does not have the interest to do any of his activities. What type of counselling does he require?**
**Ans.:** If a boy or girl suddenly withdrawn from his or her routine, they need proper attention, they may have faced some kind of abuse or break up from a relationship or may have faced an embarrassing situation. You should also think of substance abuse. Sometimes there may not be any serious issue.

**Que.: My daughter Radha is 18 years old, she is in her second year college. She used to go to the college with her friends for the past 1½ years. Suddenly, she has started avoiding them and her usage of mobile phone has increased dramatically. Where to find help?**
**Ans.:** If a girl suddenly isolates herself from friends and is spending a lot of time busy with her mobile phone, it may be the indication of a new relationship. It should be monitored to ensure that she is in a right relationship.

**Que.: I am Mr. Velu, 34/M, I am having 2 Children, My first child (son) is having mental illness since adolescence, now my second child (daughter) is 14 years. Does she need counselling to prevent the illness?**
**Ans.:** Counselling may be helpful for the child having sibling with mental illness to understand their status and to cope up with their own stress and sufferings of the parents.

**Que.: What are the criteria of a good counsellor?**
**Ans.:** A good counsellor should be very patient to listen to the adolescent's questions, observe, interact and should be able to answer all queries, maintain confidentiality and a good relationship with the adolescent throughout all the counselling sessions.
**Topic 11: School Issues In Teens**

**Que.: What is the best meal plan for schoolgoers?**
**Ans.:** School Tiffin should be home cooked, made with locally available fresh vegetables and grains. Should include fruits, salads and sprouts whenever possible. A balanced diet is a must for growing children. It should contain carbohydrates, protein, fats, dairy products, vitamins, etc. Mothers should try to make the Tiffin nutritious as well as interesting so that adolescents enjoy their meal and gain maximum benefit from it.

**Que.: I love to eat fast food but parents don’t allow. What should I do?**
**Ans.:** Fast food on regular basis is unhealthy and can lead to obesity, diabetes, hyperlipidemia, etc. causing serious illnesses like heart disease, renal failure, stroke, etc. You can look for healthy options that can be cooked at home. Fast food should be allowed once in a fortnight.

**Que.: I feel excessively tired and reduced stamina. What should I do?**
**Ans.:** Anaemia due to iron deficiency is common cause of tiredness among menstruating girls. Include green leafy vegetables like spinach, broccoli, green peas, dairy products, nuts and dried fruits like raisins, apricots and dates in your diet. Also, your diet should be rich in proteins. Eat eggs, fish, meat, sprouts, etc. on a regular basis. Consult your doctor and start iron supplements if Hb level is low. In severe cases, you may need to be investigated for anemia, diabetes and thyroid disorders.

**Que.: My daughter complains of general aches and pains especially after physical exertion. Please advise.**
**Ans.:** Among other things, calcium deficiency can cause aches and joint pains. Give her calcium rich foods like dairy products- milk, yogurt, cheese, paneer, banana, custard apple. Ragi is a rich source of Calcium and you can give it in the form of porridge or roti. Fish when eaten with bones can be a good source of calcium. Sprinkle sesame seeds over vegetables and salads as it is a rich source of calcium. Vitamin D is required to utilise calcium for making stronger bones. Vit D is produced in the skin when exposed to the sun's ultraviolet B rays. Daily exposure to the morning sun for 30 to 60 minutes will provide enough Vit D. In case deficiency of calcium or Vit D persists, please see a doctor and start calcium and Vit D supplements.

**Que.: I don’t get enough time for exercise due to full day school and extra classes. Please advice.**
**Ans.:** Exercise is important for healthy growth and bone development. Practice outdoor sports during PT period. Not only will you get a healthy dose of happy hormones, exposure to sunlight will help your body manufacture Vit D needed for strong bones. Also, you can leave home 45 minutes early and walk to school. If you stay far from your school, alight the bus one stop earlier and walk to school. You can also go cycling to and from school. This way, exercise becomes a part of your daily routine.
Que.: How many hours sleep is required for school students?
Ans.: Teenagers aged 13–18 years should sleep 8–10 hours per 24 hours. Chronic sleep deprivation which is less than 7 hours can lead to excessive sleepiness in daytime, lack of concentration, fatigue, depression and irritability, eating disorders and obesity.

You can develop healthy sleeping habits by doing the following:

- Sticking to a consistent sleep schedule during the school week and weekends.
- Limiting light exposure and technology use in the evenings.
- Meditation before sleep.

Que.: The female students of my class often complain of episodes of burning and pain while passing urine. They try to avoid using the washroom during school hours due to various reasons. Can it be a result of the same?
Ans.: Urinary tract infection leads to burning and pain when passing urine. It is common among girls due to anatomical peculiarities like short length of urethra and proximity to vagina in females.

In school going girls, access to clean and safe toilets is important. In most public schools and remote areas, these basic facilities are lacking. Hence girls tend to avoid passing urine for long hours, making them prone to urine infection, and urinary stones. The school management should take up this issue on priority basis and provide the same.

Que.: My daughter was always a bright student. But lately she is not scoring well. She doesn’t talk too much and also doesn’t eat well. She is very withdrawn and her teachers also complain that she does not concentrate in class and is falling back in class work. Please advise.
Ans.: Drop in scholastic performance and all the above problems in an otherwise healthy child can be a sign of depression. Kids are under tremendous stress to meet academic / other expectations and mental disorders are on the rise. Do get her evaluated as it can lead to suicidal tendency in severe cases.

Que.: Lately my daughter is very reluctant to attend school. Also, she avoids meeting people and her school performance is also deteriorating.
Ans.: One of the reasons for this type of behavior could be sexual abuse. Please make sure she is not being subjected to Sexual abuse of any kind. It may vary from teasing, stalking, inappropriate touching, being blackmailed through her pictures or videos, molestation and in worst cases, rape. Kids are afraid to talk about such things as often the perpetrator is someone they know or trust such as family members, friends or neighbours. Sexual abuse is to be taken seriously as it can jeopardize the physical and mental health of the child. The POCSO Act is a strong statute enforced in our country to safe guard minors. You can seek help
from police, doctors, teachers or counsellors.

**Que.: What vaccines are recommended in adolescent girls?**
**Ans.:** Vaccines are a cost-effective way of preventing serious illness. If the girl has received primary immunization in childhood, then booster doses like TDAP and MMR are recommended. While HPV, Dengue, Mumps/MPV, TD/Tdap, Hepatitis A, Typhoid, Varicella and Hepatitis B vaccines should be recommended for all adolescents, Meningococcal, Pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine (PPSV), JE, Influenza, Rabies, Cholera and Yellow fever vaccines should be given under special circumstances. HPV vaccine specifically prevents cervical cancers and is particularly recommended for adolescent girls.
**Topic 12: Social Media - A Virtual boom**

**Que.: Can social media negatively affect youth?**
**Ans.:** Social media use can negatively affect teens by distracting them from studies, disrupting their sleep, and exposing them to bullying, rumour spreading and many more bad outcomes.

**Que.: Can social media cause peer pressure in teens?**
**Ans.:** Social media gives unrealistic views of other people lives and the colleagues. Teens also want to show off their virtual image in trying to prove themselves more socially popular and acceptable and this way it causes lots of peer pressure. The risks might be related to how much social media teens use. Many times the teen get engaged on social media only because of peer pressure.

**Que.: How does social media affect teen behavior?**
**Ans.:** Experts believe boys are growing up with more anxiety and less self-esteem. Social media gives unrealistic views of other people lives. Naturally teens are attracted to this virtual trap unknowingly and start to change the behaviour. Most of the parents are worried for the technology causing behavioural changes in their teens. Various survey results found that snap chat, facebook, twitter and instagram all led to increased feelings of depression, anxiety, poor body image and loneliness.

**Que.: Can social media reduce the self confidence of teens?**
**Ans.:** Yes, excessive use of social media gives boost to the virtual image of boys where they can beat anyone in online games without even being recognised, they can even talk to girls that they normally wouldn't. Messaging online is an easy thing rather than talking to someone in real. But this confidence online can give rise to loss of confidence in real and inability to interact with people face to face.

**Que.: Is Social Media always negative?**
**Ans.:** Many people believe social media is a negative thing, but that is not necessarily true. Basically it depend upon how much and in what way someone is using it. Focusing on social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, Twitter, Facebook, or YouTube, leaving behind your regular work can have a negative impact on mental health and well being. So it's better to use it in positive ways to ensure growth of a person or society.

**Que.: How social media is harmful?**
**Ans.:** “Friends” on social media may not always be true friends but may be strangers and sometimes people with criminal background. Young boys can get influenced by bad people which can change their way of thinking and can lead to cyber bullying, social anxiety, depression, and exposure to content that is not age appropriate.

**Que.: Can social media be addicting?**

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Ans.: Yes, social media can be very addicting, longer the child is using various social media platforms, more influenced he becomes with the virtual world and starts living there only. This leads to easy escape from reality and more addiction and virtual sense of wellbeing.

Que.: How social media can influence you?
Ans.: Social media is harmful to school students. Students are young and their minds are not much developed hence they cannot differentiate between good and bad. They can easily get influenced and distracted by bad influences. It might also lead to biased, prejudiced views about people, religion, countries, societies or other important issues they hardly have much knowledge about.

Que.: How social media affects friendship of students?
Ans.: Through social media networks children create new virtual friendships, express their views and opinions in a manner to impress unknown friends, sometimes they even create new and fake identities. They might get so much involved in virtual friendships that they do not associate or nurture their real world friends and become more socially withdrawn.

Que.: What precautions should someone take while using social media?
Ans.: The biggest rule to use social media responsibly is that you should learn about internet safety. You should know that once some information or fact goes online it can never be deleted completely and social media world is a dangerous world.

Que.: What if a teen got trapped with some wrong post or some cyber bullying?
Ans.: Boys generally tend to hide the wrong doings on social platform. They are afraid to talk about when they are trapped or if somebody is bullying them on social media. They should not be afraid to talk about this to their parents or sibling rather they should communicate well with their parents and feel secure in their own home environment. They should not try to hide, worry or take extreme steps out of fear. Alone they may not, but with the help of parents, they will be definitely come out of it.

Que.: Can social media affect students learning skills?
Ans.: Social media is a big platform of information and exposes students to many innovative ways of learning. Research has shown that students who are frequent users of social media are more innovative and exhibit better memory and cognitive skills. The only precaution to be taken is not to get trapped. Students who get addicted to online games or social apps, might get negative effects on academics, familial and social relations.
**Topic 12: Social Media - A Virtual boom**

**Que.: How does social media affect the teenage brain?**  
**Ans.:** For many teens, social media can become almost addictive. In a study by researchers at the UCLA brain mapping centre, they found that certain regions of teen brains became activated by likes on social media, causing them to want to post more on social media to get more and more likes. They waste their precious time in posting things and getting likes. Sometimes they get into doing dangerous acts to get more likes which could even prove fatal.

**Que.: Does social media act as an addictive substance?**  
**Ans.:** Social media has the effects on the brain and is addictive both physically and psychologically. According to the observation of a new study by Harvard University, self-disclosure on social networking sites lights up the same part of the brain that also ignites when taking an addictive substance.

**Que.: What are Benefits of Social Media?**  
**Ans.:** Social networking services can work as a powerful media for highlighting and acting on some important issues and causes that affect and interests young people. Social networking services can be used for organising activities, events, or groups to show case social issues and opinions and make a wide approach to influence large number of people.

**Que.: How does social media affect my personality?**  
**Ans.:** We all know that the environment around is a key factor in making any personality. Circumstances, life events, influences, and surroundings can further change our behaviour and perception. Social media can highly influence environment, our relationships, mindset, thoughts and education. So one should be careful how much time they spend on it.

**Que.: How much social media one should use?**  
**Ans.:** Limiting time for social media is very important. If a boy is lagging behind in his school work and studies then he should definitely limit the time or avoid social media.

**Que.: Does having more social media friends make you more influential?**  
**Ans.:** No, not necessarily, if somebody has more social media friends that doesn't mean he is more influential and successful. One has to understand that real world success, real friend family and parents is more meaningful than having virtual fan following and pseudo social media success.

**Que.: Is social media making children more violent?**  
**Ans.:** Yes, social media is making children more violent specially when boys are playing online violent and competitive games. Withdrawal from social media world can also lead to violent behaviour in real world.
**Topic 12: Social Media - A Virtual boom**

**Que.: Can someone make friends with strangers?**
**Ans.:** One of the very important thing to keep in mind is that one should never talk to strangers on social media. Strangers could be scammers or dangerous people so one should avoid them.

**Que.: How does social media affect your safety?**
**Ans.:** When someone uses social networking sites they have to understand that they are posting personal information on web world. Once information is posted online it is no longer private and can sometimes fall into the wrong hands. The more someone posts, the more he become vulnerable to harm.

**Que.: Can social media cause sleep deprivation?**
**Ans.:** When too much social media attention is given, one can lose their precious time of sleep. According to one British study it was found that one fifth of teens were almost always logged in to social media in the night. Habit of repeatedly completing the targets, checking the status and likes leads to sleepless nights and sleep deprivation.

**Que.: What are mental health issues with social media use?**
**Ans.:** Anxiety, depression, poor self esteem, insomnia and feeling of envy are some serious mental issues with excessive use of social media.

**Que.: What is passive screen time?**
**Ans.:** Passive screen time is just sitting and passively staring at TV program, video or movie either on a big screen or on a small device or phone. Passive screen makes once mind go blunt and reduces cognitive functions.

**Que.: What is interactive or constructive screen time?**
**Ans.:** Interactive screen time is playing video game, moving along with games or online fitness activities. Constructive screen time is spent on designing websites, writing blogs, writing literature, learning music, dancing or coding.

**Que.: How can a teen avoid addiction of social media?**
**Ans.:** Talking to parents or taking help from psychiatrist may be needed for this. Find out alternative activities to reduce social media time. Going to play outdoor games, interacting with friends and family can help to divert the teens from social media.
**Que.: What is the Incidence of drug abuse in adolescents worldwide?**

**Ans.:** The incidence is very high throughout the world. If handled carefully & diagnosed early it is preventable. Parents should be aware & try to protect the child of being trapped in the drug abuse.

- There is a huge burden of drug abuse worldwide. WHO has come out with the following details -
- The harmful use of alcohol results in 3.3 million deaths each year.
- Incidence is very high in boys compared to girls.
- Some 31 million persons have drug use disorders.
- Almost 11 million people inject drugs, of which 1.3 million are living with HIV,
- 5.5 million live with hepatitis C, and 1 million with both HIV and hepatitis C.

**Que.: What is the Incidence of Drug Abuse in adolescents in India?**

**Ans.:** Incidence in India is high. It is prevalent in urban & rural sectors equally. Rich & poor all are affected. Mostly boys start taking drugs in adolescence only without realising its long term disastrous effects.

Education, counselling & therapy should be started early.

There are mainly eight categories of psychoactive substances: Alcohol, Cannabis, Opioids, Cocaine, Amphetamine Type Stimulants (ATS), Sedatives, Inhalants and Hallucinogens.

Alcohol is the most common psychoactive substance used by Indians. About 8-10% of the boys experiment with alcohol.

Use of alcohol is considerably higher among boys as compared to girls. States with the highest prevalence of alcohol use are Chhattisgarh, Tripura, Punjab, Arunachal Pradesh and Goa. Bihar government efforts must be appreciated in this. After complete prohibition the incidence of alcohol consumption has come down considerably.

After alcohol, cannabis and opioids are the next commonly used substances in India. About 2-5% of the young boys try cannabis product. The use of cannabis further differentiated between the legal form of cannabis (bhang) and other illegal cannabis products (ganja and charas). States with the highest prevalence of cannabis use are Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Sikkim, Chhattisgarh and Delhi. Now a days current hot topic of discussion is cannabis consumption in MUMBAI which NCB is investigating.

About 2-5% of the country's young population use opioids which includes opium, heroin (or its impure form – smack or brown sugar) and a variety of pharmaceutical opioids.

In our country, the most common opioid used is Heroin, followed by pharmaceutical opioids and opium. Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram have the highest prevalence of opioid use. A sizeable number of individuals use Sedatives, Pain Killers and Inhalants. About 1-3% of 10-20 year old Indians are current users of sedatives (non-medical, non-prescription use).

States with the highest prevalence of current sedative use are Sikkim, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram.
However, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat are the top five states which house the largest populations of people using sedatives. Inhalants are the only category of substances for which the prevalence of current use among children and adolescents is higher than adults. Other categories of drugs such as, cocaine, amphetamine type stimulants and hallucinogens are used by a small proportion of country's population.

**Que.: What is Harmful Use, Dependence and Addiction?**

**Ans.:** Use of any substance is defined as use, even once within the preceding 12 months, unless specified. HARMFUL USE is defined as current use of the substance and experiencing harmful consequence of substance use within last three months. DEPENDENCE is defined as current use of the substance along with severe addiction & consumption-pattern in which the individual requires professional help. It also indicates substance use disorders. Next stage is ADDICTION, the stage where the person behaves abnormally because of substance intoxication.

**Que.: At What Age do most Boys First Use drugs or alcohol?**

**Ans.:** More than half the drug users start drugs or alcohol abuse between the ages of 15 and 17 yrs. Some of them start substance abuse as early as 10 - 12 years of age. Rest start after 17 years of age so if parents are suspicious they should not ignore the problem. Early intervention gives best results.

**Que.: Why do informed teens use drugs?**

**Ans.:** Anti-drug awareness campaigns are run in schools across the globe, but many teens continue to use drugs, even when they understand the risks of addiction and other negative side effects. Some want to experiment it out of curiosity. Some want to impress friends. Sometimes due to academic stress. Sometimes due to hostile environment at home. Some are using under peer pressure. This is a vicious circle. Once you get into it difficult to come out.

**Que.: Does drug & alcohol use lead to addiction & suicidal behaviors?**

**Ans.:** Yes, there is a correlation between the two. Boys who use drugs or alcohol between the age of 15 to 17 are at risk of significant addiction later in life too. The research shows that young adolescents who consume drugs or alcohol are more likely to demonstrate suicidal behaviors. They are also more likely to engage in risky sexual acts, such as having multiple partners. Those who consume alcohol by age of 14 or earlier are also more likely to struggle with alcohol dependence later in life.
Researchers say that reason behind this is the effect on brain development at this age. The teenage years are a critical period for brain development, and the effects of alcohol on the teen brain can stall this development. During adolescence, an area of the brain called the amygdala in temporal lobe limbic system which is responsible for fear and emotional decision making, develops first, whereas the frontal cortex, involved in rational decision making develops later.

Teenage alcohol use can have a negative impact on brain development and lead to increased impulsive, irrational behaviour. Most adolescents if taken care early may not become drug abusers or drug addicts in adulthood. But drug use in adolescence can put their mental, emotional, and physical health at risk. They become impulsive, arrogant & violent. And it can put vulnerable kids at risk for ongoing drug abuse and addiction problems into their future.

**Que.: What are the dangerous effects of drugs in adolescents?**

**Ans.:** These children are more prone to develop addiction in adulthood. They may end up with unprotected sex, sexual activities with stranger, multiple sex partners, putting them into risk of unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, rape etc.

Drug abuse masks other emotional issues in the adolescents like anxiety, depression, suicidal or homicidal tendencies.

Drug abuse causes impotence in boys, baldness, stunted growth, heart attacks, HIV, STDs, etc.

**Que.: Why do boys start using drugs?**

**Ans.:** Some of the factors that may place a teen at risk.

- Our society is male dominated, sons are more pampered by parents. They are given more pocket money and no accounting.
- Too little parental supervision and monitoring.
- Lack of communication and interaction between parents and children.
- Poorly defined and poorly communicated family or home rules.
- Family conflicts.
- Parental alcoholism or drug use.
- Friends and peer pressure, especially if the teen hangs around with at-risk friends with poor academic achievement.
- High need for sensation seeking or engaging in physically dangerous behavior impulsiveness, psychological distress.
- Difficulty in maintaining emotional stability perception that drug use is harmless.
• Low family income, with little access to opportunity for success.

**Que.: Is addiction hereditary?**
**Ans.:** Addiction is hereditary, as it has been linked to certain genes within a person's DNA. If family carries a gene linked to increased susceptibility to addiction, children may be at risk for developing a substance use disorder. But the presence of the gene alone does not necessarily mean that someone will become addicted to a substance. But this theory is controversial, it is more with environment than genetics.

**Que.: How to spot drug abuse in kids?**
**Ans.:** Every parent must be alert and attentive to their kids. They must observe them and analyze their behavior carefully.

According to experts, teens who engage in underage substance abuse may act rebelliously or begin spending time with new groups of friends. They may also demonstrate mood swings and be irritable and angry. A teen who is abusing alcohol may become detached from the family, struggle academically or begin to lose interest in previously enjoyed activities, such as sports and clubs. Teens who drink may also get in trouble at school or appear tired and sluggish. Any significant changes in behavior could be a sign of a problem. Your child may be using alcohol or drugs if you notice that there is dramatic change in the teen's appearance, friends, or physical health. Early suspicion is the key.

**Que.: How will you identify drug abuse in Adolescents?**
**Ans.:**
• Check, if you are losing money from home
  • Check if your children are lying or making excuses.
  • Check if they have become confined to their rooms only.
  • Look if they are behaving differently or losing interest from their previous hobbies.
  • Do they smell of tobacco, or alcohol or using chewing gums or perfumes often.
  • Have you found syringes needles in their rooms?
  • Is their school performance degrading in value?

**Que.: Do these adolescents have more risk of addiction in adulthood?**
**Ans.:** Yes! The Adolescent who engage in drug abuse have very high risk of addiction in adulthood.

**Que.: What are the signs of drug abuse?**
**Ans.:** Signs of teenage substance abuse can include problems at school or at home.
• Evidence of drugs and/or drug equipments
• Behavioral problems and poor grades in school, quarrelling with classmates.
• Emotional distancing, isolation, depression, or fatigue.
• Overly influenced by peers.
• Hostility, irritability, or change in level of cooperation around the house.
• Lying or increased evasiveness.
• Decrease in interest in personal appearance.
• Physical changes, such as bloodshot eyes, runny nose, frequent sore throats, and rapid weight loss.
• Changes in mood, eating, or sleeping patterns.
• Dizziness and memory problems.
• Unusual odour in breath (alcohol, inhalants, marijuana).
• Widely dilated pupils even in bright light or pinpoint pupils even in dim light.

**Que.: Which prescription of pain medication is the most addictive?**

**Ans.:** Opioids are very addictive prescription painkillers. NSAIDs are not addictive and medications that treat causes of pain, instead of pain explicitly, may or may not be addictive, and will not normally be as addictive as opioids.

**Que.: Is Vaping Safer Than Smoking?**

**Ans.:** Traditional cigarettes involve a nicotine containing substance being burned and the smoke from that substance being inhaled into the lungs. Vaping allows for nicotine to be delivered into the lungs with the traditional method of combustion. Vapes use electricity to heat water that contains nicotine and other substances, turning into vapour which can then be inhaled. While vaping does not create tar like traditional cigarettes, it has been shown to start or worsen breathing problems and typically contains several carcinogenic substances.

**Que.: Are steroids used only by athletes?**

**Ans.:** The use of anabolic steroids is dangerous and is more widespread than most people believe. Athletes are not the only people who abuses steroids. There are many serious risks associated with the abuse of anabolic steroids. Anabolic steroids are chemicals produced to mimic the effects of the naturally occurring male hormone testosterone.

Steroid use can affect many body systems and can result in heart disease and dysfunction, liver damage, reproductive disorders and increased risk of blood borne illnesses such as HIV and hepatitis from the use of unsanitary needles. They can damage kidneys also. There is no safe level of drug use when it comes to
anabolic steroids. They are banned in competitive sports. Treatment for anabolic steroid abuse is available and generally involves education, counselling and management of the effects of steroid use.

Que.: Can cough syrup be used to get high?
Ans.: Cough syrup is frequently used as a recreational drug, especially among teens. When misused, active ingredients in cough syrup can be dangerous, even fatal. Dextromethorphan (DXM) is a common ingredient in cough syrup. Used as directed, it is an effective cough suppressant and expectorant, but it has a serious potential for misuse and is a particularly prominent teen drug abuse concern. Cough syrup addiction can have profoundly negative physical and psychological consequences, especially in developing minds.

Que.: Should I test drug abuse in my child?
Ans.: As a parent you always have your child's best interest in mind. But drug testing your child can damage the parent-child relationship. Building trust between parent and child is important during the adolescent years, as teens should feel comfortable discussing concerns with their parents and receiving guidance. But if boy is already addict, tests are required to plan proper rehabilitation programmes.

Que.: When should I start talking to my child about drugs and what precautions should I take?
Ans.: Finding out that your child is struggling with drug abuse is heartbreaking. Parents can watch for signs of addiction or substance use in their children and intervene if they suspect their child is using drugs. Recovery is possible. Parent's unconditional love & support can help them to come out of it. Do not ignore the problem. Don't be harsh with them. Don't be judgemental. Parents should also avoid keeping drugs or alcohol in the house, where teens might have access to it. Parents must avoid using alcohol and smoking in front of kids. Changing a teen's home environment could make a difference in their susceptibility to drug or alcohol addiction.

Que.: How to talk to kids about drugs?
Ans.: You can always take help of counsellor and psychiatrist. With teen cigarette, alcohol and marijuana use beginning early, it is important to have a conversation about the dangers of substance abuse with adolescents. If you are wondering how to talk to your kids about drugs, you can take help of counsellors, psychiatrists, clinical psychologists or physician. They are well trained to handle these situations with absolute care. First step is to plan and determine what you want to say during the conversation and tell them that you are
having a conversation because you care about them and want them to be safe and healthy.

It is important to avoid making accusations and allow your child to have an opportunity to speak and ask questions. Topics during this conversation can include the effects of teen drug abuse and the risks of drugs and alcohol. You can also inform your teen that research shows that drug and alcohol abuse during youth is associated with brain changes that can have a negative effect on the way they think and behave as an adult. While these conversations may be difficult, they are important to have because communication between children and parents can significantly reduce teen drug and alcohol use. It should be done in friendly manner and good environment.

**Que.: How do you know if your child needs treatment?**

**Ans.:** If child is addicted, needs treatment, if child has started using drugs or alcohol recently, it is easy to motivate to stop it. But over the time, these drugs change the structure and functioning of the brain. Once he is addicted, the urge to use the substance gets very strong. Don't provide them excess funds. This will discourage them from buying drugs. Take it as a warning sign if he keeps using drugs or alcohol after having problems with his health or education, or his relationships. You need to ask for help.

**Que.: Is drug addiction treatable?**

**Ans.:** Yes it is treatable. Early treatment is best. Drug and alcohol addiction are long lasting diseases. They can be treated as successfully as many other long lasting diseases such as high blood pressure, asthma, and diabetes. The earlier you seek help for a teen's alcohol or drug problem, the better. A qualified family therapist can evaluate and assess your child, then provide appropriate treatment. This may include outpatient therapy or therapy in a residential treatment facility.

**Que.: Where to go for help for drug addiction?**

**Ans.:** The first step is to admit that you have a problem and you need help. The next is accepting that treatment takes time. Short term, one time treatments hardly ever work. The best treatment programs offer many services over a period of time. These services often include family education and support. Studies show that anything less than 90 days is often not long enough.

Section 71 of the Narcotic Drugs & Psychotropic Substance Act, 1985, empowers to Government for establishment of identification, treatment and rehabilitation centres for drug addiction. There is National Drug Dependence Treatment Centre (NDDTC), at AIIMS, New Delhi. The Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment as the nodal agency has been supporting Integrated Rehabilitation Centre for Addicts (IRCAs) under the scheme of Prevention of Alcoholism and Substance (Substances) Abuse being run by voluntary organisations. There are dedicated centres run by State Governments, Medical Colleges & NGOs in every state & Union Territory of India. You may feel powerless over drugs or alcohol. But remember that you are
fighting a disease and you need help. Treatment does work, but it is a lifelong process. Finding the right treatment program can help you start to address your needs. It can also help you focus on the health, emotional, and social parts of your son's addiction.

**Que.: How to find the right rehab program for substance abuse?**

**Ans.:** Treatment isn't the same for everyone. Treatment program may change according to child's age, the drugs he is abusing, health history, including mental health problems, the cost of treatment and the family support. Parents should consult a doctor. The doctor will plan the right strategies to fight the abuse. The biggest myth about drug and alcohol rehabilitation is that treatment doesn't work. It is not so. Parents have to be supportive & they should have patience. This will keep the boy motivated. It is a long battle but you can always win it.

**Que.: What is Adolescent Medicine or Adolescent health clinic?**

**Ans.:** The Centre for Adolescent Health provides medical services for adolescents and young adults between the ages of 12-26 years. These services are confidential and are provided by adolescent medicine specialists. The Teen and Young Adult Clinic provides comprehensive primary care health services (e.g. checkups, acne, colds, including confidential reproductive health counselling and sexually transmitted infection testing) and consulting services to primary care physicians for issues such as menstrual disorders, delayed puberty, etc. Clinic staff understands the unique health issues that young adults face during this time in their lives.

**Que.: How to help children with addicted parents?**

**Ans.:** Growing up can be a tough challenge for most adolescents, but when their parents are abusing alcohol or drugs it becomes more difficult. These kids need help.

- Let the teenager talk it out, then take appropriate steps, such as reporting physical or emotional abuse.
- Family friend, Doctor, Counsellor, Social Worker, NGO, Govt agencies can provide help, the school guidance office or volunteer agency can assist troubled families.
- Here are a few suggestions on ways to help teenagers with addicted parents-
  - If the child is being physically or emotionally abused, report it to child protection authorities.
- Addicted parent or parents should be recommended substance abuse counselling.

**Que.: Are state & national agencies doing enough?**

**Ans.:** Many people with alcohol and drug dependence want to leave the habit & they need good centres. But unfortunately very few are able to do it. At present treatment is not available easily to all. Very few dedication
centres are there. Indeed, ‘admission to a de-addiction centre’ (which is mistakenly regarded as the primary modality of treatment of substance use disorders in India) is received by a miniscule proportion of affected population. In the light of the finding that most common type of facility where patients receive treatment is the government general hospital, it is evident that neither the program by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (support to NGOs for establishing Integrated Rehabilitation Services for Addicts – IRCAs) nor the Drug De-Addiction program of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (support to government hospitals for establishing de-addiction centres) are able to cater to the vast demand of treatment.

**Que.: What Steps Should be Taken to Stop The Drug Abuse?**

**Ans.:** More drug de-addiction centres, psychiatrists, counsellors should be there. Urgent need of policies and programs which can bring relief to the large number of affected Indians. It is imperative that these policies and programs are based upon the scientific evidence and take into consideration the local, socio-cultural context. Substance use disorders are clearly a significant public health concern in the country.

- Scientific evidence based treatment needs to be made available for people with substance use disorders at the required scale.
- Evidence based substance use prevention programmes are needed.
- Supply reduction approaches, i.e. those aimed at making the drugs not available to the users.
- The punishment to drug peddlers and suppliers should be harsh and exemplary.
- In the states with alcohol prohibition, consumption of alcohol is a criminal act like Bihar and Gujrat the same should be extended to other states.
- Criminalisation of people using substances, further enhances the stigma, isolation and hinders access to treatment. In the line of recommendations by International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) and many other international agencies, it is important to take necessary steps to minimise the stigma and discrimination and provide health and welfare services to people affected by substance use rather than subjecting them to the criminal justice system. They should be treated as patient rather than punished.
- Harm reduction as an approach serves to minimise the risk of harms of substance use, even when complete abstinence from drugs is not possible. Harm reduction approach has been endorsed by the Government of India through the National Narcotic Drugs & Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Policy, 2012. There is a need to scale-up the programme according to the available evidence. In addition, the scope and ambit of harm reduction needs to be expanded to cover larger population.

**Que.: Can parents prevent drug abuse in Adolescent children?**

**Ans.:** Yes

- Family atmosphere should be healthy.
- Parents themselves should not be addicted.
Effective communication with affection with children is very important.

Parents should do adequate supervision of them in home as well as out of the home.

Parents should know how, when and with whom their children socialize.

This way parents can prevent children's basic access to drugs.

Que.: Some of my friends smoke cigarettes and even pot. They keep telling me to try it at least once. I feel left out and sometimes think I should smoke to fit in. Is it ok if I do it just once?

Ans.: Substance abuse is a great hazard to physical and mental health. Majority of addictions start in adolescent years. During teenage, you are particularly vulnerable to addiction of various types like smoking, tobacco chewing, ghutkha consumption, drinking alcohol and use of narcotics by smoking, inhalation or IV route. Most substance abuse drugs are highly addictive and difficult to get rid of. Hence it is best to say no to drugs the very first time. Drugs can cause serious illness and withdrawal symptoms which are potentially life threatening. Also, they impair cognitive thinking and judgment leading to increased incidence of criminal activities like theft, physical assault, even rape and murder. Please stay away from friends who indulge in drug abuse. Also encourage them to seek professional help to de addict themselves.
**Que.: What do you mean by adolescent violence?**

**Ans.:** “The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal development, or deprivation in adolescent”.

**Que.: What is the role of parents in preventing adolescent violence?**

**Ans.:** The parents can play a great role in preventing violence in adolescents. The parents should do their part by spending quality time with their kids and educate them on all aspects of life. It's always easy for the parents to anticipate the signs and symptoms of violence in their kids.

**Que.: Is there any role of spirituality in overcoming this problem?**

**Ans.:** The core of the youth violence problem is a spiritual crisis. Human beings are not simply animals with complicated brains. Rather, we are spiritual beings having a physical experience. This recognition directs our attention to the spiritual crises in the lives of violent adolescents.

**Que.: Are we giving comfortable environment for our teenagers to grow and not be frustrated leading to violence?**

**Ans.:** Family members need to give the adolescence a comfortable environment for them to grow. There should be room for them to fall and rise again. Any failure whether in sports or academics should not become a success criteria to judge the adolescent. Any such judgmental behavior can instigate a sense of frustration in the teenagers leading to violent behavior.

**Que.: There are comparisons such as ‘not everyone is a Shakuntala Devi? How to deal with it?**

**Ans.:** In many households there are comparisons between the grades or school performances of one child to another in the same family. Comparisons lead to feeling of inferiority in the adolescent if he is not up to the mark to the other child in the family, leading to a feeling of dejection and anger which bursts out into violent behaviour.

**Que.: What is the role of social Media in violence in adolescents?**

**Ans.:** In previous times, teenagers used to look towards their parents and grandparents to find any solution of their problems. Today, internet is the guiding light for all the generation. They think it can answer all things in a right way. The internet is an information gateway and has good and well as bad contents. Adolescents get easily swayed away with the bad contents which talk about revolt and violence. There are also videos which inspire youth on the path of violence.
Que.: Do questioning religion leads to a vacuum in thoughts?
Ans.: In older ages religion was the guiding light of all youths. Correct interpretations of religion used to give people a path of living and controlling their harmful emotions. The adolescents of today have learned to question everything including religion. They raise doubts of whether Ram actually existed or is it just a work of fiction, they questions the teachings of Gita. This leads to a vacuum in the path to follow, leading to frustration, anger and violence.
Parents should educated their children that religion guides the path we take in the life.

Que.: My son is addicted to watch action Movies. What shall I counsel him?
Ans.: Action movies have always been the best sellers from the Bahubalis of Bollywood to the Gladiators of Hollywood. Movies have glorified action, violence and the use of brutal power by the winners in different generations. This has led to the adolescent to believe that physical power and violence is the path to establish superiority over the other individual. Teenagers get influenced by the same and resort to violence for any quarrels between them.

Que.: What role does technology play in spoiling the youngsters?
Ans.: With the technological advances and the availability of modern communication systems including the internet, our teens are bombarded with a sea of information that is frequently inaccurate or age-inappropriate.

Que.: What are the social factors responsible for violent adolescent behaviour?
Ans.: Social factors such as asthenic heterogeneity, crowded housing, racial intolerance, lack of adult supervision, and social acceptance of violence.

Que.: Which type of personality people are specially prone to violence and we need to take extra care??
Ans.: Children suffering from depression, antisocial behaviour, conduct disorder, or aggression especially male gender, alcohol or drug abuse, poor impulse control, previous gunshot injury, and minority race are especially prone to violence.

Que.: What role does school play in behaviour modelling?
Ans.: Schools need to make sure that all the children are given an environment to grow with confidence and good moral values. The path of non-violence to resolve problems should be taught.
**Que.: Bodybuilding, the age of six packs?**

**Ans.:** With so much focus on looking good, everyone is pumping iron to look bulky and muscular. In all this the adolescent develops violent aggressive behavior and tends to think that the strength in the arms is the solution to all problems and wants to punch his way through all problems.

**Que.: No focus on improving mental strength, meditation an answer?**

**Ans.:** The teenagers are not focusing on improving their mental strength through yoga and meditation. An unstable mind leads to confusion, unclear thoughts and aggression leading to violent behavior. Parents should encourage adolescent to take up meditation courses to improve their mental stability and get calm and composed mind.

**Que.: How to manage low self esteems, keep talking to them?**

**Ans.:** The adolescents generally develop a sense of low self-esteem due to their looks, or comments from their peer

Parents and family members should keep talking to them to make sure they have someone to discuss their feelings and get a right opinion

**Que.: Are childhood experiences, a precursor for violent behaviors?**

**Ans.:** Many adolescents have some childhood experiences that leave a lasting impression on their behavior patterns. And leads to suppressed behavior which can lead to violent behaviors at times. Proper counselling of the adolescents is needed at times to make them come out of their past experience fears.

**Que.: Is a friend in need a friend indeed?**

**Ans.:** Adolescents need to have like minded group of friends who have mutual respect and share good thoughts.

In their age they pick up maximum from their peer groups. Parents and family should make sure that they are in good company so they pick the correct habits. Wrong company can introduce them to thoughts that can cause violent tendencies in them.

**Que.: Can substance abuse leads to violent behavior?**

**Ans.:** Substance abuse in the form of alcohol or drugs intake in their peer groups, at home, within family or in relatives can induce violent behaviors in the teenagers.
**Que.: Are you an instructor, an observer or a friend? What relation you form as a parent?**

**Ans.:** Parents relationship with the adolescents is the most important guiding factor for them not to develop violent behavior.

A parent who doesn't say anything to the teenager but only observes his behavior change is not the correct approach.

Similarly an parent, who always keeps instructing the adolescent on what to do is also not the best approach as this instigates a feeling of rebellion in the teenager.

The best approach is to become the adolescent's best friend so that he depends on you for every advise and knows that you will understand him and guide him like a good friend.

**Que.: What is the role of gender? The Boy Vs Girl Debate?**

**Ans.:** Though over the last 50 years, we have grown above the Boy Vs Girl discussions in many sections of the society, some societies still differ in the way they bring up their girls and boys. This feeling of being unimportant can lead to many girls becoming violent and aggressive in their outlook towards society as if they want to teach society a lesson. Parents should give equal opportunities and benefits to their children whether they are boy or girl.

**Que.: The Importance of society and its watchdogs?**

**Ans.:** Adolescents should be given proper education by the parents about the way society works and how the watchdogs of society, the police, the legal system work. They should have good faith in the way society functions, especially police and legal system.

**Que.: Does bullying lead to violent behavior?**

**Ans.:** If the adolescents is bullied in his peer group or his school/college it can cause a violent tendencies in the teenager.

Proper care should be taken by the parents to make sure that the bullying stops and the teenager is at peace and does not keep any grudges which can develop into violence.

**Que.: What are the socioeconomic factors affecting the violent behavior?**

**Ans.:** Adolescents can also develop violent behaviors due to socioeconomic factors like poverty, single parenting, unemployment of parents. Parents should provide them access to good counselling if there is a need.
**Que.: Can stress lead to violent behaviors?**
Ans.: If the family has been undergoing stressful times it can induce violent behaviors in the adolescents. Parents should take care of their teenagers and get help if they need to come out of violent behavior patterns.

**Que.: Can parents troubled marriages have harmful impacts?**
Ans.: Marriage is not a relation between a male and a female, but it's a union of two families, as per Indian culture is concerned. Troubled marriages with constant quarrels and fights between the spouse can lead to the adolescents showing oppressed behavior and subsequent violent tendencies. Parents should constantly be in talking terms with their adolescent child to know about the impact of the home environment on him/her.

**Que.: Adolescents may need someone to unwind themselves? How to Manage?**
Ans.: Even adolescents need a 'go to person' to whom they can go and talk their heart out and he should have the time and patience to listen him/her out and give correct guidance. If the adolescent does not find the 'go to person' in his parents, the parents should make sure that they introduce him to someone who can be his/her 'go to person' and answer all their questions.

**Que.: How to Manage access to Firearms at home?**
Ans.: Some families have access to licensed and unlicensed firearms in the form of guns and other weapons. Adolescents should not be given access to the firearms and should be educated to never use them and to have faith in the systems that our society have built.

**Que.: Is it a bid for freedom from parental control?**
Ans.: While parental control is important, it is more important that we educate the adolescent on why parental control is put in place. Simply enforcing the parental control without educating the teenager will develop curiosity in the teenager to wriggle out of the parental control. It can irritate him to the level to show violent behaviors to come out of it.

**Que.: What is included in childhood violence?**
Ans.: Violent behavior in children and adolescents can include a wide range of behaviors: explosive temper tantrums, physical aggression, fighting, threats or attempts to hurt others (including thoughts of wanting to kill others), use of weapons, cruelty toward animals, fire setting, intentional destruction of property and vandalism.
**Topic 14: Violence In Teens**

**Que.: What are the "warning signs" for violent behavior in children?**
**Ans.:** Children who have several risk factors and the following behaviors should be carefully evaluated:
- Intense anger
- Frequent loss of temper or blow-ups
- Extreme irritability
- Extreme impulsiveness
- Becoming easily frustrated

Parents and teachers should be careful about these behaviors in children.

**Que.: What can be done if a child shows violent behavior?**
**Ans.:**
- Immediately arrange for a comprehensive evaluation by a qualified mental health professional.
- Early treatment by a professional can often help.
- The goals of treatment typically focus on helping the child to:
  - Learn how to control his/her anger;
  - Express anger and frustrations in appropriate ways
  - Be responsible for his/her actions
  - Accept consequences.
  - In addition, family conflicts, school problems, and community issues must be addressed.
**Que.: What is suicide?**

**Ans.:** A suicide is when direct injury is inflicted at themselves with the intent to end their lives and die because of those actions.

A suicide attempt is an attempt where a person tries to die by suicide but survives.

**Que.: What is suicidal behaviour?**

**Ans.:** It includes -
- Ideation [thinking about killing oneself]
- Planning suicide
- Attempting suicide
- Suicide itself

**Que.: What are the signs of suicide in a kid?**

**Ans.:** It is important to be aware of signs of any self-harm in your teen. Self-harm is the act of hurting oneself. Although there are many factors behind the urge to self-harm, it is important not to dismiss it and give it the necessary concern. Remember, one person dies by suicide every 40 seconds.

Changes in eating n sleeping habits, frequent or pervasive sadness, withdrawal from friends, family and regular activities, frequent physical complaints like, stomach aches, headaches, decline in quality of schoolwork, preoccupation with death n dying.

If you see any cuts on their arm, cigarette burns, or any odd marks, be sure to approach them.

If your teen is withdrawing from friends and from family, make sure to express concern.

Remind them that there is no problem or issue too small to reach out for help. Make sure that your teens know how important they are to you.

**Que.: Is there gender variation in adolescent suicide?**

**Ans.:** Yes, suicidal attempts are more common in females than male adolescents.

**Que.: Who is at risk of suicidal tendencies?**

**Ans.:** It is most often associated with depression, family history of suicide attempt, exposure to violence, impulsivity, aggressive or disruptive behaviour, access to firearms, bullying, acute loss or rejection, adolescents with mental illness, history of being sexually abused are also at high risk.
Que.: What is the most common cause of suicide?
Ans.: About 60% of suicides are by adolescents suffering from Depression.

Que.: What are the common methods of suicide?
Ans.: Firearms, accounts for more than 50% of all suicides in boys. In girls it is self poisoning or hanging.

Que.: Is suicide related to impulsiveness?
Ans.: Yes, it is a symptom of mental disorder. Girls may have borderline personality disorder and boys may have conduct disorder.

Que.: Is alcohol and substance use related to suicides?
Ans.: It has been found that adolescents dependent on alcohol and drugs are almost 6 times more likely to commit suicides than non dependent on substance abuse. There is a correlation between depressive mood and substance use and peer pressure.

Que.: Why suicides occur? What biological factors increase risk for suicide?
Ans.: Decreased Serotonin in the brain, low levels of its metabolites 5-HIAA, have been detected in CSF of persons who have attempted suicides.

Que.: Can the risk for suicide be inherited?
Ans.: Scientists have confirmed that those with methionine [met] variation of the gene had higher risk for suicide.

Que.: What should I do if my kid talks about suicide?
Ans.: Always take it seriously. He may be going through bad phase. Show that you care about him/her. Don't hesitate to seek assistance or help from others.

Que.: Do kids threaten suicide to get attention?
Ans.: Threatening to die by suicide is not a normal response to stress and should not be taken lightly. Suicidal thoughts or actions are sign of extreme distress and an alert that someone needs help.
Que.: If we talk directly about suicidal thoughts, does that put the idea into their head?
Ans.: Asking someone about suicide is not harmful, it is the best way to identify someone at risk for suicide. Watch and analyse the reactions.

Que.: What to do if someone is in crisis or someone I know is considering suicide?
Ans.: If there is a warning sign or change in behaviour, get help as soon as possible. Do not leave them alone. Do not promise anyone that you will keep their suicidal thoughts a secret.

Que.: What if someone is posting suicidal messages on social media?
Ans.: Contact the toll free number of national suicide prevention to alert them. AASRA [New Delhi]—9820466726, Sumaitri—011-23389090, MP-SPANDAN-9630899002

Que.: What therapies are available for the suicidal victims?
Ans.: Psychotherapies and medications are available. It is a multi systemic therapy or approach.

Que.: What are DBT and CBT?
Ans.: Dialectal Behaviour Therapy and Cognitive Behavioural therapy. DBT begins with CBT strategies. Focus on acceptance and validation change negative thinking patterns and pushing into positive behavioural changes. Addressing behaviour that interferes with therapy emphasising the therapeutic relationship as key for healing.

Que.: How does DBT work?
Ans.: DBT for adolescent includes individual psychotherapy along with some family sessions. Also there are multifamily group skills training with adolescents and parents. Therapists are available for phone coaching 24 hours daily.

Que.: How long is the course for DBT therapy?
Ans.: It is brief for 16 weeks or 6 months and includes parents as well.

Que.: How important is parent’s role in managing adolescents with suicidal behaviour?
Ans.: When a adolescent is experiencing pain and distress, the family's duty to keep him or her safe is enhanced. They have to act like “protective seatbelts”. In two therapists model, one therapist working with the teen and other primarily with the parents and caregivers.
Que.: How social media can help?
Ans.: By careful media coverage on mental health promotion and training. Educating that this is a disease like all other disease and not to put a stigma. Also flashing crisis help lines for the needy people.

Que.: What is the liability of schools?
Ans.: School based prevention programs that offer skills and work to reduce stigma associated with help seeking have shown promise for reducing suicidal attempts.

Que.: What is imitation behaviour?
Ans.: Imitation means learning by modelling, the acquisition of new patterns of behaviour through observation of models behaviour by direct contact in their living environment [peer groups, friends, school environment]. Adolescents are more susceptible for it.

Que.: What is association of stress and suicide?
Ans.: Trouble coping with the stress, often occurs impulsively as a reaction to psychosocial stress. Availability of means of committing suicide can be crucial for that transition in that moment and that specific situation. The method chosen may also determine the lethality of action.

Que.: What can one do to prevent adolescent suicide?
Ans.: Address depression or anxiety, ask what's wrong and offer your help. Pay attention, never shrug off threats of suicide as drama. Discourage isolation, encourage healthy lifestyle, help him/ her to eat well, exercise and to get regular sleep. Support the treatment plan. Encourage teen to follow doctor's recommendations. Encourage them to participate in activities that will help him/her rebuild confidence. Safely store firearms, alcohol and medications.

Que.: How can stress be reduced in students with high academic expectations?
Ans.: Acknowledge that there are many ways to be successful in the world. They can still achieve their dreams even if they don't get through a good college. Teens need to slow down. Pressure and stress won't help. Encourage positive activities, participation and meditation.

Que.: Is there assurance of confidentiality in the management of this behaviour?
Ans.: Stigma is an issue in our society so confidentiality between a therapist and a client is must.
Que.: I and my mother always fight on small issues, how should I correct myself?
Ans.: • Fighting with your mom is inevitable, so here is what to do when it happens:
  • Check yourself before you wreck your mom
  • Put yourself in her shoes and understand
  • Cool down and then you see, soon things will get back to normal
  • Sometimes mother knows best
  • Get some perspective- make a mental note of all the things she does for you and then this fight won't seem quite as important

Que.: My daughter used to listen to me nicely in 6th standard but now she throws anger towards me and her father on every subject. Is it normal?
Ans.: Clashes like these are very common between teens and parents. Teens get angry because they feel parents don't respect them and are not giving them a space to do what they like. It is normal for your daughter to react and be angry on many issues. It is easy for your feelings to get hurt when there are conflicts like this. It can take several years for parents and teens to adjust to their new roles. Give your teens the space, the time, to get over behavioural changes.

Que.: What should I tell my daughter about menses, she has not had it yet?
Ans.: Practical advice should be given to your daughter. Tell early and often - as the earlier you begin talking to your daughter about the changes to expect during puberty, the better. There should be a series of conversation. Tell her
  • What is menstruation- the details
  • When will it happen- usually two years after breast changes
  • How long does it last --mostly 3 to 5 days
  • Does it hurt - like cramps in lower abdomen
  • What to do -how to use sanitary pads and tampons
  • Will everyone know about?
  • Be positive about it

Que.: What instructions should I give to my daughter about hygiene in menses?
Ans.: • Important points to remember are
  • To change sanitary napkins every four to six hours
  • This is the cardinal rule to establish vaginal hygiene
• Wash yourself properly
• Don't use much of soaps or vaginal hygiene products
• Try to use reusable sanitary napkins rather than disposable.
• Discard the sanitary napkins properly, better in incinerators.
• Stick to one method of sanitation
• Used sanitary pads should always be placed in the bin and never down the toilet
• Take a shower or bath at least once a day
• Use clean undergarments and change it every day
• Break the silence around periods and learn to take care of your body, mind and spirit during menstruation.

Que.: How can mother daughter relationship be improved?
Ans.:
• Know what your daughter likes
• Show to her that you love her
• Talk to her and communicate with her
• Be a patient listener
• Celebrate and appreciate your daughter's talents
• Be there for your daughter
• Be kind to her
• Trust your daughter

Que.: Why do most parents love sons more than daughters?
Ans.: This is not true for everyone, but if seen in some families, it may be because ...
• They think family name needs to be preserved forever that only a son can do
• Dowry and the gifts after marriage is the tradition, and giving gifts to groom family during festival may be their problem.
• Sons take care of the family and perhaps the last rites
• The fear of old days and abandonment has led many women desperately wanting a male child, one who would take care of his parents in their old age
Que.: How boys and girls are treated differently in India in rural areas?
Ans.: • Boys and girls are treated differently in India especially in rural areas. This is because
  • They expect to depend on them in their old age
  • They prefer to live with their sons in old days than their daughters
  • This is mostly motivated by economic, religious, social and emotional desires and norms that favours males
  • Parents expects sons but not daughters to provide financial and emotional care
  • Sons add to family wealth and prosperity
  • They also provide better nutrition and medical care for boys than for girls and indulge in a host of other practices that discriminate girls.
  • Even in present time families openly celebrate the birth of a son while the birth of a daughter is not always greeted

Que.: Why is a mother daughter relationship so important?
Ans.: It is because mothers occupy such a critical role their children's physical and emotional growth. The future of every girl is parallel to the strength of the relation between daughter and mother. A mother can push her on the top of success and can prevent her fall with every failure. Of all relationships, the mother–daughter one is the most likely to remain important for both, even when major life changes occur.

Que.: How should I improve relationship with my daughter after any conflict?
Ans.: 
  • Make the first move
  • Don't wait for the other person to make the first move
  • Change yourself - change your own reactions and responses
  • Have realistic expectations
  • Communicate with her- speak to her in a very heartfelt and gentle manner
  • Be an active listener to her feelings
  • Repair damage quickly
  • Put yourself in her shoes
  • Learn to forgive and forget
  • Stick to the present
**Que.: How should I spend quality time with my daughter?**

**Ans.:**
- Have a daily ‘connect’ time with her daughter
- Create a special ritual for you and your child, something that can be done everyday
- Reinforce positive behaviour
- Tell your child you love her everyday
- Make and eat meals with her whenever possible
- Schedule time for doing an activity of her choice
- Play with her, tell her how important she is to you
- Every little bit of time makes a positive impact
- Laugh and be silly with her
- Turn off technology while spending time with her. Try not to text, answer call, scroll through social media or watch television
- Meaningful connections are about quality of time not quantity of time

**Que.: How to communicate effectively with your teenage daughter?**

**Ans.:** Listen if you are curious about all what's going on in your teen's life, asking direct questions might not be as effective as simply sitting and listening
- Validate their feelings
- Show trust
- Don’t be a dictator
- Shower praise
- Control your emotions
- Do things together
- Share regular meals
- Be observant

**Que.: What is the role of father in the upbringing of a daughter?**

**Ans.:** Father plays a key role with psychological development of their daughters from the moment they are born. When fathers are present and loving, their daughters develop a strong sense of self-esteem and are more confident in their abilities.

To develop self-esteem a healthy father-daughter bond is the key. Girls with fathers do better academically. Supportive fathers can help improve their daughter's body image. A father's love and acceptance greatly
impacts a teen's future confidence.

**Que.: How can I give sex education to my daughter?**

**Ans.:**  • First of all show that you are interested in what she has to say about sex:
  • Allow pauses in your own speech so that it will invite her to respond
  • When she doesn't speak, take time to think about what she has said and ask for clarification
  • Avoid jumping to the conclusions about what she thinks and feels
  • Show her that you are interested in what she has to say about sex
  • Improve opportunities for genuine conversations and find time to spend doing things she likes like shopping, sitting in a restaurant for dinner where she can freely talk
  • Make sure you go beyond her biology teacher, teach her the importance of sex in a relationship
  • Tell her that sex is an expected part of life but it exposes her to the unimaginable complications of pregnancy and dangerous diseases.
  • They are expected to look ravishing yet are advised to say no to sex
  • Parents are the first educators when it comes to teaching their children about sexuality and values
  • Talk to her with real practical names used for genitals, rather than code names.

**Que.: My mother hits me in anger. How should I react?**

**Ans.:** When your mother hits you in anger, you should request her not to do so; it will adversely affect your mental status. You will become emotionally weak and that will in turn affect the physical health too. You should also avoid doing things that irritate your mother. If still things do not improve, try to tell your father, grandparents to see to it. Tell her that hitting promotes anger and may lead to rebel. It brings back bad memories. Try your best to handle the situation by counselling your mother.
**Que.: How does attachment to parents change during adolescence?**
**Ans.:** There are a lot of changes in parent-adolescent relationship during adolescence. There are conflicts on most of the issues, there is significant decrease in the ‘together’ time. And the adolescent wants more space and independence from parents.

**Que.: How should parents treat their teenager?**
**Ans.:** Parents should deal with their own stress levels and avoid venting that on their own children. Be there for your teen and listen to them without judging them. Expect their rejection and opposition to certain issues but at the same time establish boundaries and rules and consequences. Be a good listener and try to understand what's behind the anger or stress of the teen.

**Que.: Why do the behaviour of adolescents changes with their parents?**
**Ans.:** A child get converted into adolescent because of the secretion of sex hormones. This hormone causes the physical and mental or psychological changes in the adolescents. And because of this the child will experience mood swings, irritable behaviour, and struggle to manage their emotions.

**Que.: What are different types of parenting?**
**Ans.:** There are 5 types of parenting
- Authoritative
- Authoritarian
- Permissive
- Uninvolved
- Overbearing or rocket parenting.

**Que.: What Is Authoritative parenting?**
**Ans.:** The Balanced style – Authoritative
This is considered optimal because there is a balance of separateness versus togetherness with the teenager. Balanced style parenting is moderate to high on both closeness and flexibility
It is characterized by warm and nurturing parents who are supportive emotionally, responsive to their children's needs, encouraging toward independence (with monitoring), consistent and fair in meeting out discipline, and who expect age-appropriate behaviour.

**Que.: What is uninvolved parenting?**
**Ans.:** The uninvolved parenting style is very low in closeness between parents and child(ren) and very high in
flexibility. It is characterized by low emotional connection, low responsiveness from parent to child, high independence of child from parent. Parents are disconnected from child's life, highly negotiable rules that are loosely enforced, and few demands made on the child.

**Que.: What is permissive parenting style?**

**Ans.:** The permissive parenting style is high in closeness between parents and teens and also very high in flexibility. This style is characterized by parents who are overly protective of their teens, very responsive to the needs of their teenagers, more of a friend to them, lenient in discipline, and unlikely to place demands on their child(ren).

**Que.: What is The Strict parenting style? (Authoritarian Parenting style)**

**Ans.:** It is low in closeness between parents and teenagers, also low in flexibility. The Strict parenting style is characterized by strictly enforced rules, highly restricted child freedom, firm discipline, low responsiveness to child, and low emotional connection between parent and child.

**Que.: What is the overbearing parenting style or rocket style parenting?**

**Ans.:** It is high in closeness between parents and teenagers and also high in flexibility. The overbearing parenting style is characterized by overly protective parents who cater to the teen's every need and act more like a friend to the him/her while at the same time strictly enforcing a proliferation of rules with firm discipline.

**Que.: How to stop my child being defiant and her/his answering back?**

**Ans.:** Whenever the teen becomes defiant, walk away or keep busy in some other work at that time. Do not hit back at that moment. It will help to ease down the situation. Avoid telling him what he should do, instead talk what you can do.

**Que.: What can I do to help my teenager cope with peer pressure?**

**Ans.:**
- During adolescence peers have more influence on teenager's thinking, attitudes, values and behaviour as they grow. If a young person is asked to resist peer influence, he might feel isolated.
- Teach your teens how to say no, whenever required, and maintain their dignity.
- Encourage them to give good amount of thought to the request by their peers before supporting them.
- They should be encouraged to understand the consequences of their decisions through examples.
- Encourage them to have their own opinions and not get influenced by their peers and discourage them from always pleasing them.
Topic 17: Parenting The Adolescents

Que.: Is it possible to discipline my child without hitting?
Ans.: In certain situations you as parents get very angry with your teen's behaviour and you feel like hitting him/her. To avoid such a situation just leave that place and distract yourself for some time or just keep quiet and do not react. Always remember to appreciate their good behaviours with a smile and a hug.

Que.: What can I do when my teenager gets aggressive towards me?
Ans.: Your ability to stay in control and composed is the key in such situation. It is usually difficult but with time you will learn to be quiet. Pacify the conversation by postponing it to a later time.

Que.: How do I get my teen understand how to accept NO?
Ans.: This needs to be started in early childhood as a policy at home. NO is a complete sentence and it doesn't have to be explained. Sometimes children do not understand this and keep persisting until they get their things done their way. Your child may throw tantrums when you say NO. It has to be ignored. The most important thing is to make them understand that both the parents are on the same opinion otherwise they take advantage of the difference of opinion between the partners.

Que.: How do I stop my child being a quitter and giving up things easily?
Ans.: Encourage and help them persist with what they are doing with proper counselling. Make them understand the value of persistence. Tell them that hard work always leads to success. They should be taught to not quit half way. Encourage them to stay at the task until the end, never to quit their sports team, or any other hobby. Remind them about their past achievements when hard work gave good results.

Que.: How should I react when my kid lies?
Ans.: Teenagers alter the truth and lie for many reasons. Sometimes they want to escape a certain situation and avoid you. They want to make themselves seem important. First try to identify the purpose of their lies. Make sure your reaction is positive. Make them understand the negative effects of lying. The importance of honesty and trust should be imbibed in kids through examples and storytelling right from their childhood.

Que.: Your teen tells you that she took alcohol when she went for a party, how will you react?
Ans.: You will have to react but not over-react. First of all appreciate her for letting you know that she did that. Ask her about the whole situation. She might have been forced to take it. Tell her about ill effects of taking alcohol at that age and send a strong message that 'No' means 'No'. Do not confront but be firm.

Que.: How do we tell our teenager to avoid taking fast food and shift to nutritious food?
Ans.: Keep the nutritious food available at home instead of fast food. The whole family has to be disciplined regarding the food you eat. You can't dictate when you are not disciplined yourself.
**Topic 17: Parenting The Adolescents**

**Que.: How do I know that my teen is having mental health issues?**

**Ans.:** When you observe a change of behaviour in your child suspect something is wrong. Suddenly the teenager starts being alone, closing her surroundings, not talking, aggressive, not sleeping properly. She might be indulging in substance abuse or getting sexually exploited or in bad company. Talk to her and find out her problem. Seek professional help if needed.

**Que.: What should be done if a teen becomes argumentative & screams often?**

**Ans.:** Teens may scream and argue with you about rules and discipline, or rebel against daily structure, but that doesn't mean they need them any less. Structure, such as regular mealtimes and bedtimes, make a teen feel safe and secure. Sitting down to breakfast and dinner together every day can also provide a great opportunity to check in with your teen at the beginning and end of each day.

**Que.: How should we reduce screen time of the adolescent?**

**Ans.:** There appears to be a direct relationship between violent TV shows, movies, Internet content, and video games, and violent behaviour in teenagers and it impacts brain development. Limit the time your teen has access to electronic devices and restrict phone usage after a certain time at night to ensure they get enough sleep. To do this the whole family has to reduce screen time. You can't tell your teen not to use phone when you yourself are indulging in too much of social media. Be a role model for your teen.

**Que.: How can I make myself and my child relax?**

**Ans.:** Eat nutritious food, exercise regularly together, do meditation along with your family. Have family conversations together, involve your teen in family matters and give them responsibilities. Improve their life skills and try to make them good human beings.

**Que.: What is ideal parenting?**

**Ans.:** Parenting a child is such a beautiful experience and it comes with its own rewards and challenges. The transition from parenting a child to parenting a teenager has a mixed feeling for the parents. This is the time when the teens learn to cooperate and become a responsible family member. In reality there is no mould for ideal parenting. It's an ongoing learning process for both the parents and the children.

Also, it is not reasonable to demand or expect to be an ideal parent or a child. However, parents strive towards their ideal. We need to understand that parenting is an ongoing process of learning on basis of day to day demands or situations. One of the essential components of good parenting is about accepting and understanding our children when they miss the mark. There cannot be a standard protocol which should be followed. You need to understand your child first. Be it regarding the level of attention, toughness, expression of love needed by your child. We need to understand that they are not our property and we must not try to
mould them according to our ideology. According to Proff. Steinberg, Professor off psychology at Temple University in Philadelphia, good parenting helps foster honesty, self-reliance, empathy, cooperation, kindness and cheerfulness in the child. It promotes intellectual curiosity, motivation and encourages a desire to achieve. It also helps protect children from developing anxiety, depression, antisocial behaviour etc.

**Que.: My son is fourteen years old. What should I do at this stage to ensure good parenting? People say that loving the children much, spoils them?**

**Ans.:** Love your child and show your love. Let them feel loved and valued. Loving never spoils the child. In fact there is release of neurochemicals known as hormones, eg, oxytocin which brings in contentment, a deep sense of calm and emotional warmth in your child. This not only builds a strong bond between parent and child but also brings in resilience in the child.

However, certain actions in name of love, e.g., leniency, low expectation, over protection, fulfilling the wrong demands, may spoil the child.

Identify the fine line between obsession and love.

**Que.: My daughter is a teenager. How can I make her more responsible?**

**Ans.:** Making a child responsible is allowing her to take her own decisions. As they have limited experience, supervision is needed to ensure that they do no harm themselves or anyone by their wrong decision. Help her in identifying and analysing the pros and cons of her decision before finally going ahead with it. Let her decide for herself, show trust, keep supervising and help her out if she gets stuck. It is likely for her to make mistakes, be gentle and kind with her and help her in accepting the failures and find the solutions.

**Que.: My son is a teenager and he does not like any sort of interference in his day-to-day life. What should I do?**

**Ans.:** Making a child independent is important but it is equally important to discipline them. Please ensure that his independence is not being interpreted by you as his rebellious nature. Ensure that your authority is established on wisdom and not power. Make some ground rules in home for everyone, regarding screen time, dining time etc. Explain your rules and decisions. Be consistent with the rules. Don't be imposing on the child.

Let him be free to decide about his dress, hobbies etc. Don't micromanage him. Don't show your fear or anxiety but develop a joyous and loving atmosphere. Be gentle and patient in your approach. Let him learn by observing his parents.

**Que.: My daughter is a picky eater. How should I handle her?**

**Ans.:** Make your child understand "why" should she eat "what". Expose her several times to the healthy food. Ask her to help in serving the food, she may find it a fun to serve for herself and eat. Don't bribe the child or substitute it with an unhealthy food. Ensure that you are not over snacking your child. Don't argue on the dining table or discuss her eating habits while having food. This can be reserved for the story time. Give her
healthy food options to choose from your cooking list.

**Que.: Can you give some tips to help me in understanding and guiding my teenager better?**

**Ans.:** Your parenting challenge with a teenager is to ensure that he/she becomes more confident, independent and responsible. Practice and learning should be around the following:

- Ensuring effective and positive ways to discipline.
- Lending a patient ear to your teen.
- Understand your teen and your response towards his behaviour. Identify and understand the reason behind the undesirable behaviour of the child and addressing it.
- Making your teen able to decide in a rational way.
- Treating yourself and your teen with respect.

**Que.: What are the major reasons behind the misbehaviour of my teenager?**

**Ans.:** There can be many reasons for a teen to misbehave. However, the few common ones may be to seek:

- Attention
- Take revenge
- Take control/power
- Displaying inadequacy

However, the above misbehaviour has a flipside for the want of --

- Involvement
- Fairness
- Independence
- Being Competent

**Que.: Can you please give me some good parenting tips?**

**Ans.:** Yes, there are certain tips which every parent must have or practice to provide healthy nurturing to their children.

- To love unconditionally: This ensures sharing our thoughts and feelings while tenderly touching our child's life with care. To ensure that our children understand, we need to take time to listen and explain things to our children. Try to create a safe environment for your children where they are away from any kind of emotional, mental or physical harm. Accept the children the way they are and then gently help them explore their talent, skill or happiness. Remember every child is unique and will blossom best when not compared with anyone. We however need to avoid being overprotective and over pampering our children thus making them powerless and too delicate to survive on their own. Let the process of loving be
liberating instead of entangling one.

• Be a role model: Try to demonstrate or practice a healthy lifestyle that involves exercise, healthy eating, being wise in words and actions, promoting self-expression, meditation. Demonstrate that it is ok to make mistakes accept and improve rather than fixing the blame or victimising self. Children learn by observing and not by lecturing. Be a person the child can look up to with love and affection and be proud of. You are the biggest source of imitation for them.

Make them understand and value the concept of patience. Be there and enjoy what is going on in the moment. Let the child observe and enjoy the sense of care, love, joy and discipline both within oneself and the home.

• Understanding the need of our child: Let the children not become victim of our ambition and aspiration. Avoid putting them in hardship and being cruel to them. There is no standard or universal rule for every child. You need to use your own discretion. Be patient and non-judgemental. Every child is unique and develops or accomplishes best in his/her area of interest. It is all right to be contended and happy even if one is a mediocre. Parents must accept this fact and not tag their prestige or status with the child's achievements. Our thoughts, ideas, priority change with time and we should have this maturity and commitment while dealing with our children.

• Be a happy being: With today's hectic lifestyle and demanding situations it is so difficult to maintain the calm and poise. There is so much of tension, anxiety, jealousy and fear in our life that we have forgotten to be a peaceful and loving. This transformation within us has made bringing up of a child, challenging. We need to sit and ponder about our own behaviour, speech, habits and allow ourselves to overcome the shortcomings without being impatient. Our inner peace and compassion will reflect and touch our child deep inside and make them a strong, affectionate and peace-loving human being.

• Give your child the freedom to decide when it comes to decision making: Be supportive and intervene only if needed, else monitoring is enough.

• Make some consistent ground rules for everyone in the house: this is related to homework, screen time etc. It can be changed as the child grows older.

• Show support and kindness: No one is perfect and everyone makes a mistake. Be supportive and embrace their mistakes. Be forgiving.

• Avoid being a helicopter parent: Being too focussed on success or failure of your child may deprive your child from being independent and may be damaging and stressful for both the parent and the child.

• The key is to maintain balance between the extremes and being flexible, understanding and patient with our children who are unique!
Topic 18: Law & Adolescents

**Que.: What is POCSO Act?**

**Ans.:** The Protection Of Children from Sexual Offences is gender neutral (for both boys as well as girls) act to protect children from offences of sexual assault, sexual harassment and pornography and to provide a child-friendly system for the trial of these offences. The term “child” means any person below the age of 18 years.

**Que.: Is the electronic depiction of children in a sexually explicit manner an offence?**

**Ans.:** Yes, depiction of children in a sexually explicit manner is an offence under the POCSO Act as well as the Information Technology Act, 2000 (IT Act). Using a child in any form of media for the purpose of sexual gratification is an offence under Section 13 of the POCSO Act. Section 67B of the IT Act, 2000 criminalizes the publication or transmission of materials depicting children in sexual explicit act or conduct in electronic form. Creating text or digital images, collecting, seeking, browsing, downloading, advertising, promoting, exchanging or distributing material in any electronic form depicting children in obscene or indecent or sexually explicit manner is an offence. Cultivating, enticing, or inducing children to enter into online relationships for any sexually explicit act, facilitating the abuse of children, or recording in electronic form own abuse or that of others pertaining to sexually explicit act with children, is also an offence. These acts are punishable on first conviction with imprisonment for a term which may extend to five years and with a fine which may extend to ten lakh rupees and in the event of second or subsequent conviction with imprisonment for a term which may extend to seven years and also with fine which may extend to ten lakh rupees. However, this penalty will not be attracted to any book, pamphlet, paper, writing, drawing, painting, representation or figure in electronic form which is proved to be justified as being for the public good, on the ground that it is in the interest of science, literature, art or learning or other objects of general concern, or is kept or used for bonafide heritage or religious purposes.

**Que.: Is sexual intercourse by a man with his wife aged less than 18 years punishable under POCSO Act?**

**Ans.:** Being a special law, the POCSO Act will govern the field on sexual offences against children. Section 42A of the Act clearly states that in the event of inconsistency between this Act and any other law, the POCSO Act will override. Under the IPC, sexual intercourse by a man with his wife who is above 15 years of age is not rape. No such exception has been provided for under the POCSO Act. Hence, this is an inconsistency between the POCSO Act and the IPC. Due to its overriding effect, a person who has intercourse with his wife who is between the ages of 15 to 18 years can be prosecuted under the POCSO Act.

**Que.: Who can be charged for sexual offences under the POCSO act?**

**Ans.:** The POCSO Act is gender neutral for the perpetrator as well as the victim. This means that it is applicable to everyone (male, female or others). Any person of any age, including a child can be charged with an offence under this Act. A parent or relative of the child can also be an offender under the Act. In fact, sexual assault by a
parent or relative would constitute an aggravated offence that carries a much higher penalty.

**Que.: Is consent by a child a valid defence against sexual offences?**
**Ans.:** No. Under the POCSO Act, consensual sexual intercourse between children or between a child and an adult is not recognised. Any sexual act with a person under the age of eighteen years is an offence. The IPC also makes it clear that sexual intercourse with or without the consent of a woman below the age of 18 years will amount to statutory rape.

**Que.: What are the other offences that are provided for under the POCSO Act?**
**Ans.:** Apart from sexual offences, the POCSO Act also creates eight other offences. These carry a punishment of 6 months to 1 year imprisonment and/or a fine. They are as follows:
- Failure to report an offence that has been committed
- Failure of media, hotel, hospital, club, studio or photographic facility to report about pornographic or sexually exploitative object involving a child
- Failure of the police to record information relating to the commission of an offence or an apprehension that an offence is likely to be committed
- Failure of the head of a company or institution to report an offence allegedly committed by his/her subordinate
- False complaint about specific offences against an adult
- False complaint against a child
- Making report or comments on any child victim from any form of media or studio or photographic facilities without having complete and authentic information
- Disclosure of the identity of a child victim in the media

**Que.: What is meant by 'sexual harassment' under the POCSO Act?**
**Ans.:** A person commits an offence of sexual harassment of a child under Section 11 if he/she does any of the following with a sexual intent:
- Utters any word or makes a sound or gesture or shows any part of the body or object to the child with the intent that it is heard or seen by the child.
- Makes the child show her/his body, or part of her/his body to the person, or to any other person.
- Shows any object in any form for pornographic purposes.
- Follows the child repeatedly or watches or contacts a child directly or through other electronic, digital or other means.
- Threatens to use a real or fabricated depiction of any part of the child’s body or involvement of the child in
a sexual act in any form of media (e.g., a threat to circulate a morphed picture with child's face and body of another child on the internet).

• Entices the child for pornographic purposes or gives gratification for such purpose.

Sexual harassment is a non-penetrative and non-touch based sexual offence. The distinct feature of this offence is that it does not involve penetration of body parts or insertion of objects or physical contact, but requires a sexual intent while doing any of the acts listed above.

**Que.: What is the JUVENILE JUSTICE (CARE & PROTECTION) ACT 2015?**

**Ans.:** The JJ Act provides for a separate justice system for children who commit offences. The objective of the Act is to reform, rehabilitate and reintegrate children who are found to have committed an offence. A Juvenile Justice Board (JJB), consisting of two Social Work Members, of whom at least one member is a woman, and a Judicial Magistrate of the First Class, has the exclusive power to deal with all proceedings concerning a juvenile in conflict with law. The JJB has to consider not only the gravity of the offence and commission of the offence by the juvenile, but also the socio-economic background of the juvenile, psychological factors, and circumstances in which the offence was committed.

**Que.: What is meant by 'sexual harassment' under the IPC?**

**Ans.:** Section 354-A of the IPC refers to the offence of sexual harassment. Commission of any of the following acts by a man will constitute sexual harassment:

• Physical contact and advances involving unwelcome and explicit sexual overtures
• Demand or request for sexual favours
• Showing pornography against the will of a woman
• Making sexually coloured remarks

**Que.: What is meant by 'voyeurism' under the IPC?**

**Ans.:** The act of watching, or capturing the image of a woman engaging in a private act in circumstances where she would usually have the expectation of not being observed either by the male perpetrator or by any other person at the behest of the perpetrator would constitute voyeurism. Dissemination of such images is also an offence. A 'private' act would include an act of watching carried out in a place which would reasonably be expected to provide privacy and where the:

• Victim's genitals, posterior or breasts are exposed or covered only in underwear; or
• Victim is using a lavatory
• Victim is doing a sexual act that is not of a kind ordinarily done in public. For example, watching women undressing in a changing room would constitute voyeurism.
• If the victim consents to the capture of the images or any act, but not to its dissemination to a third person, the dissemination will be an offence. Consent of the child is irrelevant to the offences under the POCSO Act. Therefore, the act of taking a picture of the genitals of a child, even with his or her consent, will amount to an offence under this Act.

**Que.: What is meant by 'stalking' under the IPC?**
Ans.: Any man who follows a woman and contacts or attempts to contact her to foster personal interaction repeatedly despite a clear indication of disinterest by such woman or monitors her use of the internet, email or any other form of electronic communication commits the offence of stalking. For instance, keeping tabs on a girl on social media may constitute stalking. It will not amount to stalking if the man can prove that it was undertaken in order to prevent or detect crime and that he had been entrusted with the responsibility of crime prevention and detection by the State or that it was pursued under a law or in compliance with a law or was reasonable and justified in the particular circumstances.

**Que.: What is “immoral trafficking” as per IPC? What is The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956?**
Ans.: The recruitment, transportation, harbouring, transferring or receiving of a person or persons for:
• Physical exploitation, or
• Any form of sexual exploitation, or
• Slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude, or
• Forced removal of organs by-
  - Using threats, or
  - Using force, or any other form of coercion, or
  - By abduction, or
  - By practicing fraud, or deception, or by abuse of power, or
  - By inducement, including the giving or receiving of payments or benefits, in order to achieve the consent of any person having control over the person would constitute the offence of trafficking under Section 370 of the IPC.

It also includes:
• Kidnapping, abducting or inducing woman to compel her for marriage, etc. (Section 366)
• Selling minors for purposes of prostitution, etc (Sec 372)
• Buying minors for purposes of prostitution, etc (Sec 373)
• Wrongful restraint (Section 339)
• Wrongful confinement (Section 340)
Trafficking is a gender-neutral offence, i.e. the perpetrator and victim can be male, female, or any other gender identity. It can be for various purposes and is not confined merely to sexual exploitation. In the case of children, it is likely that their parents or guardians are led into believing that the children will benefit from transfer to a city under the guise of better employment or educational opportunities.

Traffic of a minor/minors can be sentenced to life imprisonment and also be liable to pay fine. Sexual exploitation of a minor knowing or having reason to believe that she or he has been trafficked is also punishable under Section 370A(1).

Traffic in human beings and forced labour is punishable under Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act (ITPA) 1956. Under section 4 of the ITPA the punishment for living in the earnings from the prostitution of a child is for a term not less than seven years and not more than 10 years. Under Section 1, ITPA has established Protective Homes for girls and women detained under this Act.

**Que.: What is meant by ‘rape’ under the IPC?**

**Ans.:** A man is said to commit ‘rape’ under Section 375, IPC as per the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act (CLAA) February 2013, if he does any of the following acts or makes a woman do so with him or any other person:

- Penetrates his penis or any other object or part of his body, to any extent, into the vagina, mouth, urethra or anus of a woman; or
- Manipulates any part of the body of a woman so as to cause penetration into the vagina, urethra, anus or any part of body of such woman; or
- Applies his mouth to the vagina, anus, urethra of a woman, under any of the following seven circumstances:
  - Against her will.
  - Without her consent.
  - With her consent, when her consent has been obtained by putting her or any person close to her in fear of death or hurt.
  - With her consent, when the man knows that he is not her husband and that her consent is given because she believes herself to be lawfully married to him.
  - With her consent when, at the time of giving such consent, because of unsoundness of mind or intoxication or the administration by him or through another of any stupefying substance, she is unable to understand the nature and consequence of what she is consenting to.
  - With or without her consent, when she is under 18 years.
  - When she is unable to communicate consent.

The term 'consent' has been defined to mean an unequivocal voluntary agreement when the woman by words, gestures or any form of verbal or non-verbal communication, communicates willingness to
participate in the specific sexual act. It is also clarified that absence of physical resistance to the act of penetration will not by reason of only that fact, be regarded as consent. Now the age of consent has been raised from 16 years to 18 years. Hence consent by a girl below 18 years is irrelevant to a charge of rape and cannot be used as a defence.

**Que.: To whom should an offence under the POCSO Act be reported to?**

**Ans.:** A sexual offence must be reported to the local police or the Special Juvenile Police Unit (SJPU)

**Que.: Who is under an obligation to report offences under this Act?**

**Ans.:** All persons are under an obligation to report offences under the POCSO Act. According to Section 19(1), anyone who knows that an offence is committed or believes that it is likely to be committed will have to inform the Special Juvenile Police Unit (SJPU) or the local police.

Failure to report the commission of an offence is punishable under Section 21(1) with imprisonment for a maximum term of six months and/or fine. Children too are under an obligation to report offences under this Act. However, they cannot be punished for failure to report an offence.

**Que.: In what circumstances should one report a sexual offence?**

**Ans.:** There are two situations in which a person is expected to report an offence:

- Where a sexual offence has already been committed against a child.
- Where there is an apprehension that a sexual offence is likely to be committed against a child.

Thus, a person does not have to wait for the actual occurrence of the offence and can even report to the police or the SJPU if it is likely that that a child may be abused.

**Que.: What are the obligations of schools under the POCSO Act?**

**Ans.:** Children spend a significant amount of time in schools and schools are not only important for intellectual growth but are also an important part of the child's emotional, and psychological development. The general obligation to report sexual offences under the POCSO will apply to all schools (private/government). Sexual abuse is now a criminal offence and must be reported. It cannot be handled internally through administrative inquiries or compromises.

**Que.: Where should the statement of a child victim be recorded?**

**Ans.:** The statement of the child should be recorded at a place preferred by the child. This could include the child's own home or wherever the child resides. For instance, if a street child wants his statement to be recorded near a temple where he resides, the police will have to record the statement of the child at that spot.
**Que.: Who should record the statement of a child victim? Who should be present with the child when the statement is being recorded by the police or the magistrate?**

**Ans.:** As far as possible and practice, the child's statement should be recorded by a woman police officer not below the rank of a Sub-Inspector. The officer recording the statement of a child should be in plain clothes and not in police uniform. The statement of the child needs to be recorded in the presence of the child's parent/s or in presence of the person whom the child trusts or has confidence. The statement of the child to be recorded as spoken by the child.

**Que.: How is the Medical Examination and court trial conducted in case of sexual offence against a minor?**

**Ans.:** Medical examination of the child is to be conducted in the presence of the parent of the child or any other person in whom the child has trust or confidence.

- In case the victim is girl child, the medical examination shall be conducted by a woman doctor. Frequent breaks for the child during trial should be given.
- Child not to be called repeatedly to testify.
- No aggressive questioning or character assassination of the child.
- In-camera trial of cases.
- To prevent the misuse of the law, punishment has been provided for making false complaint or providing false information with malicious intent. If false complaint is made against a child, punishment is higher (one year).
- The media has been barred from disclosing the identity of the child without the permission of Special Court. The punishment for breaching this provision by media may be from six months to one year.
- A Special Court is supposed to complete the trial within a period of one year.

**Que.: Why is it important to make the general public, children and parents aware about the POCSO Act?**

**Ans.:** The Act cast a duty on the Central and State Governments to spread awareness through media including television, radio and the print media at regular intervals to make the general public, children as well as their parents and guardians aware of the provision of this Act.

The National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) and State Commission for the protection of Child Rights (SCPCRs) have been made the designated authority to monitor the implementation of the Act.
**Que.: What is the scenario of adolescent/child marriage in India?**

**Ans.:** According to the census, there are 1.5 million girls in India under age of 15 already married. One in every five girls aged 15-17 years and more than half of girls aged 15-24 are married. 47% of India's girls aged 20-24 are married before the legal age of 18. 40% of the world's child marriages take place in India.

A study also shows that there is an inverse correlation between the attainment of education and the odds of getting married and child bearing.

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**Que.: What are the problems with child marriage and early child bearing?**

**Ans.:** Early marriage and childbearing impacts adolescent health causing reproductive health problems, including complications that come with teenage pregnancies. Nearly 6000 adolescent mothers die every year in India. India has a high maternal and child mortality rate because young girls, whose bodies are still maturing, are burdened with child bearing, often in the absence of proper maternal and child care. They also suffer from iron deficiency anaemia and under-nutrition due to short birth intervals.

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**Que.: What is the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006?**

**Ans.:** This is an act for the prohibition of solemnisation of child marriages. The Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929 is hereby repealed. Child is a male who has not completed 21 years of age and a female who has not completed 18 years of age.

Any person having charge of the child, whether parent or guardian or any other person, lawful and unlawful, including any member of the organisation, promoting the child marriage or permitting it to be solemnised, including attending and participating in a child marriage, shall be punishable with rigorous imprisonment extending to two years and liable to fine which may extend up to one lakh rupees.

The numbers of child marriages reported and stopped under the Act have been negligible. For instance, in 2010 there were only 60 registered cases of child marriages under the PCMA. This is due to the approval from political, religious and social systems for child marriages, especially common in states like Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh.

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**Que.: What is the scenario of adolescent/teenage pregnancy in India?**

**Ans.:** The following are a few reasons for early, unwanted pregnancy and unsafe childbearing:

- Early marriage
- Lack of education and of contraceptive information and reproductive rights
- Sexual violence and/or forced sex.
- Lack of and low access to appropriate information on safer sex, methods of protection
• Prevalence of sexual abuse and exploitation
• Sex trafficking, slavery and prostitution
• Rape

**Que.: What is The Medical Termination Of Pregnancy (MTP) Act, 1971?**

**Ans.:** This law provides the liberalized conditions for women to seek abortion, and for doctors to do it. Following conditions when a pregnant women can seek the facility of abortion:

- Therapeutic: when the continuation of pregnancy endangers the life of women or may cause grave injury to her physical and mental health.
- Social: a) When economic & social environment is not suitable for continuation of pregnancy. b) Contraceptive failure.
- Humanitarian reasons: rape
- Eugenic reasons: When there is a risk that child born would be with serious physical or mental abnormalities as to be seriously handicapped (e.g. congenital defects)
- When pregnant woman is mentally not sound (e.g. schizophrenia, mania etc.). Written consent of the guardians is necessary for abortion of such women.

**Que.: Can a minor girl undergo Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP)?**

**Ans.:** Yes. In case a girl is a minor i.e. below 18 years of age, then a written consent by parent or guardian is required. Age of consent is 18 years and for pregnant woman below 18 years of age or who is mentally ill, consent of her guardian is sufficient.

**Que.: What is the legal age for consent for sex in India?**

**Ans.:** The legal age of consent for sex is 18 years and is needed only for females. According to POCSO and PCMA (Prevention of Child Marriages) Act any sexual activity with a girl less than 18 years, even if she is a child bride, is a punishable offence.

**Que.: Can a minor give consent for medical examination?**

**Ans.:** The age for consent for medical examination is 12 years. In case the victim is a girl child, the medical examination shall be conducted by a woman doctor.

The medical examination shall be conducted in the presence of the parent of the child or any other person in whom the child reposes trust or confidence.
Que.: Is it compulsory for a doctor to inform regarding sexual offence if the minor victim does not wish to report?

Ans.: Yes as per POCSO Act, it is mandatory to report any sexual activity with a child aged less than 18 years to the SJPU. Failure to do so makes the Doctor liable for prosecution. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, too came out with guidelines and protocols for Medicolegal Care for Survivors/Victims of Sexual Violence in 2014. These guidelines mandate compulsory reporting to police of any case of sexual assault even though the victim/guardians do not wish for the same and need only treatment/counselling.

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**Que.: I keep on hearing the word puberty. What is this?**
**Ans.:** It means to grow, to mature. Puberty is the process of developing from a child to a sexually mature adult. It includes growth spurt, development of secondary sexual characters in boy as well as in a girl.

**Que.: Is it true that each girl should get their periods by 12-13 years of age otherwise it is delayed menses?**
**Ans.:** Everyone develops at their own pace. When certain expected changes including menses and change in stature have not started at the required time in an individual then puberty is delayed. For example, menses should have started by 16 years while appearance of pubic hair and increase in size of breast by age 14 years. If one doesn't get periods by age 15 one should consult a doctor. Normally a girl should get a period after few years of breast growth. A girl usually follows her mother and has period around the time when her mother got them.

**Que.: Why are my breasts smaller than those of my friends?**
**Ans.:** It is mainly a matter of variation in the size of breast between individuals even in the same person the sizes of the two breasts may differ. Adolescents of the same age might have different sizes of breasts which would increase in size as they grow older.

**Que.: What if I don't get periods at all?**
**Ans.:** Amenorrhea is when a girl's menstrual bleeding (period) doesn't occur. Doctors calls it primary amenorrhea when the first menstrual bleeding at puberty doesn't occur by the age of 15. One should see a doctor who would get some tests and probably ultrasound to find out the problem.

**Que.: My friend is quite obese. She started with her periods but for six months she has not got them. She was very worried. Is this also amenorrhoea?**
**Ans.:** Yes, this is called secondary amenorrhoea. It may be for a simple reason due to obesity in your friend. Other reasons can be hormonal changes, stress, excessive exercises as in athletes, thyroid gland problem. It may be also due to pregnancy. Ask her to meet a doctor. Don't worry she would become alright.

**Que.: My friend gets lot of pain during the first day of her periods. She has to miss school also. What should she do?**
**Ans.:** She has menstrual cramps or dysmenorrhoea. It is because of tightening of the walls of the uterus. You know it is a muscular organ. As the menstrual flow progresses the pain decreases. It is very common in young age. Not to worry. She should consult her gynaecologist. Should do some exercises according to
instructions by her doctor.

**Que.: Is dysmenorrhea serious. What treatment should be given?**

**Ans.:** No, it is not serious. She would be given a pain killer. May be a hot water bottle to use on lower abdomen. Pain killer like acetaminophen or ibuprofen can be given. She needs adequate sleep, exercise. She doesn't need to miss school. Some YOG asanas like Bhujangaasan, Titali Asan and Balaasan will help to relieve the pain.

**Que.: My elder sister used to play with us even during menstrual cycles but now for last six months she gets a lot of pain during cycles. What should she do? Is her treatment also same, pain killers?**

**Ans.:** If pain develops during periods and increases with blood flow then it can be due to a condition called endometriosis. Particularly if there was no pain initially. For pain she may be given pain killer. First, she will need some investigations. Ask your mother to take her to a doctor. She might need an ultrasound to diagnose the problem. Then she may need some hormonal pills.

**Que.: Will washing my vagina with water and soap or alum help to prevent infection?**

**Ans.:** When you excessively wash your vagina with soap or alum, it kills the normal flora of organisms that protects the vagina. Soap and alum can irritate the vagina causing bruises, pain and discomfort.

**Que.: Just before my periods I get a lot of discharge from below. I feel slightly more wet. What should I do?**

**Ans.:** Getting slightly more discharge just before cycles is normal and is an indication that you would be getting your period. It is called physiological leucorrhoea. It may happen before and after periods and after 1-14 days at the time of ovulation. No need to worry about it.

**Que.: I keep on scratching my vulva and inner thighs. The area always feels wet. My undergarments smell when I come back from school? What should I do?**

**Ans.:** Any discharge that causes smell and itching is abnormal. There may be a mild infection. It may be a fungal infection like candidiasis. Consult your doctor who will give you the proper treatment.
**Que.:** My boy friend held my hand while seeing a movie together. I am so worried. Can I get AIDS from this?

**Ans.:** No, holding hands doesn’t transmit AIDS virus called HIV. HIV can be transmitted through sex, or through infected needles and syringes or infected blood transfusion. Having sex with multiple partners also increases the risk of infection.

**Que.:** How can I prevent AIDS?

**Ans.:** Hundred percent protection is through abstinence that is not having sex at all. However safe sex and usage of condoms is important. One should not use common syringes and needles if one is addicted to drugs.

**Que.:** If I have a fear that I have HIV infection whom to consult and how?

**Ans.:** There are HIV clinics or ART centres in all the hospitals that can be consulted. There are adolescent friendly clinics in major general hospitals where the issue can be discussed in full privacy.

**Que.:** How can I distinguish a person who has HIV and a person who is not infected?

**Ans.:** You cannot know the HIV status of any person by looking at their faces. It can be diagnosed only by doing the required tests.

**Que.:** If somebody develops pain in passage of urine after sex is this abnormal?

**Ans.:** Yes, this may signify infection. It can be urinary infection or part of sexually transmitted infections. It is better to show to a doctor and take treatment.

**Que.:** I read on internet that by doing oral sex one doesn’t get AIDS. Is it true?

**Ans.:** This is not true. HIV/AIDS occurs by transmission through mucous membranes. Oral cavity is lined by mucus membranes. Oral sex can transmit HIV, if there are injuries in the mouth.

**Que.:** I have started feeling very heavy in lower abdomen and my periods have started to have increased flow. I also pass clots. I feel weak. Please guide me.

**Ans.:** Feeling heavy in lower abdomen may be due to some swelling or any other abnormality there. Since you have increased blood loss you should show to a doctor. They will treat you for blood loss and find a cause for heaviness. You might need an ultrasound.
**Que.:** My breasts feel painful before periods and feels as if lumps are there. Is this normal?

**Ans.:** Lumpy breast which are tender just before periods may be normal or part of fibrocystic disease. This is due to hormonal changes. It is not always cancer. If it is disturbing your routine, please consult a gynaecologist.

**Que.:** I had normal cycles since beginning of my periods. But now my cycles are delayed by 15-20 days for last six months. I have some hair growth on my upper lip and chin. I am worried and feel ashamed in my class. How do I proceed?

**Ans.:** Do you have an increase in weight also. You may be having a hormonal disease called Polycystic ovarian disease. This is a hormonal imbalance. Losing weight by proper lifestyle management may help you in treating this. Please consult your doctor for this. This can cause many issues in future, so needs proper assessment.

**Que.:** Last night I had sex with my boy friend without any condom usage. Can I get some protection to prevent pregnancy?

**Ans.:** Yes, you may use emergency contraception. This has hormone called Levonorgestrel. But you should not use it frequently. You should use contraception if you want to remain sexually active.

**Que.:** Which emergency contraception I may use?

**Ans.:** You may use low dose oral contraceptive pill if you don't have any contraindications. You should always use barrier method (condom) which prevents pregnancy as well as sexually transmitted diseases.

**Que.:** I had lot of pain on my left side yesterday. My family doctor got an ultrasound done. She told me that I have an ovarian cyst. What is this? Is this a cancer? Why do I have pain? What is the treatment for this?

**Ans.:** There are two ovaries on each side of your lower abdomen. This is where eggs are formed. Ovarian cyst is a swelling in one of the ovaries with the over development of egg. No, all cysts are not cancer. Ultrasound and some blood investigations can help in deciding whether they are cancer or not. The pain may be because of the rotation of the cyst on itself, called torsion. If it is an ovarian torsion then you should immediately consult the gynaecologist.

**Que.:** How do I know whether I am pregnant?

**Ans.:** If you are pregnant normally you stop getting your periods. A simple urine test is available in the market which can be done at home. This slide test tells you about pregnancy. And it can be confirmed by serum Beta
HCG levels if any confusion on urine test.

**Que.: Where can I get an abortion?**
**Ans.:** One should go to a trained and certified gynaecologist for consultation and abortion. Adolescent clinics will also guide.

**Que.: I am afraid of surgery for abortion. Is there any other method?**
**Ans.:** Yes, don't worry. These days medicines are available which can help you abort pregnancy which is of less duration.
**Topic 20: Adolescents in COVID-19 Pandemic**

**Que.: My age is 15 years. Can I catch COVID-19?**

**Ans.:** Yes. All age groups can catch COVID-19. While we are still learning about how COVID-19 affects all people, older persons and persons with pre-existing medical conditions, like high blood pressure, heart disease, lung disease, cancer or diabetes, appear to develop serious illness more often than others. As this is a new virus, we are still learning about how it affects children and adolescents. Evidence to date suggests that children and adolescents are less likely to get severe disease, but severe cases and death can still happen in these age groups. Adolescent can act as a carrier of this virus.

**Que.: Can adolescents spread COVID-19 to other people even if they have mild or no symptoms?**

**Ans.:** The virus is spread from person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth, which are spread when a person with COVID-19 coughs, sneezes or speaks. These droplets can land on objects and surfaces. Touching these objects or surfaces, and then touching their eyes, nose or mouth can then infect people.

Current evidence suggests that most transmission occurs from symptomatic people through close contact with others. Available evidence from contact tracing reported by countries suggests that asymptotically infected individuals are much less likely to transmit the virus than those who develop symptoms. Comprehensive studies on transmission from asymptomatic patients are difficult to conduct, as they require testing of large population cohorts and more data are needed to better understand and quantified the transmissibility of SARS-CoV-2. WHO is working with countries around the world, and global researchers, to gain better evidence-based understanding of the disease as a whole, including the role of asymptomatic patients in the transmission of the virus.

**Que.: Since, there are few known cases of adolescents getting seriously ill with COVID-19, Should I go to a health facility if I develop symptoms of the disease?**

**Ans.:** Although children and adolescents are considered less likely than adults to catch and spread COVID-19, everyone with symptoms should get tested.

**Que.: What should I do if someone in my family gets ill with COVID-19?**

**Ans.:** Seek medical care, if members of your family get seriously ill. If possible, either you or an adult should phone the local or national COVID-19 emergency number for advice on where and how you could get care. If your family member is confirmed as having COVID-19, you must be prepared that you and other known contacts will need to monitor your symptoms, and continue to self-quarantine for 14 days, even if you feel healthy.
**Topic 20: Adolescents in COVID-19 Pandemic**

**Que.: I am on medication for a chronic health condition. Should I change anything?**

**Ans.:** It is important to continue with any medication you may be using for chronic and other conditions, such as asthma, diabetes, HIV infection and TB, and attend recommended check-ups. Check with your health authorities and health provider if these check-ups should be done differently during the COVID-19 outbreak. Some services, such as counselling, may be available remotely. For treatment of clinically stable adolescents with HIV and adolescents with TB and/or other chronic conditions, your health provider should consider multi-month prescriptions and dispensing which will reduce the frequency of your visits to the clinic and ensure continuity of treatment, if movements are disrupted during the pandemic. Adherence to treatment is just as important during this period.

**Que.: I was due to get vaccinated for HPV and other vaccines but immunization services have been disrupted. Should I be concerned?**

**Ans.:** WHO recommends that all vaccination in schools and mass campaigns should be postponed during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, vaccines provided to adolescents have sufficiently flexible schedules to make sure you can get the vaccine in time when vaccination services start again. For example, the HPV vaccine that requires two doses can be started any time between 9 and 14 years of age and the interval between the two doses can be longer. The minimum interval between doses is 6 months, but it can be 12 or 15 months and, if necessary, even longer. It is most important that you receive the second dose at some point in time to be fully protected.

Contact your doctor or ask a family member or another trusted adult how you can get information about vaccination services where you live. It is important you get the vaccines you are supposed to get, even if they get delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Que.: I am bored staying home. Since, I am very unlikely to get severely ill even if I was to get COVID-19 why is it important that I follow the guidelines to prevent transmission such as keeping physical distance from other people?**

**Ans.:** Staying at home is difficult and can get boring, but it may help you to do something you enjoy. This could be reading a book, playing games or listening to music. Try to stay connected with friends and family every day either by communicating with them by phone or internet if you can, or if you live close to them and the local rules allow you to, by talking in-person while keeping your distance.

At the same time, it is still important that you reduce your chances of being infected or spreading COVID-19 by washing your hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub as often as possible, keeping at least 1 meter (3 feet) from other people, and avoiding crowded places. You might be one of the unlucky adolescents who does get severely ill if you catch COVID-19, or you could spread it to others and be responsible for them getting really ill or even dying. You have the power to make choices that could save lives and together young people can play an important part in fighting COVID-19.
Topic 20: Adolescents in COVID-19 Pandemic

Que.: Some of my friends are not sticking to the rules about physical distancing. What should I do?

Ans.: Explain to your friends why it is important to protect themselves and others by washing their hands, avoiding touching their face, always coughing or sneezing into their elbow, sleeve, or a tissue, and cooperating with physical distancing measures and movement restrictions when called on to do so. Maybe you can share ideas for virtual activities that your friends can participate in, and you can encourage them to do them together with you or with other friends. This way you are giving them alternatives rather than just telling them to stay at home. But, remember that you do not have control over other people's actions. So, do not get into an argument or a fight to try to change their minds.

Que.: I am feeling really anxious about COVID-19 and its impact on my life. What should I do?

Ans.: In situations like a pandemic it is very normal to feel anxious and powerless, and that is ok. Here are a few suggestions on things that could help you proactively manage your anxiety:

Think about how you are feeling. Don't ignore your feelings, especially if you don't feel well. When your life is disrupted, it is normal to have many different feelings: worry, frustration, sad, stress, anger, and anxiety - this can happen to everyone. Draw on skills and strategies you have used in the past that have helped you to manage life challenges, and skills to help you manage your emotions. Here are a few examples:

- Keep a diary
- Express your feelings through art, like writing a poem, drawing, dancing, or playing music
- Talk about your feelings and concerns with someone you trust
- Try some breathing exercises. You may find guided breathing exercises online if you have access to internet.

Do something active every day: Any exercise will help, as it reduces levels of the body's stress hormones, which can help your body and mind relax. Exercise also produces a “feel good hormone” called endorphins which can help to improve your mood. Try taking a walk, running, or any physical activity outdoors while keeping a distance from others. For those who are unable to leave the house, you could open the window for fresh air and do some indoor exercises to stay active.

Don't use smoking, eating, alcohol or other drugs to deal with your emotions.

Stay connected with friends and family either by communicating with them by phone or internet if you can. If you live close to them and the local rules allow you to, you could also talk to them in person while keeping your distance.

Keep a daily routine as much as possible. Try to go to bed and wake up at the same times every day, making sure you get enough sleep. Plan ahead and try to have a balance of activities such as keeping up with schoolwork, physical exercise, connecting with friends and family, doing things you enjoy, and eating regular meals.
Talk to a health worker or counsellor if you, or someone you care about:
  • Feels overwhelmed with emotions like sadness, fears and worries
  • Feels like stress gets in the way of your daily routines, or
  • Feels like you want to harm yourself or others.

At this time, you may find it easier to speak to a counsellor rather than a health worker, given that there may be restrictions on movement and health facilities may be busy caring for those with COVID-19.

**Que.: When will this pandemic end so I can go back to school and meet my friends?**

**Ans.:** We don’t know when the pandemic will end, but we know it depends on every individual’s contribution in helping stop the transmission. The sacrifices you have made by not seeing your friends and by stopping going to school and other activities are your contributions to fighting the pandemic. By putting societies and economies on hold, we have reduced the ability of the virus to spread through our communities. These defensive measures have helped to limit some of the short-term impacts of the virus, and bought us time to translate what we have learned about the virus into solutions so that we can get back to a more familiar way of living. It is important that you continue to practice these measures and encourage your friends to do the same.

**Que.: Is it safe to go back to school when it reopens?**

**Ans.:** A decision to reopen schools in every country and area is made based on careful assessment of the situation, with consensus among all the key parties involved, including the health and education policymakers, teachers and other school staff, parents and health and community workers. In addition, the reopening of schools is carefully planned and prepared, with all necessary measures in place to protect the safety and health of everyone in the school community.

Therefore, if your school reopens, you should feel assured it is safe for you to go back to school – provided you strictly follow the guidelines and rules that will be provided by your school.

Of course, if you have any concerns with going back to school, do not hesitate to speak to your teachers, parents or guardians.

**Que.: I know there is a risk of getting COVID-19 at the moment, but I feel fine. Can I still play sports?**

**Ans.:** Yes. You can still play sports that are in line with the physical distancing measures and movement restrictions that are in place in your country. Being physically active is good for your health, both physical and mental. Set up a regular routine to practice activities or sports that do not require close contact with others every day for 1 hour. You can do individual sports, like jogging, walking, dancing or yoga. There are many options to try. You can set up playground games indoors, such as jump rope and hop-scotch, play with your brothers and sisters, and practice some strength training activities, using improvised weights like bottles full
of water or sand. If you have access to the Internet, you can also join in online active games or fitness classes, or set up your own online physical exercises with your friends or classmates. Find an activity that is fun, can be done within the restrictions that are in place in your country, and makes you feel good.

**Que.: I am missing out on my education because of COVID-19 pandemic. What should I do?**

**Ans.:** Your school or place where you are studying is likely to make arrangements for you to catch up or have exams at another time. Follow the procedures that your school has put in place to reduce the immediate impact of school closures, and to facilitate the continuity of education. If you have access to internet, you can also consult your teachers and other trusted adults to identify and access reliable online learning opportunities and resources.

In places where internet connectivity is a problem, many governments have started to broadcast educational programmes on TV and radio channels during school closures. If you live in such a place, look out for educational programmes on your local TV and radio channels.

**Que.: COVID-19 is everywhere in news, and I am finding it difficult to know what is true and what is false. What should I do?**

**Ans.:** A near-constant stream of news, sometimes contradictory, can cause anyone to feel lost and distressed. Make sure to use reliable sources such as the UNICEF and the World Health Organization’s sites to get information, or to check any information you might be getting through less reliable channels.

If you have a phone, you can use the WHO Health Alert on WhatsApp to get the latest information about the pandemic. This is a new service, which is free to use, designed to give prompt, reliable and official information 24 hours a day, worldwide. Start by clicking WHO Health Alert, then simply text the word ‘Hi’ in a WhatsApp message to get started. Keep in mind that overloading yourself with information about the COVID-19 pandemic can also be stressful, so seek information updates and practical guidance at specific times during the day and avoid listening to or following rumours that make you feel uncomfortable.

**Que.: During the lockdown, I am spending much more time online playing games, socializing and studying. Should I be worried about this?**

**Ans.:** COVID-19 has abruptly pushed many people's daily lives online, and you may be spending even more hours online than before. While online solutions provide huge opportunities for continuing your learning, socializing and playing, you should try to limit the amount of screen time that is not related to your studies or physical activity. This is because you need to be physically active to keep healthy and a positive attitude. In addition, some people are sensitive to flickering lights and may get headaches, nausea, and dizziness, and even seizures if they spend too much time in front of a screen. Therefore, it is important to replace some of the recreational screen time with non-screen activities, like listening to music, reading, playing board games, and
physical activity, like going for a walk or jog. Excessive gaming can lead to “gaming disorder” that leads to reduced sleep or day-night reversal, loss of appetite, aggression, headaches, and attention problems. If you experience these symptoms, seek help from your parents or a trusted adult.

**Que.:** Since, my parents stopped going out to work, they have been arguing with each other much more, and in some instances, I have seen one parent harm or hurt the other either verbally or physically. I don't feel safe at home. What should I do?

**Ans.:** This is a difficult time. Many people, including perhaps your parents are worrying about security, health, and money. When people are in the cramped and confined living conditions of lockdown, these tensions and stress can become even greater. It is normal to have disagreements. However, if the disagreements become verbal or physical, then it is right to act.

If you are worried about what is happening in your home, or don't feel safe, talk to a trusted adult about what worries you, and seek their advice. During an argument or a fight, try not to draw attention to yourself so that you end up getting hurt. It might be useful to have a safety plan in case the violence escalates. This includes preparing a bag with essential items, like clothing, documents and electric charger, and having a neighbour, friend, relative, or shelter identified to go to should you need to leave the house immediately for safety reasons. Arrange with the trusted adult to help you alert the relevant authorities who can help you stay safe, including the police, emergency health services and social services.

**Que.:** I am a girl and I don't like the way someone touches me at home and we are both at home all the time because of the pandemic. What should I do?

**Ans.:** It is wrong for anyone to do this. And it is not your fault in any way. If you are staying in the same house as the person and/or are dependent on him (it will usually be a man), that may make some of the things that you could do difficult, especially during stay-at-home restrictions due to COVID-19. Here are some things that you can consider doing to improve your safety while in the house.

- You could tell him politely but firmly that you do not want him to touch you and ask him to please stop.
- You could inform your parents or other caregivers or trusted adult in the house about what is happening.
- You could inform a trusted adult outside your home such as a neighbour or a teacher or family friend or relative.
- If you have access to a phone, you could call or text for help and support. This includes calling hotlines/help lines for children and women who are in need of help or feeling distressed or subjected to abuse, or call a child protection service in your area. Be careful not to leave your phone calls or text messages where anyone else could access them.
- If you need to leave the house immediately because he is hurting or harming you, think of doing it discreetly (without him overhearing), pre-arranging with a neighbour or trusted relative or family friend to
help you leave the house and stay with them until it is safe for you to return home.

• If you have been sexually abused or raped and need urgent medical help or care, go as soon as possible to the nearest hospital or clinic to ask for medical care.

**Que.: I heard I could be hurt by online contacts. What are my risks and how can I protect myself online?**

**Ans.:** Since you might be spending even more time online than before, it is wise to be aware of some of the risks. First, be careful what content you share online. Risky behaviour, such as sexting or sharing of sexualized content, can expose you to risks of blackmail, harassment and humiliation. Second, spending more time online may increase the chances that you could come into contact with online predators who seek to sexually exploit young people. When in front of webcams wear appropriate clothing and do not connect with teachers or virtual classrooms from a bedroom. In addition, it's important to note that some adolescents, for example those with disabilities and those perceived to be different or at greater risk of catching or spreading COVID-19, may be at increased risk of cyber bullying and discrimination. Hurtful, discriminatory or inappropriate online contact is never okay. If in doubt, or if you feel uncomfortable or distressed about some interactions you have had online, tell a parent or another trusted adult immediately.

**Que.: Is it safe to have sex currently?**

**Ans.:** There is no evidence that COVID-19 is transmitted through semen or vaginal fluids. However, having sex with someone means that you shall get very close to them. This puts one person at risk if the other person has COVID-19. Masturbation does not involve another person, and carries no risk of COVID-19. Also, having sex with a partner whom you are living with does not carry risk if both of you are taking steps to protect yourself from the virus. Make sure to use condoms and contraception to avoid sexually transmitted infections and unintended pregnancy. If you are adolescent and below 18 years of age, you should be aware of POC SO ACT 2012.

Source: [https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-for-adolescents-and-youth-related-to-covid-19](https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-for-adolescents-and-youth-related-to-covid-19) These questions and answers were developed by the World Health Organization, UNESCO, UNFPA and UNICEF
**Que.: I want to drive a car and my parents tell me that I have not attained the age for license. But my friend is driving a car despite being of the same age. What should I do?**

**Ans.:** Unintentional injuries are the leading cause of death and disability among adolescents. In 2016, over 135,000 adolescents died as a result of road traffic accidents. Many of those who died were “vulnerable road users”, including pedestrians, cyclists or users of motorized two-wheelers.

Hence, you need to drive the vehicle only after the license is issued to you.

Road safety laws need to be made more comprehensive, and enforcement of such laws needs to be strengthened. Furthermore, young drivers need advice on driving safely, while laws that prohibit driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs need to be strictly enforced among all age groups and zero-tolerance for drink-driving are recommended.

Drowning is also among the top 10 causes of death among adolescents – nearly 50,000 adolescents, over two thirds of them boys, are estimated to have drowned in 2016.

Hence, teaching children and adolescents to swim is an essential intervention to prevent these deaths.

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**Que.: How can I maintain my personal hygiene?**

**Ans.:** You can maintain your personal hygiene by:

- Bathing and washing regularly
- Wash your hands regularly
- Trim and clean your nails regularly
- Wash your hair regularly. You can also clean your combs and brushes once a week to keep them clean
- Brush your teeth and floss two times a day
- Wear clean clothes. Wash underwear regularly

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**Que.: Why is good personal hygiene necessary?**

**Ans.:** Personal hygiene is very important because not only does it maintain your cleanliness, it also contributes greatly to your health. Personal hygiene includes taking a bath, brushing your teeth, cleaning your nails, your ears, washing your hands, wearing clean clothes etc. Failure to keep up a standard of hygiene can have many implications. Not only is there an increased risk of getting an infection or illness, but also there are many social and psychological aspects that can be affected. Good personal hygiene is paramount in preventing epidemic or even pandemic outbreaks. Engaging in some very basic measures could help prevent many coughs and colds from being passed from person to person.

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**Que.: What are the implications of poor personal hygiene?**

**Ans.:** People will not want to be around you. Further it can instil

- Low self-esteem
- Make you more prone to illnesses
- You could also transmit diseases