














 **Where Women Have No Doctor - A Health Guide for Women (Hesperian Foundation, 1997, 600 p.)**

 **Chapter 16: Sexually Transmitted Diseases and Other Infections of the Genitals**

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Chapter 16: Sexually Transmitted Diseases and Other Infections of the Genitals

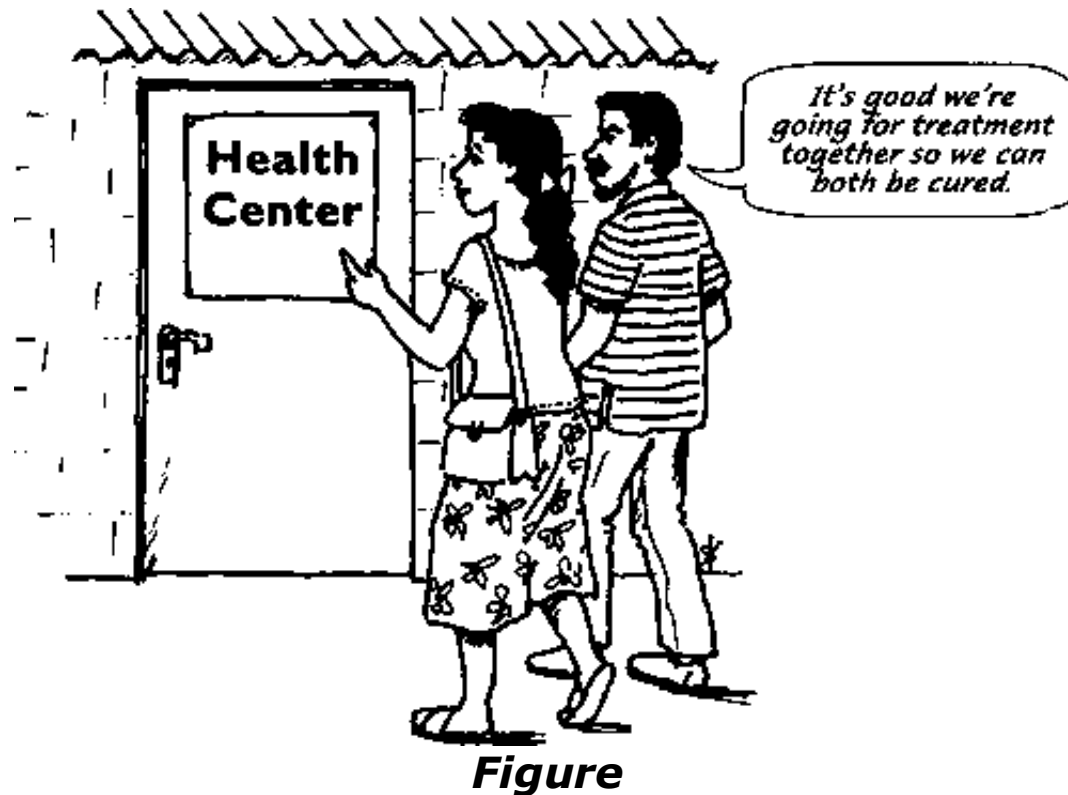
How to use this chapter:

Many STDs have no signs in men or women. This chapter can help you learn when you are at risk for getting STDs and how to treat them. The chapter will also help you treat some problems of the genitals that are not sexually transmitted.

***If you have signs:* Look up the sign that is bothering you most. You may have to look in more than one place. For example, if you have a discharge but you also feel itchy, look first in the section called 'Abnormal Discharge'. If your problem is not there, look in the section called 'Itching of the Genitals'.**

***If you do not have signs:* Read What to do if you have an STD to learn when you are at risk for getting an STD.**

This chapter suggests many different medicines that treat different STDs. Before you take any medicine, read about how to use medicines safely in the chapter called "Use of Medicines in Women's Health. There is also information you should know about each medicine listed in the "Green Pages".



Figure

Sexually Transmitted Diseases, or STDs, are *infections* passed from one person to another during sex. Any type of sex can cause an STD. It can be penis to *vagina* sex, or penis to anus sex, or *oral* sex (mouth to penis, mouth to vagina). Sometimes STDs can happen from just rubbing an infected penis or vagina against another person's *genitals*. STDs can be passed from a pregnant woman to her baby before it is born, or during childbirth.

◆ *Early treatment of STDs in both partners can prevent many serious problems.*

Unless they are treated early, STDs can cause:

- ***infertility*** in both men and women.
- **babies born too early, too small, or blind.**
- **pregnancy in the tube (outside the womb).**
- **death from severe infection or *AIDS*.**
- **lasting pain in the lower *abdomen*.**
- ***cancer* of the *cervix*.**

◆ ***This chapter will also help you treat some problems of the genitals that are not sexually transmitted.***

Why STDs Are a Serious Problem for Women

Men and women can both get STDs. But a woman gets infected from a man more easily than a man gets infected from a woman. This is because a man's penis goes into some part of a woman's body - such as her vagina, mouth, or anus - during sex. Without a condom, the man's semen, which may carry infection, stays inside her body. This gives her a greater chance of getting an infection in the *womb*, *tubes*, and *ovaries*.

Because most STDs are inside a woman's body, the signs of an STD in a woman are harder to see than in a man. So it is often hard to tell if a woman has an infection in her genitals - much less what kind of infection she has.

◆ ***More than half of all women who are infected with an STD do not have any signs.***

There are tests that can show if a woman has a particular STD. But these tests are not available in many places, and sometimes they do not give accurate results or

do not find all possible STDs. Tests can also be expensive.

Since many women are not able to be tested accurately for STDs, if you are at risk for being infected it is usually better for you to take medicine to treat all the STDs you may have - just in case.

◆ *If low-cost, accurate testing for STDs were available, women could avoid taking medicines that they do not need, may not be able to afford, or that cause side effects.*

Why so many women get STDs

It can be hard for a woman to protect herself from an STD. Often, she must have sex when her partner demands it. She may not know if her partner has sex with other partners, or if he is infected with an STD. If he has another partner who is infected, he may infect his wife.



Figure

A woman may not be able to persuade her partner to use condoms.

Latex condoms are the best way to protect both partners, but the man has to be willing to use them.



**sexual health
Figure**

STDs hurt men, too



Figure

When they are not treated, STDs can cause a man to:

- become infertile.
- have lasting pain.
- die of AIDS or other serious infections.

You may have an STD if you have one or more of the following signs:

- **unusual *discharge* from the vagina**
- **pain in your lower abdomen**
- **a rash, bump, or sore on your genitals**

How to know if you are at risk for an STD



Figure

Even if you do not have any signs, you may be at risk (more likely to have an STD) if:

- your partner has signs of an STD. He has probably passed the STD to you, even if you have no signs.
- you have more than one partner. The more partners you have, the greater the chance that one of them has passed an STD to you.
- you have had a new partner in the last 3 months. He may have had another partner just before you who had an STD.
- your partner lives away from home, or you believe your partner has other

partners. This means he is more likely to become infected with an STD and infect you.

What to do if you have an STD



Figure

If you already have an STD or think you are at risk of getting one:

- **treat it early.** If you have signs described in this chapter, follow the treatments given. Remember that it is very common to have more than one disease at the same time. If you have no signs but are at risk, take the medicines for discharge.

- **do not wait until you are very ill.** Early treatment will protect you from more serious problems later on, and will prevent the spread of infection to others.
- **help your partner to get treated at the same time you do.** If he does not, he will infect you again if you have sex. Urge him to take the proper medicine, or to see a health worker.
- **make sure you take *all* the medicine, even if your signs start to go away. Do not buy only part of the medicine. You will not be cured until all the required medicine is gone.**
- **practice *safer sex*.** You can always get another STD or HIV/AIDS if you do not protect yourself.
- **try to get tested for syphilis.** If you have one STD, you could be infected with another and have no signs. Also consider being tested for *HIV*.

Abnormal Discharge

It is normal to have a small amount of discharge, or wetness, that comes from the vagina. This is the way the vagina cleans itself. The amount of discharge changes during the days of your monthly cycle. During your fertile time, your discharge is more wet and slippery, and clear in color. If you are pregnant, you may have more discharge.

A change in the amount, color, or smell of the discharge from your vagina sometimes means you have an infection, but it can be difficult to tell from your

discharge what kind of infection you have. Infections are often passed during sex (sexually transmitted), but not always.

If your discharge continues even after taking medicines, see a health worker to have an *exam* and if possible get tested to see what infection you may have. The discharge could also be caused by another problem like *cancer*.

IMPORTANT

If you have discharge from the vagina with pain in the lower abdomen, you could have a serious pelvic infection. Get treatment immediately!

COMMON CAUSES OF ABNORMAL DISCHARGE

Abnormal discharge may be caused by several different types of infections. Below is a list of them and their most common signs.

Yeast (candida, white discharge, thrush)

Yeast is not sexually transmitted. It does not cause complications. You are most likely to have a yeast infection when you are pregnant, taking *antibiotics*, or have some other illness like *diabetes* or HIV/AIDS.

Signs:

- **white, lumpy discharge, like milk curd or yogurt**
- **bright red skin outside and inside your vagina that sometimes bleeds**
- **you feel very itchy inside or outside your vagina**
- **a burning feeling when you pass urine**

- a smell like mold or baking bread



A change in the smell or color of your discharge can mean you have an infection

Bacterial vaginosis

Bacterial vaginosis is not sexually transmitted. If you are pregnant, it can cause your baby to be born too soon.

Signs:

- more discharge than usual
- a fishy smell, especially after sex
- mild itching

Trichomonas

Trichomonas is not a dangerous infection, but the itching can make you miserable. A man usually does not have any signs, but he can still carry the disease in his penis and give it to others during sex.

Signs:

- **gray or yellow, bubbly discharge**
- **bad-smelling discharge**
- **red and itchy genital area and vagina**
- **pain or burning when you pass urine**



Gonorrhoea (clap, gono, VD) and chlamydia

Gonorrhoea and chlamydia are both serious illnesses. But they are easy to cure if they are treated early. If not, they can cause severe infection and infertility in both women and men.

◆ *Gonorrhoea and chlamydia have the same signs, so it is best, if possible, to get treated for both.*

In a man, the signs usually begin 2 to 5 days after he had sex with an infected person. But a man can have no signs and still be infected. In a woman, the signs may not begin for weeks or even months. Even if you do not have any signs, you can still give both gonorrhoea and chlamydia to another person.

Signs in a woman:



Figure

- **yellow or green discharge from the vagina or *anus***
- **pain or burning when passing urine**
- ***fever***
- **pain in the lower belly**
- **pain or bleeding during sex**

- **or no signs at all**

Signs in a man:

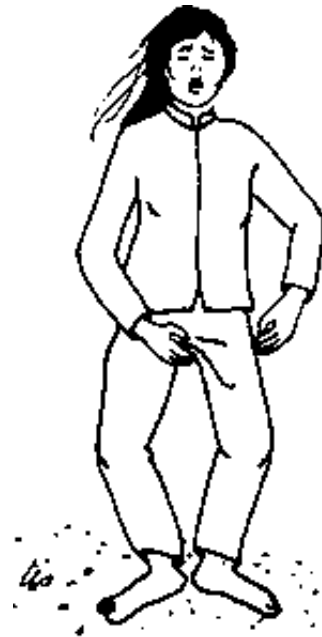


Figure

- **discharge from his penis**
- **pain or burning when he passes urine**
- **pain or swelling of the *testicles***
- **or no signs at all**

Itching of the genitals

Itching of the genitals can have many causes. Itching around the opening of the vagina could be yeast or trichomonas.



Figure

Itching in the hair of the genitals or close to the genitals could be caused by *scabies* or *lice*. Scabies or lice can be treated with local remedies, or with medicines found in most pharmacies. For more information, see ***Where There Is No Doctor***, or another general medical book.

Some itching is caused by soaps or deodorants that have perfume in them. It can also be caused by plants and herbs that are used for douching or washing out the vagina. Wash with plain water to see if the itching goes away.

Treatment:

If you have an abnormal discharge and you DO NOT think you have an STD, treat the discharge with these medicines:

Medicines for Discharge if you are NOT at risk for an STD
(These medicines will cure yeast, trichomonas and bacterial vaginosis.)

Take 2 medicines: 1 medicine from Box 1, and also the medicine in Box 2.

<u>Medicine</u>	<u>How much to take</u>	<u>When and how to take</u>
Box 1 (choose 1):		
clotrimazole inserts	500 mg	Put the inserts high into the vagina for 1 night only.
or		
Gentian Violet	1% liquid	Soak clean cotton wool and put high into the vagina each night for 3 nights. Remove the cotton each morning.

Box 2 (also take):

metronidazole	2g (2000 mg)	Take all the tablets by mouth at the same time (this will not harm you), unless you are pregnant (see note).
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If you are pregnant, do not take all the metronidazole at once. Instead, take 400 mg, 2 times a day for 7 days.

Important: Do not drink alcohol during the time you are taking metronidazole.

For other medicines that treat vaginal discharge NOT caused by an STD, see Box 1.

If you have an abnormal discharge and you DO think you are at risk for an STD, treat the discharge with these medicines:

**Figure**

Medicines for Discharge if you think you are at risk for an STD

(These medicines will cure gonorrhoea, chlamydia and trichomonas.)

Take all these medicines.

Medicine	How much to take	When and how to take
co-trimoxazole...	480 mg tablets (80 mg trimethoprim and 400 mg sulfamethoxazole)	10 tablets daily, all at once, by mouth, for 3 days (this will not harm you).

and

doxycycline.	100 mg	By mouth, 2 times a day, for 7 days. Do not take if pregnant or breastfeeding.
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and

metronidazole	2 g (2000 mg)	Take all the tablets by mouth all at the same time (this will not harm you) unless you are pregnant (see above).
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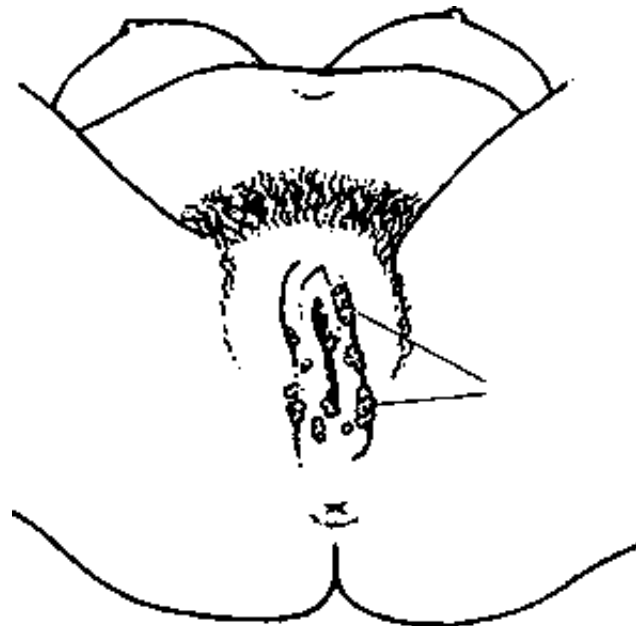
Important:

Co-trimoxazole is cheap and easy to find, but in some countries it no longer works to treat gonorrhoea.

For other medicines that treat vaginal discharge caused by an STD, see Boxes 2 and 5.

Growths (Warts) on the Genitals

Warts are caused by a *virus*. Warts on the genitals look like warts on other parts of the body. It is possible to have genital warts and not know it, especially when they are inside the vagina or inside the tip of the penis. Warts may go away without treatment, but it can take a long time. Usually they continue to get worse and should be treated.



Warts on the vulva



Warts on the penis

Signs:

- **itching**
- **small, painless, whitish or brownish bumps that have a rough surface.**
 - **In women, these bumps usually grow on the folds of the *vulva*, inside the vagina, and around the anus.**
 - **In men, they usually grow on the penis, (or just inside it) and on the *scrotum*, or the anus.**

IMPORTANT

Large, flat, wet growths that look like warts may be a sign of syphilis. Try to get a test for syphilis, and DO NOT use the following treatment.

- ◆ ***Your partner should use condoms during sex until you both have no more warts.***

Treatment:

- 1. Put some petroleum gel or other greasy ointment on the skin around each wart to protect the healthy skin.**
- 2. With a small stick or tooth pick, carefully put on a very small amount of trichloroacetic acid (TCA) until the wart turns white. You can also use bichloroacetic acid (BCA).**

OR

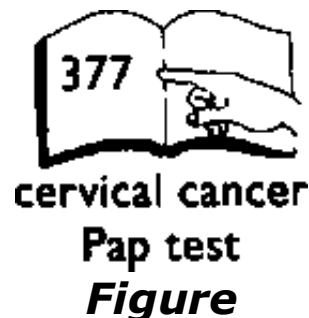
Apply 20% podophyllin solution in the same way until the wart turns brown. Podophyllin must be washed off 6 hours later. Do not use podophyllin while you are pregnant.

If the treatment is working, it will cause a painful sore where the wart used to be. Keep the sores clean and dry. Try not to have sex until they are gone, but if you must have sex, your partner should use a condom. The sores should heal within a week or two. Watch them to make sure they do not get infected.

◆ *Warts grow faster during pregnancy. If you have a lot of them, this can cause problems with childbirth. Talk with a health worker about this.*

Several treatments are usually necessary to get rid of all the warts (it does not matter which solution you use). You can repeat the treatment after one week. Try not to get acid on a sore where a wart used to be. If there is too much irritation,

wait longer before the next treatment.



IMPORTANT

Having genital warts can increase your risk of cancer of the opening of the womb (cancer of the cervix). If you have had genital warts, try to have a Pap test done every 1 or 2 years.

Sores on the Genitals (Genital Ulcers)

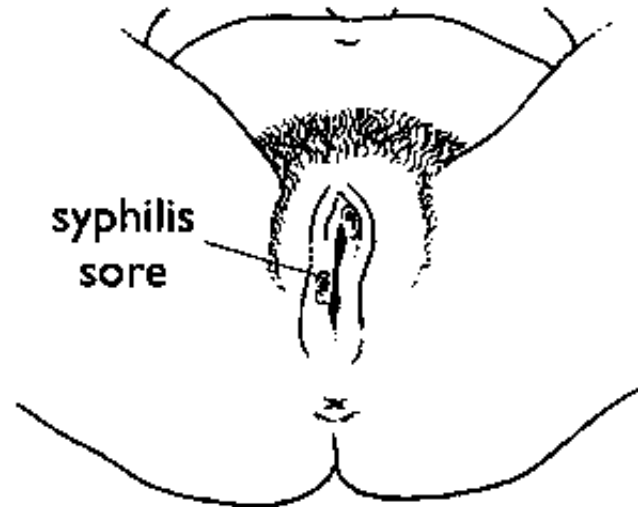
COMMON CAUSES OF SORES ON THE GENITALS

Most sores or *ulcers* on the genitals are sexually transmitted. It can be difficult to know which disease is causing the sores because the ones caused by both syphilis and chancroid often look alike. Sores on the genitals are one of the easiest ways that the AIDS virus passes into the body.

♦ *If you have ever had an open sore on your genitals that was not treated, try to get a blood test for syphilis. Some countries have free testing programs.*

Syphilis

Syphilis is a serious STD that has effects throughout the body and can last for many years. It is caused by *bacteria* and can be cured with medicine if treated early.



Figure

Signs:

- **The first sign is a small, painless sore that can look like a *pimple*, blister, a flat, wet wart, or an open sore. The sore lasts for only a few days or weeks and then goes away by itself. But the disease continues to spread throughout the body.**
- **Weeks or months later, you may have a sore throat, fever, rash (especially on the palms of the hands and soles of the feet), mouth sores, or swollen joints. During this time you can infect others.**

All of these signs go away by themselves, but the disease continues. Without

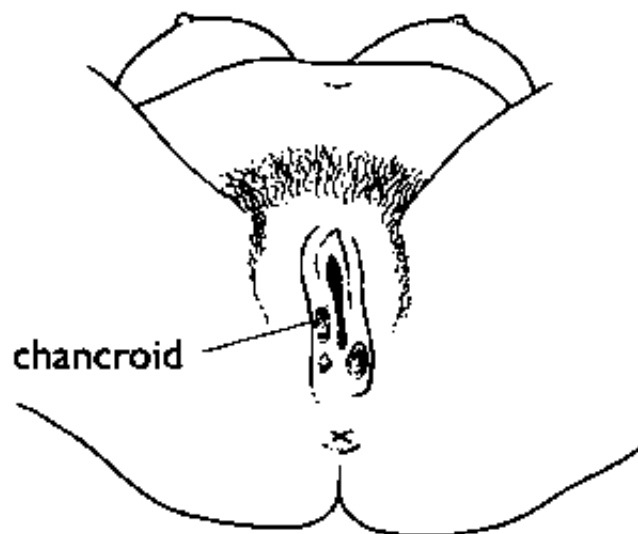
treatment, syphilis can cause heart disease, *paralysis*, mental illness, and even death.

Pregnancy and syphilis. A pregnant woman can pass syphilis to her unborn baby, which can cause it to be born too early, deformed, or dead. You can prevent this by getting a blood test and treatment during pregnancy. If a pregnant woman and her partner have blood tests that show they have syphilis, they should both be treated with benzathine penicillin, 2.4 million Units, by injection (IM), once a week for 3 weeks.

♦ ***If you are pregnant, try to get a blood test for syphilis.***

Chancroid

Chancroid is an STD caused by bacteria. It can be cured with medicine if it is treated early.



Figure**Signs:**

- one or more soft, painful sores on the genitals or anus that bleed easily
- enlarged, painful glands (*lymph nodes, bubos*) may develop in the *groin*
- slight fever

Treatment:

Medicines for Genital Sores (<i>These medicines will cure both syphilis and chancroid.</i>)		
Medicine	How much to take	When and how to take
benzathine penicillin	2.4 million Units	one injection in the muscle (IM)
and		
erythromycin	500 mg	by mouth, 3 times a day, for 7 days
Important:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>If you still have a sore after 7 days, continue taking erythromycin for 7 more days.</i> • <i>If you are allergic to penicillin, take only erythromycin, but take 500 mg 3 times a day for 15 days.</i> 		
For other medicines that work to treat genital sores, see Box 3 and Box 5.		

Sores on the genitals should be kept clean. Wash them every day with soap and water, and dry carefully. Do not share the cloth you use to dry yourself with

anyone else.

IMPORTANT

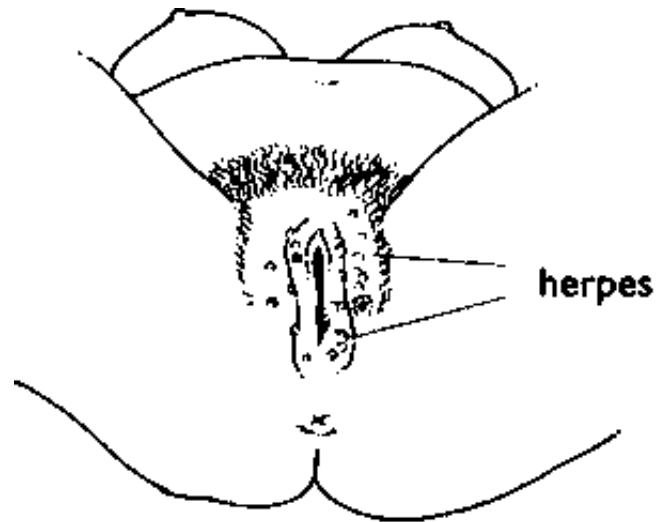
The AIDS virus can easily pass through a sore on the genitals during sex. To help prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS, do not have sex when you have a sore, or when your partner has one.

◆ *A person with AIDS can get herpes infections all over the body that take much longer to go away.*

Genital herpes

Genital herpes is an STD caused by a virus. It can happen on the genitals or on the mouth. It produces sores that come and go for months or years. There is no cure for herpes, but there is treatment to make you feel better.

Not all herpes sores on the mouth are spread by sex. Children and adults often get herpes sores on their mouths when they have a cold or fever.



Figure

Signs:

- a tingling, itching, or hurting feeling of the skin in the genital area or thighs
- small blisters that burst and form painful, open sores on the genitals

The first time you get herpes sores, they can last for 3 weeks or more. You can have fever, headache, body ache, chills, and swollen lymph nodes in the groin. The next infection will be milder.

Treatment for genital herpes:

To help you feel better:

- **Put ice directly on the sore as soon as you feel it.**

- **Make a compress by soaking some cloth in clean water that has black tea in it and put it on the sore.**
- **Sit in a pan or bath of clean, cool water.**
- **Mix water and baking soda or corn starch into a paste and put it on the sore area.**



A compress can make genital sores feel better.

- **If your signs return again and again, try the medicine acyclovir. Although it cannot cure herpes, it can help the pain and make your signs go away more quickly.**
- **You can also try the suggestions from How to Feel Better.**



acyclovir
Figure

IMPORTANT

- ***Wash your hands with soap and water after touching the sores.***
- ***Be careful not to touch your eyes or your children's eyes. A herpes infection in the eyes is very serious.***
- ***Try not to have sex any time you have herpes sores. You can easily spread herpes to your sex partner.***

Pregnancy and herpes. A pregnant woman who is infected with herpes and has sores at the time of the birth can pass the disease on to her baby. This can cause dangerous problems for the baby. Try to give birth in a hospital. They may be able to do an operation to get the baby out, or give the baby special medicines when it is born.



Other STDs

AIDS (ACQUIRED IMMUNE DEFICIENCY SYNDROME, HIV, SLIM DISEASE)

AIDS is a sexually transmitted disease caused by a virus called HIV. It is spread when blood, fluid from the vagina, or semen of someone already infected with the HIV virus gets into the body of another person.

♦ STDs can make it easier to get AIDS, because HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, can get into your body through open sores or be carried in discharge.

Women can get HIV more easily than men during sex. You can get HIV from someone who looks completely healthy.



**AIDS
Figure**

There is no cure for HIV. If possible, do not have sex with someone who may be at

risk for having HIV or AIDS. To protect yourself, use a *latex* condom every time you have sex.

HEPATITIS B (YELLOW EYES)

Hepatitis B is a dangerous infection caused by a virus that harms the *liver*. Hepatitis B is spread when the blood, saliva (spit), fluid from the vagina, or semen of someone already infected with the virus gets into the body of another person. It spreads very easily from one person to another, especially during sex.

Signs:

- **fever**
- **no appetite**
- **tired and weak feeling**
- **yellow eyes and/or skin**
- **pain in the belly**
- **dark urine and whitish stools**
- **no signs at all**



Figure

◆ If your partner has had some of these signs, do not have sex until he is completely well. Ask a health worker if you can get vaccinated.

Treatment:

There is no medicine that will help. In fact, taking medicine can hurt your liver even more.

Most people get better from hepatitis B. A small number of people may have liver problems that never go away, including cancer. Rest as much as you can, and eat foods that are easy to digest. Do not drink any alcohol for at least 6 months.



cancer Figure

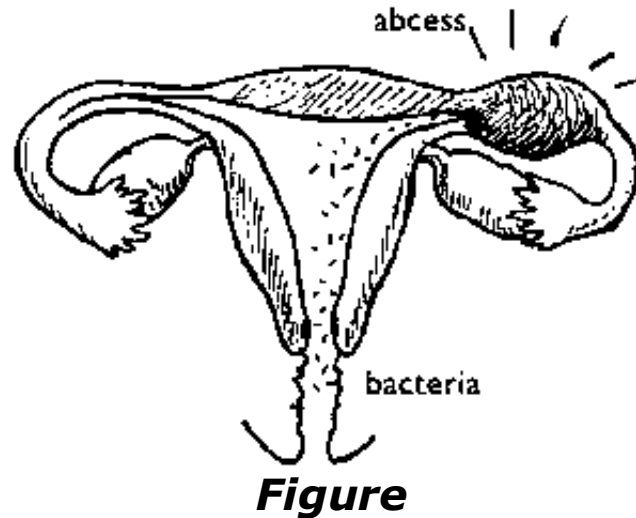
Pregnancy and hepatitis. If you have any of these signs when you are pregnant, see a health worker You may be able to get a vaccination to prevent your baby from getting hepatitis B.

Complications of STDs

Pelvic inflammatory disease (PID)

Pelvic Inflammatory Disease or PID is the name for an infection of any of the reproductive parts in a woman's lower abdomen. It is often called a 'pelvic infection'.

Pelvic infection can happen if you have had an STD that was not cured, especially gonorrhoea or chlamydia. It can also happen if you recently gave birth, or had a *miscarriage* or abortion.



The germs that cause pelvic infection travel up from the vagina through the cervix and then into the womb, tubes, and ovaries. If the infection is not treated in time, it can cause *chronic* pain, serious illness, or death. An infection in the tubes can leave *scars* that make you infertile or at risk for a pregnancy outside the womb (tubal or ectopic pregnancy).



other causes of pain in
the lower belly
Figure

Signs (you may have one or more of these):

- **pain in the lower belly**

- **high fever**
- **you feel very ill and weak**
- **green or yellow bad-smelling discharge from the vagina**
- **pain or bleeding during sex**



Treat pelvic infection right away.

◆ ***To prevent PID, always treat STDs correctly. Be sure to:***

- ***take all the medicine.***
- ***make sure your partner gets treated.***
- ***stop having sex until you and your partner have finished all the medicine and your signs have gone away.***

Treatment:

Start taking the medicines on the next page right away. If you do not feel better after 2 days and 2 nights (48 hours), or if you are very ill with a high fever or vomiting, or if you recently had an abortion or gave birth, go to a health center or hospital immediately. You may need strong medicines in the vein (IV).

Medicines for Pelvic Infection (PID)

(This infection is usually caused by a mix of germs, so 3 medicines must be used to cure it)

Take all these medicines:

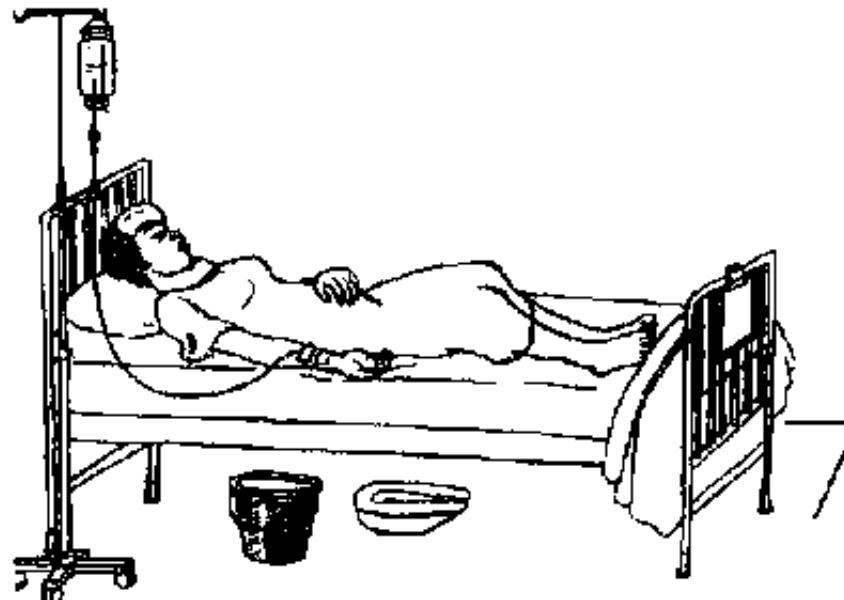
Medicine	How much to take	When and how to take
norfloxacin	800 mg	by mouth, once only (do not use if pregnant, breastfeeding, or under age 16).
and		
doxycycline	100 mg	by mouth, 2 times a day, for 10 days (do not use if pregnant or breastfeeding).
and		
metronidazole	500 mg	by mouth, 2 times a day, for 10 days.
<i>For other medicines that work for pelvic infection, see Box 4.</i>		

My husband taught school in a town far away from our village and returned home to visit me only a few times a year. After one of his visits, I became very ill with fever and a terrible pain in my abdomen. I did not know what was causing my sickness.... I tried remedies from the local healer, but they did not work. I did not want to leave my village to look for help because I did not want to leave my children, and I did not have much money. I got so sick that my neighbors thought I was going to die. So they took me in a truck to the nearest hospital, 90 miles away.

The doctor at the hospital said I had gonorrhoea, and that this had caused a bad infection inside my abdomen. He said I would need expensive surgery and many days of medicines

to cure me. He also said I would probably not be able to have more children. Now, I only wish I had taken the right medicines when I first became sick.

- Central African Republic



Hospital Emergency Ward



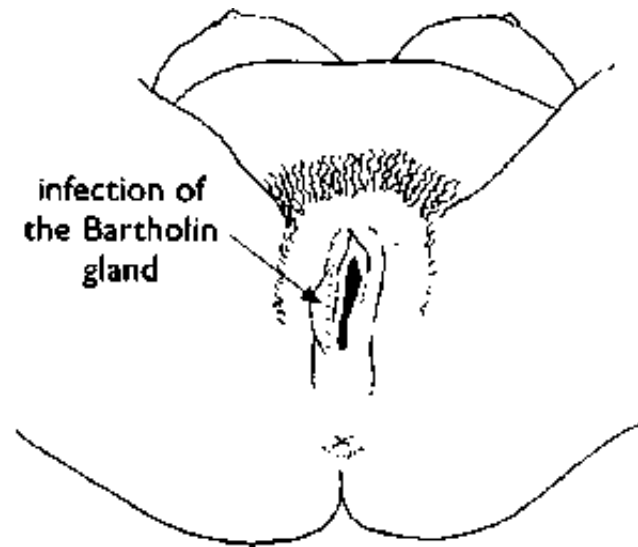
Community Clinic

In addition to PID, STDs can cause other problems for a woman. A woman with an STD that is not cured is more likely to have problems with infertility and tubal pregnancies. STDs can also cause:

◆ ***Early treatment of STDs can prevent complications.***

SWOLLEN VAGINA (BARTHOLIN GLAND INFECTION)

Just inside the vagina there are 2 small pockets of skin called 'glands'. They make a liquid that helps to keep the vagina wet. Sometimes germs get inside, and one or both glands become infected.



Figure

Signs:

- **Swollen, hot, painful vaginal fold that is darker in color. Usually it happens on one side only.**
- **Sometimes there is swelling with no pain.**

Although not always caused by an STD, this infection often happens when a woman has gonorrhea or chlamydia.

Treatment:

1. **Soak a cloth in clean, hot water and place it on the swelling. Do not make it so hot that you burn yourself. Do this as often as you can until the swelling opens and pus comes out, or until the swelling goes down.**

2. Also, you and your partner both need to take medicines for gonorrhoea and chlamydia.

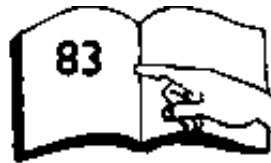
3. If the area is painful and stays swollen, see a trained health worker who can cut it open and drain out the pus.

PROBLEMS IN NEWBORN BABIES



Figure

Women who have gonorrhoea or chlamydia while they are giving birth can pass these diseases to their newborn babies. The babies' eyes become infected with gonorrhoea (neonatal conjunctivitis) which can cause blindness. To prevent neonatal conjunctivitis, put antibiotic ointment in the baby's eyes right after birth. Chlamydia can also cause *pneumonia* in newborn babies.



care of the eyes
Figure

How to Feel Better

**To cure yourself of an STD, you must take the medicine described in this chapter.
To get relief from the discomfort of an STD:**

1. Sit in a pan of clean, warm water for 15 minutes, 2 times a day. Do this until you feel better. If you think you have a yeast infection, you can add lemon juice, vinegar, yogurt or sour milk to the pan of warm water.



Figure

2. Do not have sex again until you feel better.



Figure

3. Try to wear underclothes made of cotton. This lets air in around your genitals which will help you heal.

4. Wash your underclothes once a day and dry them in the sun. This kills the germs that cause infection.



Figure

5. Take a mild pain medicine.



medicines for pain

Figure

6. If you have genital ulcers and it is painful to pass urine, pour clean water over your genital area while you urinate. Or sit in a pan of cool water while you urinate.

Other Medicines to Treat STDs

On several pages of this chapter we have recommended medicines to treat STDs and other problems. We selected these medicines because they are:

- **effective (they work to cure the problem).**
- **easy to find.**
- **not too costly.**



Figure

However, different kinds of medicines are sold in different parts of the world, and the prices may vary. So one of these medicines may not be available where you live, or there may be a different medicine that is both effective and less costly. You may also need to take a different medicine if:

- **you are pregnant or breastfeeding and the medicine is not safe to take**

during those times.

- **the STD you are trying to treat has become resistant to the medicine (see below).**
- **you have an *allergy* to the medicine. Some people are allergic to medicines like penicillin or sulpha antibiotics. See Kinds of Medicines for how to substitute antibiotics.**

◆ *Warnings are given in this chapter if pregnant or breastfeeding women should not take a medicine. If a medicine does not have a warning, it is safe to take.*

In this section we have listed other medicines that will work for each problem. Remember that most people have more than one STD or problem of the genitals at the same time, so it is often necessary to take more than one medicine. Whichever medicines you choose, be sure to take them correctly.

◆ *Before you take any medicine, you should read about it in the "Green Pages." There may be more information you should know.*

DRUG RESISTANCE AND STD MEDICINES

When using antibiotics for treating STDs and other diseases, it is very important to take all the medicine. If a person does not take enough of the right kind of medicine - or stops taking the medicine before the treatment is finished - the germs causing the infection are not all killed. The strongest germs survive and multiply and create stronger forms of the disease. Then a medicine that once worked against that disease is no longer able to cure it This is called resistance.

♦ ***If you are not sure which medicine will work best for a problem, try to check with a health worker or pharmacist who will know which medicines are best where you live.***

For this reason, in many places gonorrhea has become resistant to the drugs usually used to treat it. Talk with a health worker to find out if there are drug-resistant STDs where you live, and what are the best, locally-available medicines to treat them.

Box 1 - Other Medicines for Vaginal Discharge if you are NOT at risk for an STD
(These medicines are for vaginal infections that are not usually sexually transmitted.)

For yeast infections of the vagina:

- miconazole, 200 mg inserts: put 1 high into the vagina each night for 3 nights.
- nystatin, 100,000 U. inserts: put 1 high into the vagina each night for 7 nights.
- vinegar: mix 3 tablespoons of clear vinegar with 1 liter or quart of boiled, cool water (or 1 tablespoon of vinegar in 1 cup of water). Soak a piece of clean cotton wool in the mixture and put it high into the vagina each night for 3 nights. Remove each morning.

For trichomonas and bacterial vaginosis:

- metronidazole: 2 g (2000 mg) by mouth all at once (this will not harm you). **If you are pregnant**, do not take this medicine all at once. Instead, take 400 mg, 2 times a day for 7 days.
- metronidazole vaginal inserts: put one 500 mg insert high in the vagina, 2 times

a day for 10 days.

- tinidazole: use the same dose as for metronidazole (see above).

Box 2 - Other Medicines for Vaginal Discharge if you may be at risk for an STD

(This box inclines medicines for gonorrhoea and chlamydia. Since it is very difficult to tell these infections apart, take medicines for both. These medicines also treat infections in men. Treat for trichomonas by taking metronidazole. See Box 1.)

For gonorrhoea:

- norfloxacin: 800 mg by mouth, once only
- ciprofloxacin: 500 mg by mouth, once only

(do not use either of these 2 medicines if you are pregnant or breastfeeding or under age 16)

- ceftriaxone: 250 mg by injection into a muscle (IM), once only
- kanamycin: 2 grams, by injection into a muscle (IM), once only

(do not use if pregnant or breastfeeding)

- cefixime: 400 mg by mouth, once only

For chlamydia

- tetracycline: 500 mg, by mouth, 4 times a day for 7 days

(do not use if pregnant or breastfeeding)

- erythromycin: 500 mg, 4 times a day for 7 days
- amoxicillin: 500 mg, 3 times a day for 7 days

Be sure to take medicines correctly



Figure

Remember, when *treating STDs*, always:

- **make sure your partner gets treated too.**
- **take all the medicine.**
- **stop having sex until your signs have gone away AND you and your partner have finished all the medicine.**
- **see a health worker if you do not get better by the end of your treatment.**
- **start practicing safer sex when you do have sex again.**

Box 3 - Other Medicines for Genital Sores

(These medicines treat early syphilis and chancroid. Since it is very hard to tell the cause of genital sores, treat for both syphilis and chancroid.)

For syphilis:

The best medicine for early syphilis is benzathine penicillin, 2,4 Million Units, by injection into a muscle (IM), once only. If you are allergic to penicillin, you can use instead:

- doxycycline: 100 mg, by mouth, 2 times a day for 15 days

(do not use if pregnant or breastfeeding)

- tetracycline: 500 mg, by mouth, 4 times a day for 15 days

(do not use if pregnant or breastfeeding)

- erythromycin: 500 mg, by mouth, 4 times a day for 15 days (erythromycin will also treat chancroid)

For chancroid:

The best medicine for chancroid is erythromycin, 500 mg, by mouth, 3 times a day for 7 days. Other medicines that work for chancroid are:

- ciprofloxacin: 500 mg, by mouth, once only

(do not use if pregnant or breastfeeding or under age 16)

- ceftriaxone: 250 mg, by injection into a muscle (IM), once only
- co-trimoxazole 480 mg (80 mg trimethoprim and 400 mg sulfamethoxazole) tablets: 2 tablets, by mouth, 2 times a day for 7 days

Box 4 - Other Medicines for Pelvic Infection (PID)

(This infection is usually caused by a mix of germs. If possible, 3 medicines should be taken.)

These are the first choice:

- norfloxacin: 800 mg, by mouth, once only

(do not use if pregnant, breastfeeding, or under 16)

- doxycycline: 100 mg, by mouth, 2 times a day for 10 days

(do not use if pregnant or breastfeeding)

- metronidazole: 500 mg, by mouth, 3 times a day for 10 days

Instead of *norfloxacin* you can use any one of these medicines:

- ceftriaxone: 250 mg, by injection into a muscle (IM), once only
- cefixime: 400 mg, by mouth, once only
- co-trimoxazole 480 mg (80 mg trimethoprim and 400 mg sulfamethoxazole) tablets: 5 tablets, by mouth, 2 times a day for 3 days
- ciprofloxacin: 500 mg, by mouth, once only

(do not use if you are pregnant, breastfeeding, or under age 16)

- kanamycin: 2 grams, by injection into a muscle (IM), once only

(do not use if pregnant or breastfeeding)

Instead of doxycycline you can use any one of these medicines:

- tetracycline: 500 mg, by mouth, 4 times a day for 10 days

(do not use if pregnant or breastfeeding)

- erythromycin: 500 mg, by mouth, 4 times a day for 7 days

- amoxicillin: 500 mg, by mouth, 3 times a day for 10 days

Box 5 - Medicines for Those at Very Great Risk for STDs

(For women who have a very great risk of getting many different STDs - anyone who has unsafe sex with many different partners - this is a medicine that can be useful. It works to treat drug-resistant gonorrhoea, as well as chlamydia and genital ulcers. But it is very expensive and can be hard to find.)

- azithromycin: 1 gram, by mouth, once only

For almost all women, 1 gram is enough medicine. In a very few cases, 2 grams may be necessary for effective treatment, but this amount can cause severe nausea and vomiting.

Working for Change

HOW TO PREVENT STDs

- Practice safer sex (see the chapter on “Sexual Health”).
- Use condoms every time you have sex. To learn how to encourage your partner to use condoms, see Safer sex methods.



Condom for men



Condom for women

◆ ***Preventing STDs can protect you and your partner from serious illness and infertility.***

- **If your partner will not use a condom, use spermicide alone or with a diaphragm. This will give you some protection against gonorrhoea and chlamydia.**
- **Wash the outside of your genitals after sex.**
- **Pass urine after having sex.**
- **Do not douche, or use herbs or powders to dry out the vagina. Douching (and washing out the vagina with soap) works against the natural wetness the vagina makes to stay healthy. When the vagina is dry, it can become**

irritated during sex, making it more likely to be infected with AIDS and other STDs.



**dry sex
Figure**

Latex condoms will:



Figure

- protect you from STDs including HIV/AIDS.
- protect the health of your partner
- prevent unwanted pregnancy.

Do not have sex when you or your partner has signs of an STD.

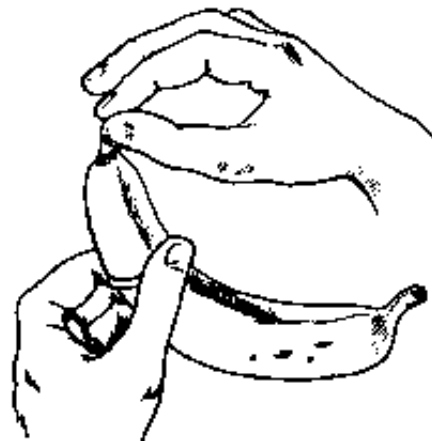
WORKING FOR SAFER SEX IN THE COMMUNITY

Sexually transmitted diseases are a health problem for the whole community. To help prevent STDs in your community you can:

- **teach men and women about the risks to their health and the health of their families from STDs. Find opportunities when women are together in groups, such as at the market or waiting at health centers, to explain how STDs are passed, and how to prevent them.**
- **work with others to find ways to convince men to wear condoms. Practice in the group what to say to your partner to get him to use a condom.**



**bargaining for
safer sex
Figure**



You can explain what a condom is and practice how to put one on using a banana.



Figure

- **make latex condoms available in your community. Work to make sure that free or cheap condoms are available at local shops, bars, and cafes as well as from health workers and at health centers.**
- **train men to teach other men in the community about using condoms.**
- **organize a community group to talk about health problems and include STDs, HIV, and AIDS. Explain how preventing STDs will also prevent the spread of HIV infection and AIDS.**
- **support education about sex in your local schools. Help parents understand that teaching children about STDs, including HIV/AIDS, helps the children make safe choices later on when they start having sex.**

- **encourage teenagers to teach their friends about STDs, including HIV/AIDS.**

After a health worker came to speak with a group of women in our community about STDs and AIDs, we began talking about our lives. Some of the women began by saying they did not have anything to worry about. But the more we talked the more we realized that every woman and every man should worry about STDs and AIDS. We thought about how to get men to use condoms and decided that we needed to educate the entire community about the dangers of STDs and AIDS and how to prevent them. We organized a play and got people from the community to act in it. We created a special character called "Commander Condom" to come to the rescue with condoms. Everyone came to watch the play. People enjoyed it and they also learned. Now the men make jokes about "Commander Condom," but they are also more willing to use them.

- Oaxaca, Mexico



Figure

To the health worker:

- **Find out from your local health center, hospital, or Ministry of Health what medicines work best to treat STDs in your community.**
- **Try to start a community pharmacy so that it will be easier for people to get medicines, latex condoms, and spermicides.**
- **Talk to the people you see who have an STD. Give them good information on how to cure their STD, how to keep from infecting others, and how to keep from getting an STD again. Make sure their partners also get treatment.**

- **Include information about preventing STDs and HIV/AIDS in family planning programs.**
- **Do not judge or blame those who come to you for help with an STD.**
- **Respect the privacy of those with STDs or other health problems. Never talk about their problems with others.**

See the chapter on "Sexual Health," for information about:

- sex and *gender roles*
- harmful beliefs about women's sexuality
- how to have safer sex

- feeling pleasure from sex



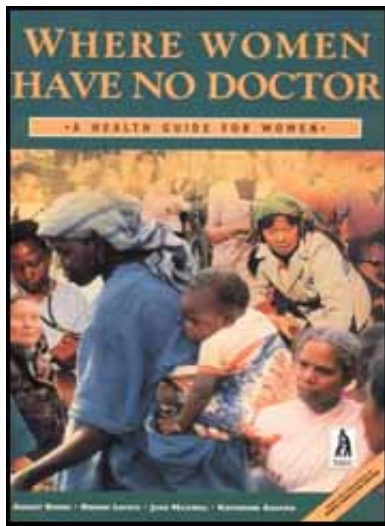
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 **Where Women Have No Doctor - A Health Guide for Women (Hesperian Foundation, 1997, 600 p.)**

 **Chapter 17: AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome)**

 **(introduction...)**

What Are HIV and AIDS?



- 📄 **(introduction...)**
- 📄 **How HIV/AIDS is spread and is not spread**
- 📄 **Why HIV and AIDS Are Different for Women**
- 📄 **Preventing HIV/AIDS**
- 📄 **The HIV Test**
- 📄 **Living Positively with HIV and AIDS**
- 📄 **Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Breastfeeding**
- ☐ **Care for Persons with AIDS**
 - 📄 **(introduction...)**
 - 📄 **Preventing HIV infection at home**
 - 📄 **Staying Healthy for as Long as Possible**
 - ☐ **Common Medical Problems**
 - 📄 **(introduction...)**
 - 📄 **Fever**
 - 📄 **Diarrhea**
 - 📄 **Skin rashes and itching**
 - 📄 **Nausea and vomiting**
 - 📄 **Cough**
 - 📄 **Problems with the mouth and throat**
 - 📄 **Wounds and sores**
 - 📄 **Mental confusion (Dementia)**
 - 📄 **Pain**
- 📄 **Caring for Someone Who Is Near Death**

□ **Working for Change**

📄 **(introduction...)**

📄 **How you can help prevent AIDS**

Where Women Have No Doctor - A Health Guide for Women (Hesperian Foundation, 1997, 600 p.)

Chapter 17: AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome)



Figure

◆ ***AIDS is everyone's problem.***

You must have heard about AIDS by now - on the radio, in the market, from your neighbors, or at the health center. You may think AIDS is not your problem. Yet

millions of people are infected with the *AIDS virus*. More and more of them are women.

We can only protect ourselves from AIDS if we understand what AIDS is, and if we talk about AIDS with our families and friends.

"AIDS is a disease that shines in hush and thrives on secrecy. It was prospering because people were choosing not to talk about it... I wanted to talk about AIDS so that at least my children, and yours, would be spared. They would know and have the information about AIDS before they became sexually active, and be able to talk about it."

- Noerine Kaleeba, Uganda, whose husband died of AIDS

WHY SO MANY WOMEN GET HIV/AIDS

AIDS is spreading fastest in parts of the world where people are poor and do not have education. If there is famine (not enough food), war, or not enough work, people are often forced to move to cities, away from their families. Traditions often break down and sex with new partners is common.

These conditions are especially hard for women. Poor women have even less power to control their lives. Often laws and tradition keep women from getting an education, skills to support themselves, or information about their bodies.

◆ ***Lack of power and information make women more vulnerable to AIDS.***

What Are HIV and AIDS?

HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) is a very small germ, called a virus, that you cannot see. AIDS is a disease that develops later, after a person has been infected with HIV, the AIDS virus.

HIV

When a person becomes infected with HIV, the virus attacks the immune system, the part of your body that fights off infection. HIV slowly kills the cells of the immune system until the body cannot defend itself against germs anymore. Although a person may feel well for only a short time, many people feel well for 5 to 10 years after getting HIV. But eventually the immune system will no longer have enough cells to fight off germs that normally do not make you sick. Because HIV takes many years to make someone sick, most people with HIV feel healthy and do not know they have it.

♦ *As long as you feel well you have HIV, but you do not yet have AIDS.*

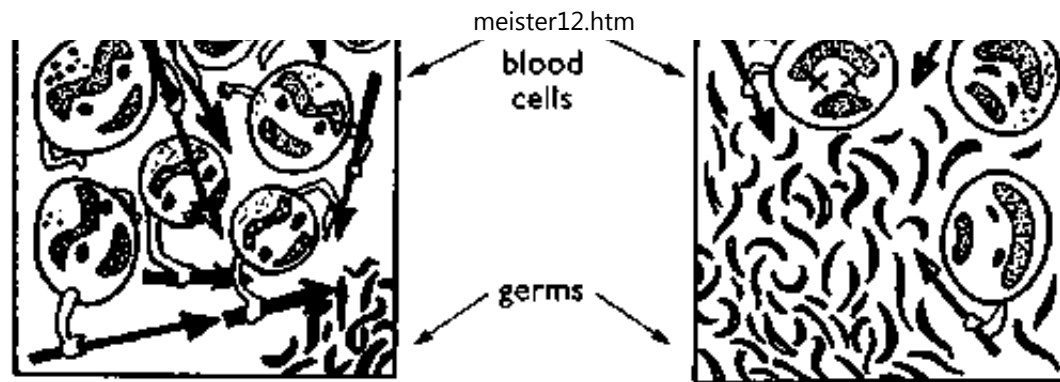
IMPORTANT

You can pass HIV to others as soon as you are infected, even though you look and feel healthy. You cannot tell from looking at a person if he or she has HIV. The only way to know if you are infected is to get the HIV test.



white





Figure

The body has millions of white blood cells that attack germs and fight off infection. HIV kills the white blood cells until there are not enough cells left to attack the germs. This is when the person has AIDS.

AIDS

A person has AIDS when the immune system gets so weak that it can no longer fight off common infections and illnesses. The signs of AIDS are different in different people, and they can be different for women than for men. Often the signs are lasting infection with other common illnesses.

Good *nutrition* and some medicines can help the person's body fight infections caused by AIDS and allow her or him to live longer. But there is no cure for AIDS itself. So after a while, a person infected with HIV will get more and more illnesses until the body is too weak to survive.

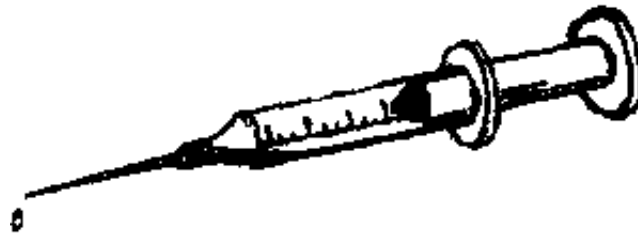
How HIV/AIDS is spread and is not spread

HOW HIV/AIDS IS SPREAD

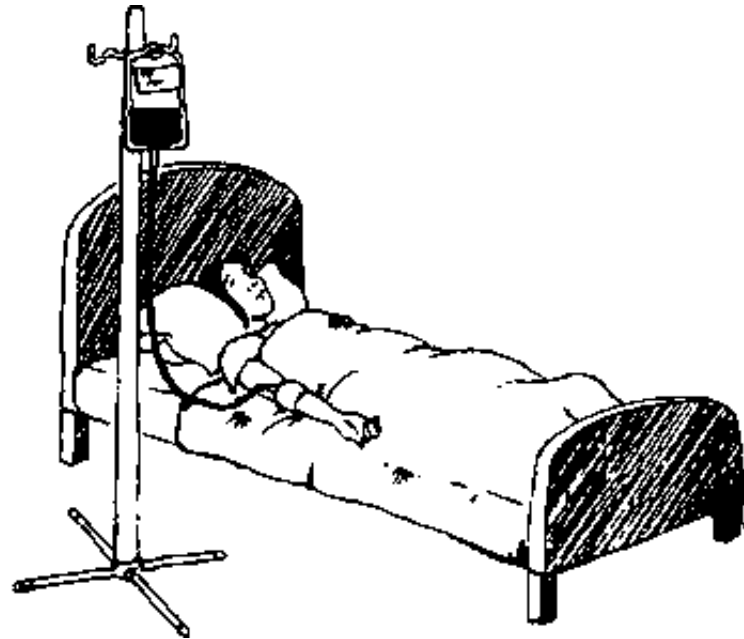
HIV lives in body fluids - such as blood, semen, and the fluids in the *vagina* - of people infected with HIV. The virus is spread when these fluids get into the body of another person. **This means that HIV/AIDS can be spread by:**



unsafe sex with someone who has the virus.



unclean needles or syringes, or any tool that pierces or cuts the skin.



blood transfusions, if the blood has not been tested to be sure it is free from HIV



an infected mother to her baby through pregnancy, birth or breastfeeding.



infected blood that gets into cuts or an open wound of another person.

HOW HIV/AIDS IS NOT SPREAD

HIV does not live outside the human body for more than a few minutes. It cannot live on its own in the air or in water. This means **you cannot give or get HIV in these ways:**



by touching, kissing, or hugging.



by sharing food.



by sharing a bed.



by sharing or washing clothes, towels, bed covers, latrines, or toilets.



by caring for someone with HIV/AIDS.



from insect bites.

Why HIV and AIDS Are Different for Women

HIV and AIDS are different for women because:

- **women get infected with HIV more easily than men do. A man puts his**

semen in the woman's vagina, where it stays for a long time. If there is HIV in semen it can pass easily into a woman's body through her vagina or cervix, especially if there are any cuts or sores.

- **women are often infected at a younger age than men. This is often because young women and girls are less able to refuse unwanted or unsafe sex.**
- **women get more blood transfusions than men because of problems during childbirth.**
- **women become sick with AIDS more quickly after becoming infected with HIV than men do. Poor nutrition and childbearing may make women less able to fight disease.**
- **women are blamed unfairly for the spread of AIDS. But men are just as responsible as women (if not more). For example, they are the ones who buy sex, which is a common way that AIDS spreads.**
- **a pregnant woman infected with HIV can pass it to her baby.**
- **women are usually the caretakers for family members who are sick with AIDS, even if they are sick themselves.**

Preventing HIV/AIDS

You can prevent AIDS in these ways:

- **If possible, have sex with only one partner who has sex only with you.**
- **Practice safer sex - sex that prevents the germs in a man's semen from getting into your vagina, anus, or mouth.**
- **Avoid piercing or cutting the skin with needles or other tools that have not been disinfected between uses.**
- **Avoid blood transfusions except in emergencies.**
- **Do not share razors or toothbrushes.**
- **Do not touch someone else's blood or wound without protection.**



**safer sex
Figure**

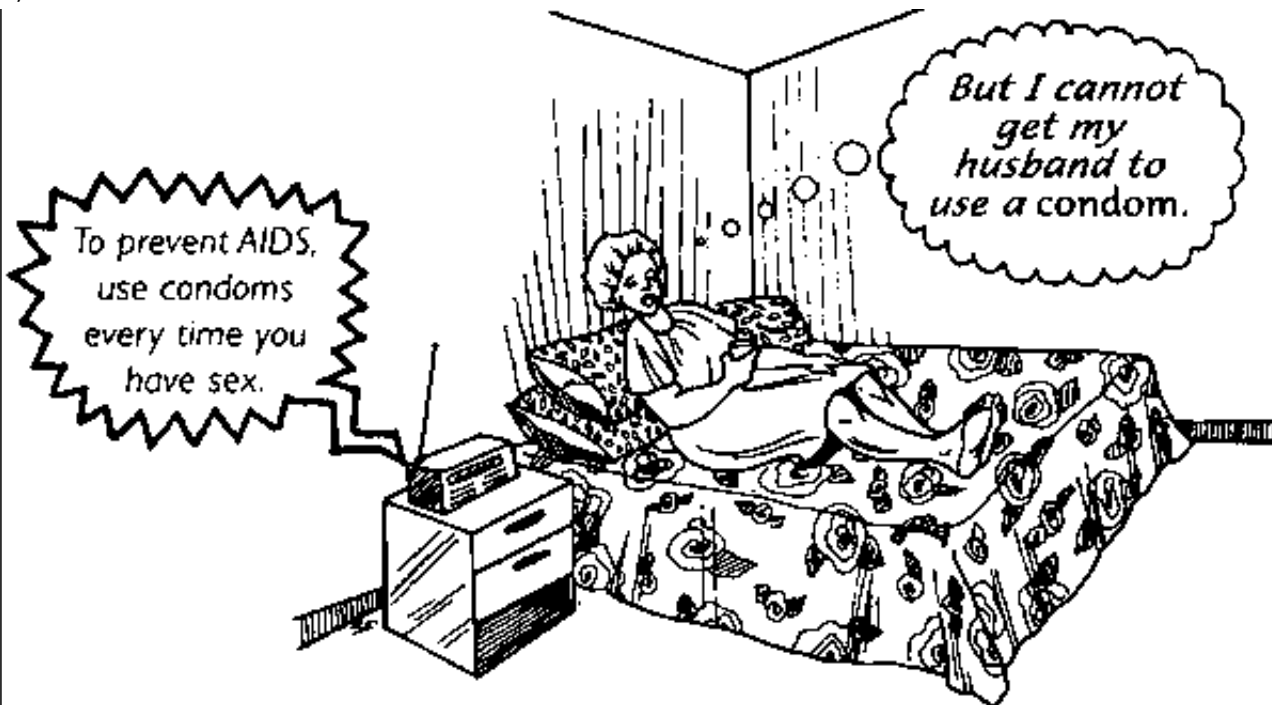


Women and girls should have a right to protect their lives against AIDS. To do this we need

PREVENTING HIV/AIDS IS NOT ALWAYS EASY



Figure



Figure



Figure

The HIV Test

When HIV enters the body, the body starts to make antibodies right away to fight the virus. These antibodies usually show in the blood 4 to 8 weeks later, but it can take as long as 6 months for the body to make enough of them to show up in a test. This time between infection and when the antibodies appear in the blood is called the 'window period'.

◆ Your local Red Cross or Red Crescent may offer testing and counseling at a low cost, Check with your national AIDS control program to find out where you can be tested in your country. It can take about 2 weeks to get the test results.

The HIV test looks for these antibodies in the blood. It is the only way to know if a person has been infected with HIV. It is not a test for AIDS.

A positive HIV test means that you are infected with the virus and your body has made antibodies to HIV. Even if you feel completely well, you can spread the virus to others.

A negative HIV test means 1 of 2 things:

- you are not infected with HIV, or**
- you are infected but have not yet made enough antibodies to HIV to test positive (the window period).**

If you have tested negative for HIV but think you might be infected, you should take the test again in a few months. Sometimes a positive test also needs to be repeated. A health worker can help you decide.

◆ ***If possible, have someone you trust go with you to get your HIV test results.***

THE WINDOW PERIOD

This is different for different people. Here is an example of how long the window period was for one woman:

1. *He was HIV-infected. They had unprotected sex. She became infected too.*



Figure

2. *Three weeks later, she tested negative for HIV. But she was still infected and could give the virus to others. She was in the 'window period'.*



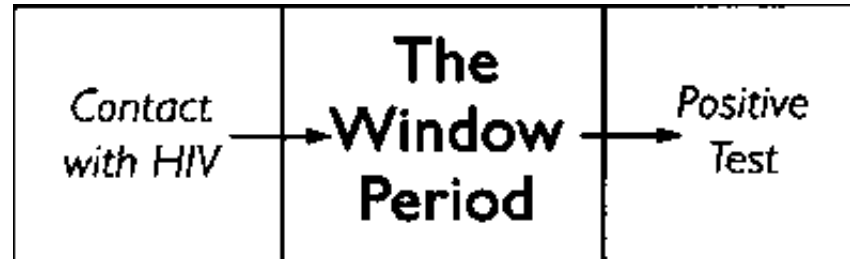
Figure

3. *Nine weeks later she tested positive for HIV.*



Figure

4. The time between her first contact with HIV, and when **antibodies** appear in her blood is the **window period**.

**Figure**

Since the window period can be as long as 6 months, it is best to wait that long after being exposed before getting the HIV test. If you think you may have come into contact with HIV again during that 6-month window period, you will need to get another test in 6 months from the date of the new contact.

WHEN SHOULD YOU HAVE THE HIV TEST?

It is usually more important to change unsafe behavior than to have an HIV test. But you and your partner may want to be tested if:

- **you want to get married (or start a faithful sexual relationship with one person) or have children.**
- **you, your partner, or your baby have signs of AIDS.**
- **you or your partner have had unsafe sex.**

◆ ***The HIV test should always be done:***

- ***with your permission.***
- ***with counseling before and after the test.***
- ***with privacy. No one should know the results except you and those you want to know.***

The advantages of knowing the test results

If your test is negative, you can learn how to protect yourself so that you stay negative and never get HIV/AIDS.

If your test is positive, you can:

- **prevent the spread of HIV to your partner.**
- **get treatment early for health problems.**
- **make changes in how you live so you can stay healthy longer.**
- **get support from other HIV-infected people in your community.**
- **plan for yourself and your family's future.**

The disadvantages of knowing the test results

You may have many different feelings if you find out you are infected. It is normal at first to be shocked and deny that your test results are positive. You may also feel anger and despair, and blame yourself or others.



AIDS is not a curse or a punishment.

It often helps to talk with someone, such as the health worker who gave you the test results or someone close to you. But be careful who you tell. Your husband or partner may blame you, even if he is also infected with HIV. Other people may act afraid and shun you, because they do not understand HIV/AIDS or how it is spread. If possible, see a trained HIV/ AIDS counselor, who can help you decide who to tell and how to face this change in your life.

IMPORTANT

A negative test does not mean that you will never become infected with HIV. If you practice unsafe sex, you can still get infected.



Figure

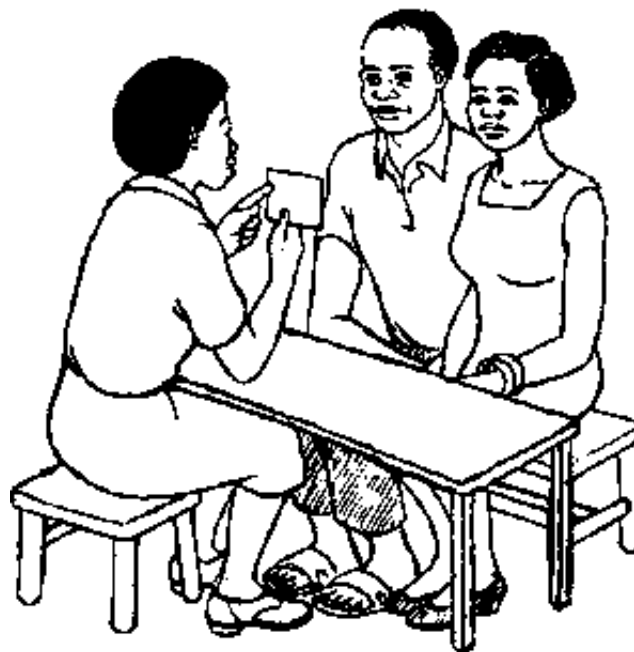
Practice safer sex.

Counseling

A counselor is someone who listens and talks with a person and his or her family to help them to cope with their worries, concerns, and fears, and to make their own decisions.

◆ *Counseling for HIV-infected people and their families can mean the difference between hope and despair. As an HIV-infected woman from Kenya says, "When*

you meet a good counselor, you feel as if you have healed.”



Figure

Counseling is important throughout the life of a person with HIV, not only when they first discover they are infected. If you are infected, a skilled counselor may be able to help you:

- **decide who to tell about being HIV-infected.**
- **find the support of others who are also HIV-infected.**
- **get the care you need from health centers.**
- **explain to your family what it means to be HIV-infected, and how HIV is**

spread. This will help them to accept and care for you without being afraid.

- **understand how to stay healthy for as long as possible.**
- **plan for your future.**
- **learn how to be sexual in a safe way.**

If you are a health worker or a leader of a religious group, you are in an ideal position to get training to help those suffering with the problems of HIV. Some people who have lost family members to AIDS have learned to counsel others about living with HIV.

Living Positively with HIV and AIDS

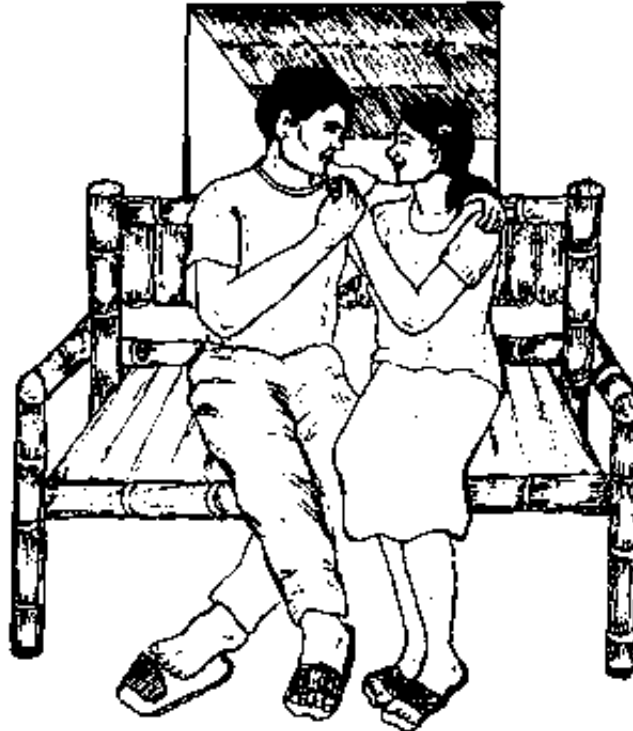
◆ ***Most people with HIV can be healthy for many years.***

Modern medicine and traditional healers still do not have a cure for AIDS. But most people with HIV can be healthy for many years. During this time it can help to:

- **make the best of every moment of your life.**
- **spend time with friends and family.**
- **try to keep active by doing your daily work.**
- **be sexual if you want to. Enjoying sexual touch can help you stay healthier longer**

If your partner is HIV infected

Although it is risky, if you practice safer sex carefully, you can continue to have sex with an HIV infected partner without becoming infected yourself. Besides using safer sex methods, watch your own health carefully. Watch for breaks in the skin or other places where infection could occur. And remember, there are other ways to be sexual besides having sex. It is safe to hug, to hold someone in your arms, and to kiss them.



Figure

- **Try joining or starting a group of people with HIV and AIDS. Some people with HIV and AIDS work together to educate the community, to provide home care to those who are sick with AIDS, and to support the rights of people with HIV and AIDS.**



**support groups
Figure**



Figure

- **Look after your spiritual and mental health. Your faith and traditions can bring you hope and strength.**



**mental health
Figure**

- **Think about the future. If you have children:**

- **spend time with them now, and give them care and guidance.**

- **make arrangements for family members to look after them when you are no longer able to do so.**

- **make a *will*. If you have some money, a house, or property, try to make sure that they will go to those you want to have them. Sometimes women who are not legally married cannot leave their possessions to their children and other family members. So it may be helpful to get legally married in order to leave your possessions to those you want to have them.**

- ◆ ***If you have children, make staying healthy for them a goal.***

Take care of your health

- **Take care of medical problems early.** Each infection can weaken your immune system more.

- **Eat nutritious food to keep your body strong.** The same foods that are good to eat when you are healthy are good for you when you are sick. Buy nutritious food instead of spending money on *vitamin* tablets or *injections*.

- **Avoid tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs.**

- **Practice safer sex** for your own health as well as your partner's. Safer sex can prevent new infections and unplanned pregnancies that could weaken the immune system even

more.

- **Try to get enough rest and exercise.** This will help your body stay strong to fight infection.
- **Prevent infection by washing often.**



Figure

Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Breastfeeding

Preventing pregnancy may keep you healthier and help you live longer. If you are HIV infected and already pregnant, it is especially important to take good care of yourself.



Figure

PREGNANCY

Pregnancy can be dangerous for a woman with HIV or AIDS. During pregnancy and childbirth she is more likely to have some of the following problems than a woman who does not have HIV or AIDS:

- **lose the baby during pregnancy (miscarriage)**
- **fevers, infections, and poor health**
- **serious infections after giving birth, which are hard to treat and may threaten her life**

In addition, her baby may:

- **be infected with HIV.**
- **be born too soon, or be sickly and die.**

Some women who become infected with HIV may still want to get pregnant Or they may have no way to prevent pregnancy.

If you want to get pregnant

If you are not sure whether you or your partner are infected with HIV and you can get a test for HIV, both of you should wait 6 months before having the test. While you wait, use condoms every time you have sex, and have sex with only each other.

If you cannot get an HIV test, you can reduce your risk by following this advice:

- **Have sex with a condom, except during your *fertile time*.**
- **When you are not fertile, practice safer sex.**
- **Never have sex when there are signs of an STD.**



**your fertile time,
220 and 233
Figure**

About 1 out of 3 babies born to HIV-infected mothers becomes infected.



This baby is HIV positive.



These 2 babies are HIV negative.

A baby can become infected while it is in your *womb*, or during birth, or while breastfeeding. Some anti-viral drugs (like AZT) are being tested that may reduce the risk of passing HIV to your baby. Check with a health worker who has been trained to treat HIV/AIDS during pregnancy.

An HIV-positive mother always passes antibodies (but not always HIV itself) to her unborn baby. This means that a new baby will always test positive for HIV because the mother's antibodies show up in the baby's blood. But many babies later have a negative test. This means they were not actually infected with HIV itself. It is impossible to tell from the usual HIV test if the baby has the virus or just the antibodies until the baby is 18 months old. At that time, the mother's antibodies will disappear from its blood.

CHILDBIRTH

If you think your midwife or birth attendant would be understanding, tell her that you are HIV infected so she can protect both of you from infection.

**After the birth, wash your genitals 2 times a day with mild soap and clean water
Learn the signs of infection after birth and get treated immediately if necessary.**



**infection after
childbirth
Figure**

BREASTFEEDING

HIV infection is sometimes passed to the baby in breast milk. No one knows yet how often this happens or why it happens to some babies and not others. There is more HIV in the breast milk of mothers who have become infected recently, and in those who are very sick with AIDS.



**when the mother
is sick
Figure**

Some mothers find a friend or relative who is not HIV infected who can breastfeed their baby for them. This can be the safest choice for your baby. But even if you are HIV infected, it is usually better to breastfeed than to use other milks or *formula*. In many communities the risk of *diarrhea* and *malnutrition* from other milks is greater than the risk of HIV, especially in the baby's first 6 months of life.

After 6 months, when your baby is bigger and stronger, there is less danger of diarrhea and infection. You can then switch to other milks and feed your baby other foods. This way your baby has many of the *benefits* of breastfeeding with less risk of getting HIV.



**other foods
Figure**

Talking with a trained health worker about breastfeeding and HIV can help you answer some of the following difficult questions and make a decision about whether to breastfeed your baby:

- **Are you certain you have HIV or AIDS? Perhaps you should be tested.**
- **Do children in your area often get sick or die from infections, diarrhea, or poor nutrition? If the answer is yes, then breastfeeding may be best.**
- **Are other clean, nutritious milks or formula available? You will need to**

buy them for at least 6 months, which is very costly. You will also need enough clean, boiled water and some training in how to feed other milks or formula with a cup or spoon.

- **Is there another woman who can breastfeed your baby? Are you certain she is not infected with HIV?**



Figure

Whatever you choose to do, do not blame yourself if your baby becomes infected with HIV. There is no way to know for sure how to protect your baby.

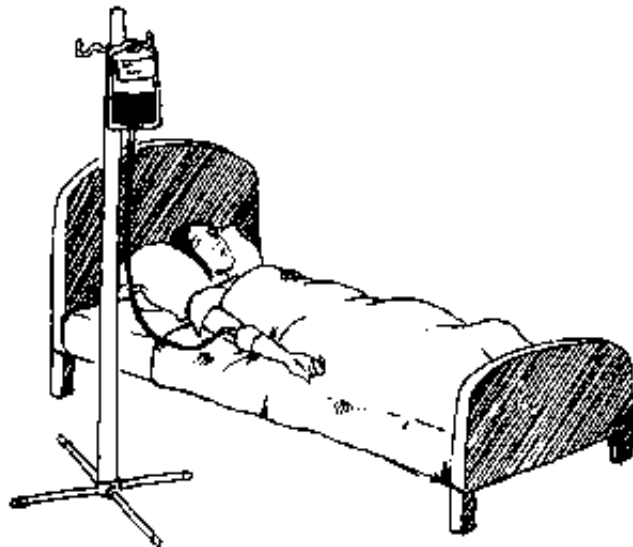
Care for Persons with AIDS

The health and medical problems of AIDS may last a long time. These problems can take a lot of the energy and resources of the sick person and her or his family.

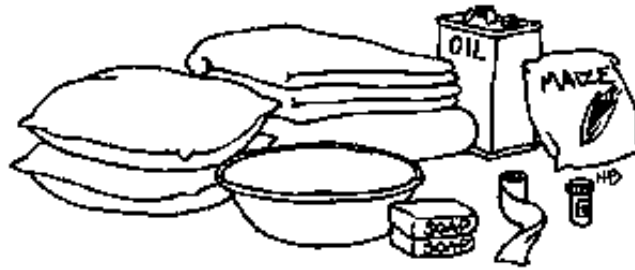
If you have AIDS, you will probably need to see a health worker or go to a clinic from time to time to have an infection treated. But you may never need to stay in the hospital. You may be more comfortable at home, cared for by family members in familiar surroundings.

If you have a problem that does not get better with home treatment, try to find a health worker, clinic, or doctor you trust who is experienced with AIDS. Then go to the same person whenever you have a problem. Going from clinic to clinic wastes time, energy, and money.

A stay in the hospital usually costs more than the food and medicine needed for good care at home.



Figure

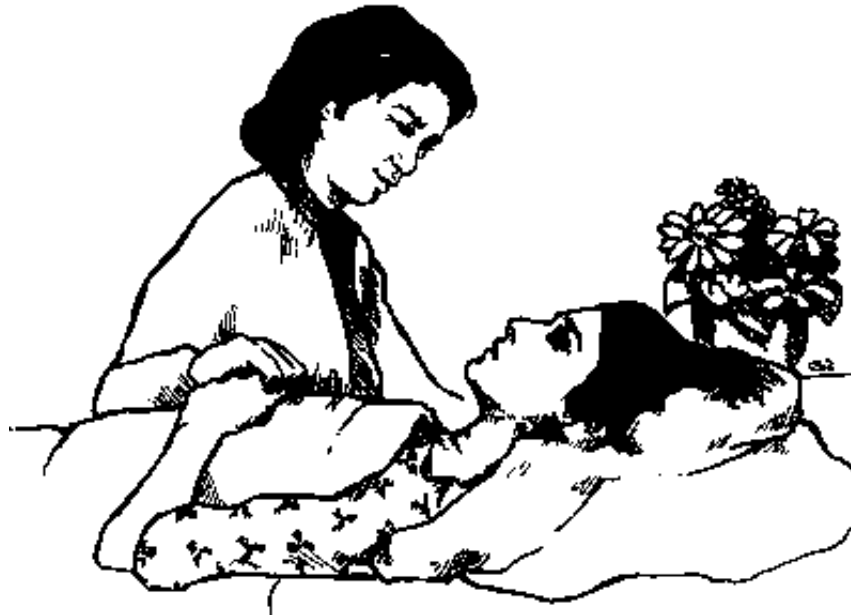


Figure

◆ ***A good counselor is key to helping you care for someone with AIDS at home.***

Much of the work in caring for sick people at home is done by women, who are usually the family's caregivers. If you are caring for someone with AIDS, be sure to take care of your own needs, too. Try to get help from other family members, friends and people in the community. Community clubs, religious groups, youth clubs, and AIDS self-help groups may assist you.

When Rosa was in bed because of *AIDS complications*, her mother kept a cheerful attitude. Every day she bathed her daughter dressed her with nice clothes, and put a little flower next to her bed. Rosa was not hungry but her mother arranged the food in a way that could make her want to eat. The family would talk to Rosa about daily life, and their work and community. With their good humor and positive comments, Rosa felt that she was not cast aside. Even though Rosa was often tired or didn't feel well, the family arranged for her friends to visit her in the moments she felt better. Music, conversation, and good spirit made the house full of life. Rosa felt that she was loved and needed, and that AIDS could not ruin her closeness and her time with her family.



Figure

Preventing HIV infection at home

If you follow these rules, there is no risk of spreading HIV from an infected person to others around her, or of getting HIV yourself:

- **Avoid touching body fluids, like blood, vomit, stool, and urine.**
- **Do not share anything that touches blood. This includes razors, needles, any sharp instruments that cut the skin, and toothbrushes. If you must share such things, *disinfect* them before another person uses them. If you are unable to disinfect them, boil them in water for 20 minutes.**



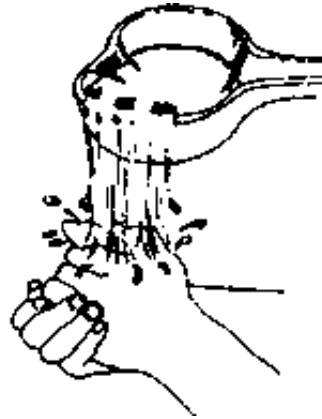
Figure



**disinfecting
Figure**

◆ ***Burn or bury soiled bandages that cannot be rewashed.***

- **Keep wounds covered. Both caregivers and persons with HIV or AIDS should cover all open wounds with a clean bandage or cloth.**
- **Use a piece of plastic or paper gloves, or a big leaf to handle dirty bandages, cloths, blood, vomit, or stool.**



Figure

- **Wash your hands with soap and water after changing dirty bedding and clothes.**
- **Keep bedding and clothing clean. This helps keep sick people comfortable and helps prevent skin problems. To clean clothing or sheets stained with blood, *diarrhea*, or other body fluids:**
 - **keep them separate from other household laundry.**
 - **hold an unstained part and rinse off any body fluids with water. Be especially careful if there are large amounts of blood, such as after childbirth.**
 - **wash the bedding and clothing in soapy water, hang to dry - if possible in the sun - and fold or iron as usual.**



You will not get HIV from washing the clothes of an infected person if you follow the advice above.

◆ The following things are helpful but not necessary:

- Add bleach to the soapy water and soak 10 minutes before washing.**
- Wear gloves or plastic bags on your hands.**



Figure

Staying Healthy for as Long as Possible

When a person has AIDS, the body's immune system is no longer able to fight off common infections and illnesses. The immune system gets weaker with each illness, making it even less able to fight infection the next time. This continues until the person's body is too weak to survive.

Preventing infections and illness is the best way to slow down the weakening of the immune system. It is also important to treat any infections to keep them from spreading or getting worse. This way a person with AIDS can stay healthy for as long as possible.

Preventing some infections with medicines

For persons with AIDS, regular use of the *antibiotic* co-trimoxazole may help prevent some kinds of *pneumonia* and diarrhea. You can start taking it as soon as you begin to fall ill from serious *lung* infections, diarrhea, and skin infections.

Take: co-trimoxazole 480 mg (80 mg trimethoprim and 400 mg sulfamethoxazole), 1 tablet by mouth daily, **or** 2 tablets by mouth 2 times a week. Drink a lot of water every day if you take co-trimoxazole.

IMPORTANT

Allergic reactions to co-trimoxazole are more common in persons with AIDS. Stop taking it if you get a new skin rash or any other sign of drug allergy. Taking antibiotics regularly usually causes problems with fungal infections of all kinds: in the mouth, on the skin, in the vagina. You may be able to prevent some of

these infections by eating yogurt or sour milk products every day.

Women will usually have more problems with *yeast infections* of the vagina when they take antibiotics. Eating yogurt or sour milk, or sitting in a bowl of water with yogurt or vinegar in it can help.

MENTAL HEALTH



Figure

Good mental health is very important for staying healthy and avoiding illness. AIDS places a heavy stress on the mind and the emotions. Often people feel very afraid and tense (anxiety), or feel sadness or have no feelings at all (depression). Sometimes these feelings are so strong they cause physical signs. Anxiety and depression can also weaken the body and make a person more likely to get sick.

It is important to try to tell the difference between signs of illness that are caused

by physical problems, and signs that are caused by anxiety or depression. Knowing the cause of a problem may make it easier to treat. It is also important to try and overcome these feelings so that they do not contribute to making a person with AIDS become sicker.



**signs of anxiety and
depression
Figure**

Common Medical Problems

A person with AIDS can get sick very easily from many different common medical problems. The rest of this chapter has information about the most common of these problems and how an individual or family may care for them.

Just because someone has one of these problems does not mean she has AIDS. This information will be helpful to anyone suffering from one of these illnesses.

◆ For the medical problems mentioned in this chapter, also see *Where There Is No Doctor or another general medical book.*

Fever

Fevers often come and go. It is hard to know if the fever is from an infection that

can be treated, like *tuberculosis*, *pelvic inflammatory disease (PID)*, or *malaria*, or if it is from HIV itself. If the fever is caused by an infection, then make sure the infection itself is also treated.

To check for fever, use a *thermometer*, or put the back of one hand on the sick person's forehead and the other on your own. If the sick person feels warmer, she probably has a fever.



Figure



taking the
temperature

Figure

Treatment:

- **Remove extra clothing and let fresh air into the room.**

- **Cool the skin by pouring water over it, wiping the skin with wet cloths, or putting wet cloths on the chest and forehead and fanning them.**
- **Give plenty of liquids even if the person is not thirsty. With fever it is easy to become dehydrated (lose too much water).**
- **Take a medicine like paracetamol, aspirin, or ibuprofen to help reduce fever.**
- **Keep the skin clean and dry. Use lotion or corn starch to help prevent sores and rashes.**

Get help when:

- **the temperature is very high.**
- **the fever goes on for many days.**
- **there is coughing, difficulty breathing, and loss of weight.**
- **there is a stiff neck, severe pain, or sudden, severe diarrhea with the fever.**
- **the person with the fever is pregnant or recently had a baby, miscarriage, or *abortion*.**
- **the person is being treated for malaria, and the fever has not gone away after the first treatment.**

- **there is discharge from the vagina and pain in the belly with the fever**



Figure



pneumonia, 304

**tuberculosis,
303 and 387**

**infection after
abortion, 255**

pelvic infection, 272

Figure

Diarrhea

Diarrhea is passing 3 or more loose or watery stools in a day. Passing many normal stools is not the same as having diarrhea. Diarrhea may come and go and can be hard to cure. The most common causes of diarrhea in persons with AIDS are infections in the *intestines* from unclean food or water, infection because of HIV, or the *side effects* of some medicines.

Diarrhea can cause:

- ***malnutrition*, if the food passes through the body so quickly that the body cannot use it. Also, people with diarrhea often do not eat because they are not hungry.**
- **dehydration, if the body loses more liquid in the stools than you take in. Dehydration happens faster in hot climates and in people who have fever.**

Signs of dehydration:

- **thirst**
- **little or no urine**
- **dry mouth**
- **loss of stretchiness of the skin**
- **feeling *dizzy* when standing up**



Lift the skin between two fingers...



...if the skin fold does not fall right back to normal, the person is dehydrated.



IMPORTANT

If someone has these signs and is also vomiting, she needs liquids in the vein (IV) or in the rectum. Get medical help fast. Severe dehydration is an emergency.

Treatment:

- **Prevent dehydration by drinking more liquids than usual. Fruit juices, coconut milk, sweetened weak tea, gruel, soup, rice water, and rehydration drink are good for fighting dehydration. Even if the person does not feel thirsty, she should still sip something every 5 to 10 minutes.**
- **Keep eating. Try to eat small amounts of foods that are easy for the body**

to digest. Cook food well, and then mash and grind it. Some good foods are cereals mixed with beans, meat, or fish; dairy products, such as milk, cheese and yogurt; and bananas. Do not eat uncooked vegetables, whole grains, fruit peels, hot peppers, or food or drink with a lot of sugar. These make diarrhea worse.



Figure

Take medicine only for these kinds of diarrhea:

- **Sudden, severe diarrhea with fever (with or without blood in the stool). Take co-trimoxazole 480 mg (80 mg trimethoprim and 400 mg**

sulfamethoxazole), 2 tablets twice a day for 10 days. If you are allergic to sulfa drugs, take norfloxacin instead, 400 mg, one time only. If you are no better after 2 days, see a health worker.

• Bloody diarrhea without fever, which can be caused by amoebas (tiny animals that live in water or in the intestines). Take metronidazole 500 mg, 3 times a day for 7 days. If you are not better after 2 days, see a health worker.

• When someone has diarrhea for a long time, she may get a red, sore area around the *anus*. It may help to apply petroleum gel or zinc oxide cream each time after passing stool. The person may also get piles (*hemorrhoids*).

♦ *If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, do not take norfloxacin. For more information about these medicines, see the "Green Pages."*



**piles
Figure**

Get help if the person:

- has the signs of dehydration.**
- cannot eat or drink as usual.**
- does not seem to be getting better no matter what she does.**

- **has a high fever.**
- **passes many watery stools in a day.**
- **passes bloody stools the do not go away with medicine.**
- **is also vomiting.**

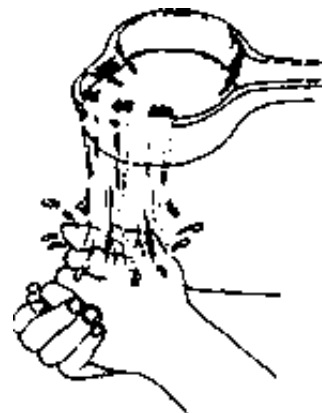


Figure

Prevention:

- **Drink clean water. Purify your water before using it in food or drink.**
- **Eat clean, safe food. Make sure raw foods are washed or peeled, and that meat is well cooked. Protect food from dirt, flies, crawling insects and animals, which can give you germs.**
- **Always wash your hands:**

- after using or helping someone use the *latrine* or toilet.
- after cleaning soiled children or sick people.
- before making food or drink.



Figure

- **Protect your community's water source.**



clean water, 155

safe food, 156

washing your
hands, 522

Figure

Skin rashes and itching

It is often difficult to know what causes skin rashes and itching. Many skin problems can be helped by keeping the body clean. Try to wash once a day with mild soap and clean water

If the skin becomes too dry, wash less often and do not use soap. Try rubbing petroleum gel, glycerin, or vegetable oils into the skin after bathing. Wear loose cotton clothing.



Figure

Allergic reactions

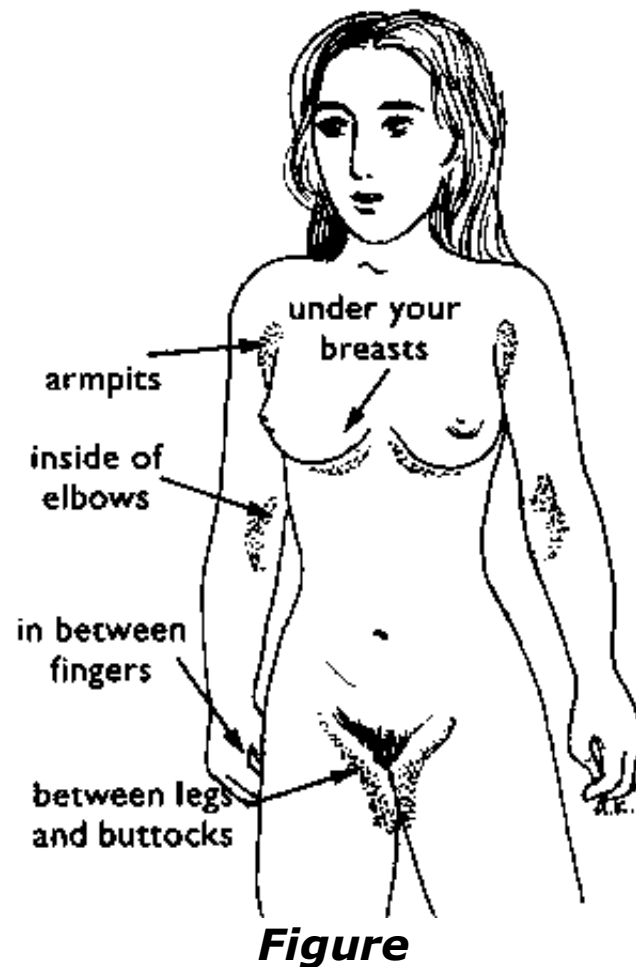
Allergic reactions, which often cause an itchy rash, are more common in people with AIDS. Medicines that contain sulfa (like co-trimoxazole) may cause especially bad reactions. If you are using these medicines and you get an itchy rash, itchy

eyes, vomiting or dizziness, stop taking them immediately and see a health worker. She may be able to give you a non-sulfa medicine that will work.

Fungal infections (yeast, Candida)

Fungal infections are difficult to describe because they can look like many different things. Some fungal infections look like round, red, or scaly patches that itch. Women with AIDS can also get frequent yeast infections in the vagina.

You may have a fungal infection if you have a skin problem in one of these areas:



Figure

Treatment:

- **If you have red, itchy patches, keep the area clean and dry. If possible, keep the area uncovered and open to the air and sunlight.**
- **Apply nystatin cream 3 times a day or Gentian Violet 2 times a day until the rash is completely gone.**

- **If you have a very bad fungal infection, taking ketoconazole by mouth may help. Take one 200 mg tablet each day for 10 days (but do not take this medicine if you are pregnant).**

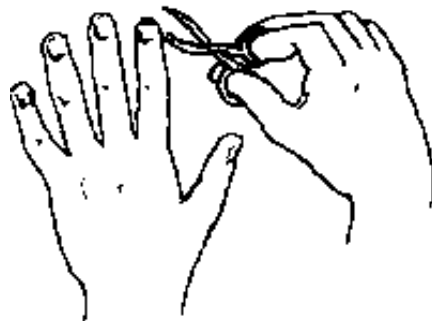
Brown or purple patches on the mouth or skin

These patches are caused by a cancer of the blood vessels or *lymph nodes* called Kaposi's sarcoma. Medicines are not helpful. If you are having problems, like difficulty eating because of patches in your mouth, see a health worker.

Itching

Treatment without medicines:

- **Cool the skin or fan it.**
- **Avoid heat and hot water on the skin.**
- **Avoid scratching, which causes more itching and sometimes infection. Cut the fingernails short and keep them clean to avoid infection.**



Figure

- **Use cool cloths soaked in water from boiled and strained oatmeal, or plant medicines from local healers.**

These can also help itching:

- tincture of tea tree from Australia
- juice from aloe vera plants



Figure

Treatment with medicines (use any one of these):

- **Apply calamine lotion with a clean cloth as needed.**
- **Apply small amounts of 1% hydrocortisone cream or ointment 3 times a day.**
- **Take an antihistamine, such as diphenhydramine or hydroxyzine, by**

mouth. Take 25 mg, 4 times a day. Antihistamines may make you sleepy.

◆ Antihistamines should be used with caution by women who are pregnant or breastfeeding (see the "Green Pages").

Herpes zoster (shingles)

Shingles is an infection caused by a herpes virus. It usually begins as a painful rash with blisters, which may then break open. It is most common on the face, back, and chest. The area may burn and be very painful. The rash may start to heal in a few weeks, but the pain may last longer.



Figure

Treatment:

- **Apply calamine lotion 2 times a day to help with pain and itching.**
- **Keep sores dry. Cover with a loose bandage if clothing rubs the sores.**
- **To prevent infection, apply Gentian Violet liquid. If the sores do become infected, see Wounds and Sores.**
- **Pain medicine is often needed.**
- **The medicine acyclovir may help.**

Do not touch your eyes because shingles can damage your eyesight and can cause blindness.

Nausea and vomiting



Figure

If nausea and vomiting prevent a person from eating or drinking, she can become weak, malnourished, and dehydrated. For some people, nausea or vomiting may go on day after day. Nausea and vomiting may be caused by:

- **infections.**
- **some medicines.**
- **problems with the *stomach* and intestines.**
- **HIV infection itself.**

Treatment:

- **Take small bites of dry food (bread, crackers, chapati, tortilla) when you wake up in the morning.**
- **Try to avoid the smell of food as it cooks. If a food or smell seems to cause nausea, avoid that food.**
- **Drink small amounts of mint, ginger, or cinnamon tea.**
- **Lick a lemon.**
- **Clean the teeth and rinse the mouth often, to get rid of the bad taste after vomiting.**
- **Let fresh air into the house or room often.**
- **Soak a cloth in cool water and put it on the forehead.**

- **If the problem is caused by a medicine, see if another medicine can be used instead.**



**other medicines
Figure**

If vomiting is severe:

- 1. Do not drink or eat for 2 hours.**
- 2. Then, for the next 2 hours, sip 3 tablespoons of water, rehydration drink, or other clear liquid every hour. Slowly increase the amount of liquid to 4 to 6 tablespoonfuls every hour. If the person does not vomit, keep increasing the amount of liquid.**
- 4. If the person cannot stop vomiting, use promethazine 25 mg to 50 mg every 6 hours as needed.**
- 5. As nausea gets better, start to eat small amounts of food again. Start with plain foods such as bread, rice, cassava, or porridge.**



rehydration drink Figure

When to get help:

- **The person cannot keep any food or drink in her body for 24 hours.**
- **The person vomiting has pain in the belly or a high fever**
- **The vomiting is very strong, it is dark green or dark brown, it smells like stool, or has blood in it.**
- **The person has signs of dehydration.**

Cough

Coughing is the body's way of cleaning the breathing system and getting rid of mucus. Coughing is also a common sign of lung problems, such as pneumonia or tuberculosis. The lungs make more mucus when they are irritated or infected.

♦ *DO NOT smote if you have a cough.*

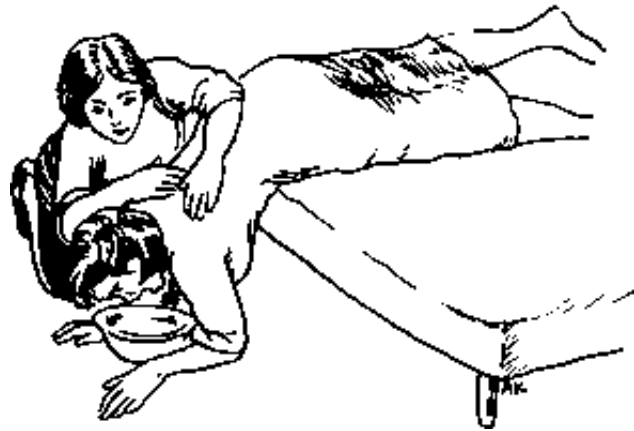
When a cough produces mucus, do not take medicine to stop the cough. Instead, do something to help loosen and bring up the mucus. This will make the cough heal faster

◆ ***Persons with AIDS often get pneumonia or TB. For more information, see below.***

Treatment:

- **Drink lots of water. Water is better than any medicine. It loosens the mucus so you can cough it up more easily.**
- **Cough several times during the day to clear the lungs. Be sure to cover your mouth.**
- **Keep active by walking, or by turning in bed and sitting up. This helps the mucus come out of the lungs.**
- **Soothe the throat by drinking tea with lemon and honey, or your own herbal remedy. Cough syrups that you buy are more expensive and no more helpful.**
- **If the cough is very bad and keeps you awake at night, take codeine, 30 mg, or codeine cough syrup.**

Have someone hit you on the back of the chest (postural drainage). This can make it easier to cough up the mucus.



Figure

IMPORTANT

If you cough up yellow, green, or bloody mucus, the cough could be caused by pneumonia or TB, and you will need special medicines.

TUBERCULOSIS (TB)

Tuberculosis (TB) is a serious infection caused by a germ that usually affects the lungs. The signs of AIDS and TB are similar, but they are different diseases. Most men, women, and children with TB do not have AIDS.

But someone with AIDS can get TB very easily because the person's body is too weak to fight it. In 1 out of every 3 people who die from AIDS, it is TB that actually kills them.

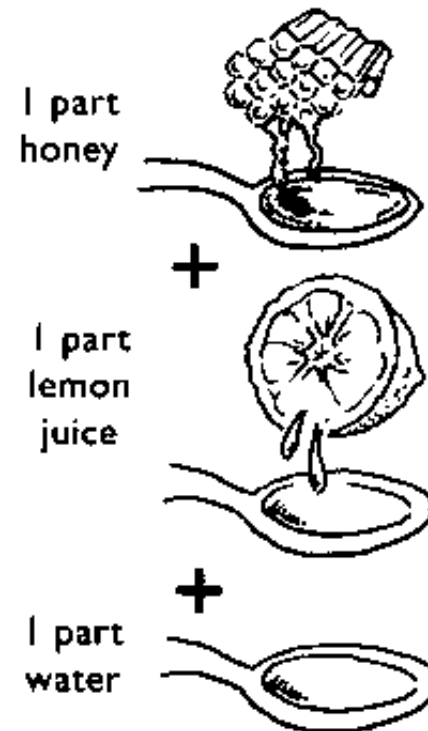
A woman infected with HIV/AIDS is even more likely to get TB if her body is also weak from many pregnancies, poor nutrition and weak blood (*anemia*).

TB can be cured, even in persons with AIDS, so it is important to get treatment

early. But people with AIDS should never take thiacetazone for TB. For complete information, see the chapter on "Tuberculosis".

You can make this syrup for all kinds of cough, especially a dry cough. Take 1 teaspoon every 2 or 3 hours.

Mix:



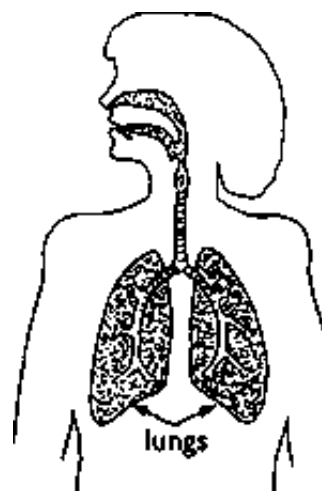
Figure

Pneumonia

Pneumonia is caused by germs that infect the small breathing tubes deep in the

lungs. Old people and very sick or weak people often get pneumonia.

Pneumonia can be very serious for people with AIDS. It should be treated with antibiotics right away. Sometimes pneumonia must be treated in the hospital with medicines in the vein (IV).



Figure

Signs:

- **Breaths are small and fast (more than 30 breaths a minute in an adult). Sometimes the nostrils open wide with each breath.**
- **You feel as if you cannot get enough air**
- **You have a sudden, often high, fever.**
- **You cough up mucus that is green, rust-colored, or bloody.**

- **You feel very ill.**

Treatment:

- **Take co-trimoxazole for 10 days or more (see the “Green Pages”).**
- **Drink plenty of liquids.**
- **Try to bring the fever down.**
- **If you are no better in 24 hours or if you are getting worse, get medical help right away.**

Problems with the mouth and throat

Problems with the mouth, or with other parts of the body that food passes through, can keep a person from eating normally. She may then become weak, malnourished, and have a harder time fighting infections. She should try to:

- **eat small amounts of food often.**
- **add vegetable oil or groundnut paste (peanut butter) to foods to give more energy.**
- **avoid uncooked vegetables. They are hard for the body to digest and may have germs.**
- **drink a lot of liquids and watch for dehydration.**



Figure

Using a straw to drink can help with painful mouth problems.

Soreness in the mouth and throat

Many people with AIDS have soreness in the mouth, and problems with their teeth and gums. Try to:

- **eat soft foods - not hard or crunchy foods.**
- **eat plain foods - not spicy foods.**
- **use a straw to drink liquids and soups.**
- **try cold foods, drinks, or ice to help ease pain.**

Sores, cracks, and blisters around the mouth

Painful blisters and sores (also called *cold sores* or fever blisters) on the lips can be caused by the *herpes virus*. A healthy person can get these sores after a cold or fever. Someone with AIDS can get these sores at any time. The sores may last a

long time, but they usually go away on their own. To help prevent infection, apply Gentian Violet to the sores. A medicine called acyclovir may also help (see the "Green Pages"). Wash your hands after touching the sores.



Figure

◆ Cracks and sores in the corner of the mouth can also be caused by malnutrition.

White patches in the mouth (thrush)

Thrush is a fungal infection that causes white patches and soreness on the skin inside the mouth, on the tongue, and sometimes down the tube that connects the mouth and stomach (esophagus). This can cause pain in the chest.



Figure

The patches look like milk curds stuck to the cheek or tongue. If the patches can be scraped off, it is probably thrush. Thrush happens more often when someone is taking antibiotics.

Treatment:

Gently scrub the tongue and gums with a soft toothbrush or clean cloth 3 or 4 times a day. Then rinse the mouth with salt water or lemon water and spit it out (do not swallow). In addition, use any ONE of these remedies:

1. Suck a lemon if it is not too painful. The acid slows the growth of the fungus. Or,

2. Rinse the mouth with 1% Gentian Violet liquid 2 times a day. Do not swallow. Or,

3. Put 1 ml of nystatin solution in the mouth and hold it there 1 minute and then swallow it. Do this 3 or 4 times a day for 5 days. Or,

4. If thrush is very bad, ketoconazole may help. Take one 200 mg tablet, 2 times a day for 14 days (but do not take this medicine if you are pregnant).

Wounds and sores

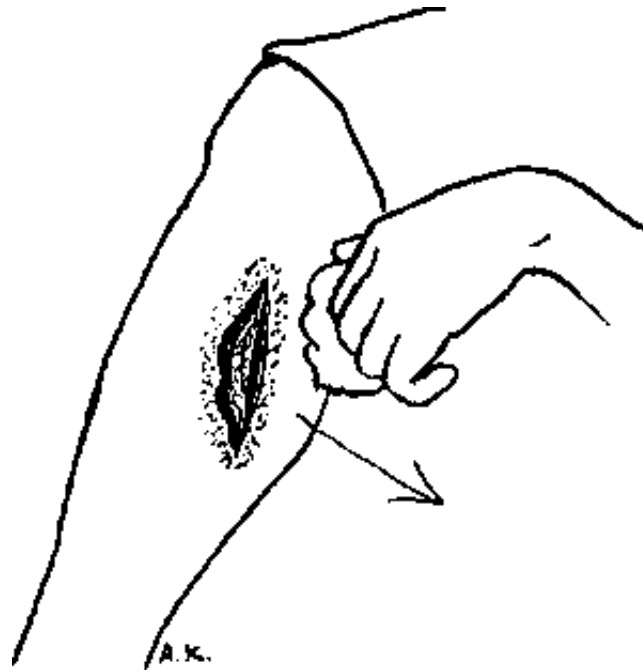
Wounds are caused by an injury that breaks the skin. Sores are often caused by *bacteria* or pressure on the skin (*pressure sores*). They can happen very easily to people who stay in bed a long time. Take special care of any cut, wound, or open sore so that it does not become infected.



Figure

General care of open wounds and sores:

1. Wash the wound or sore with clean water and mild soap at least once a day. Wash around the edge of the wound first, then wash from the center out to the edges. If possible, use separate pieces of cloth for each wipe.



Figure

2. If the wound has pus or blood in it, cover the area with a clean piece of cloth or bandage. Leave the bandage loose, and change it every day. If the wound is dry, it can be left open to the air. It will heal more quickly that way.

3. If the wound is on the legs or feet, raise the leg above the level of the heart. Do this as often as possible during the day. During the night, sleep

with the feet raised. Avoid standing or sitting for a long time. Some walking is helpful.



Figure

4. Wash soiled cloth and bandages in soap and water, then put them in the sun to dry. Or boil them for a short time and hang them to dry. If the cloths and bandages will not be used again, burn them or throw them in a pit latrine.

Home treatments for pressure sores

Papaya (paw paw): This fruit contains *chemicals* that help make the old flesh in a pressure sore soft and easy to remove.



Figure

Soak a sterile cloth or piece of gauze in the 'milk' that comes from the trunk or green fruit

of a papaya plant. Pack this into the sore. Repeat this 3 times a day.

Honey and sugar: These will kill germs, help prevent infection, and speed healing. Mix honey and sugar together into a thick paste. Press this deep into the sore, and cover with a thick, clean cloth or *gauze* bandage. (Molasses or thin pieces of raw sugar can also be used.)



Figure

IMPORTANT

Clean out and refill the sore at least 2 times a day. If the honey and sugar becomes too filled with liquid from the sore, it will feed germs rather than kill them.

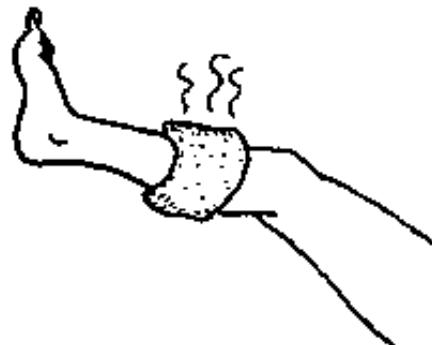
Treatment of open wounds and sores that are infected:

Wounds and sores are infected if they:

- **become red, swollen, hot, and painful.**
- **have pus in them.**
- **begin to smell bad.**

Treat the infected area as in steps 1 through 4 on the previous page, and also do the following:

- 1. Put a hot *compress* over the wound 4 times a day for 20 minutes each time. Or try to soak the wound in a bucket of hot water with soap or potassium permanganate in the water. Use one teaspoon of potassium permanganate to 4 or 5 liters (or quarts) of water. When you are not soaking the infected part, keep it raised up above the level of the heart**
- 2. If part of the wound looks gray or rotten, rinse it with hydrogen peroxide after soaking it. Try to pick off the gray parts with a clean piece of gauze or tweezers that have been properly cleaned.**
- 3. If you can, put Gentian Violet on the wound before putting on the dressing.**
- 4. If there are many infected sores at the same time, especially with a fever, treat with antibiotics. Use erythromycin, dicloxacillin or penicillin for 10 days (see the "Green Pages").**



Hot compress

♦ **Be careful: If you use too much potassium permanganate or very hot water, you will burn the skin.**

Treatment of closed wounds that are infected (abscesses and boils):

Abscesses and boils are raised, red, painful lumps on the skin. They are most common in the *groin* and armpits, and on the buttocks, back, and upper legs.



Figure

If you notice a lump, start using warm compresses right away for 20 minutes, 4 times a day. Often this will make the lump open and the pus inside will come out. Keep applying clean, warm cloths until the pus stops coming out and the area begins to heal. Cover the lump with a loose, clean bandage. If it becomes too large and painful, see a health worker who has been trained to drain abscesses using sterile equipment.

When to get help:

See a health worker trained to treat the signs of AIDS if you have a wound and:

- a fever.
- a red area around the wound is getting bigger.

Get medical help if you have a wound and:

- you can feel swollen *glands* in your neck, groin, or armpits.
- the wound has a bad smell, or brown or gray liquid comes out, or it turns black and bubbles, or blisters form. This could be gangrene.
- you are taking antibiotics and not getting better

Mental confusion (Dementia)

Some mental confusion or mental change is common among people with AIDS, especially if a person has been sick for a long time. These changes may be caused by HIV infection in the brain, by other infections, by depression, or by the side effects of a medicine.

Pain

In the later stages of AIDS (and other serious illnesses like cancer), pain may become a part of daily life. Pain can be caused by many things, such as:

- **not being able to move.**
- **pressure sores.**
- **swelling of the legs and feet.**
- **infections, like herpes.**
- **headache.**
- **nerve pains**

Treatment for pain, without medicines:

- **Try relaxation exercises, meditation, or prayer.**
- **Try to think about other things.**
- **Play music, or have someone read aloud or tell stories.**
- **For pain from swelling in the hands and feet, try raising the swollen part.**
- **For a burning feeling in the hands and feet caused by nerve pain, put the body part in water.**
- **For skin that hurts to touch, line the bed with soft covers and pillows or animal skins. Be gentle when touching the person.**



Figure

- **For headache, keep the room dark and quiet.**
- **Acupressure may help some kinds of pain.**

Treatment for pain, with medicines:

The following medicines may be used to control pain that comes day after day (chronic pain). Take the medicines regularly, according to instructions. If you wait until the pain has become very bad, the medicines will not work as well.

- **mild pain medicine, like paracetamol**
- **ibuprofen - if you need something stronger**
- **codeine - if the pain is very bad**

◆ ***Pain medicines work best if you take them before the pain gets very bad.***



**medicines for pain
Figure**

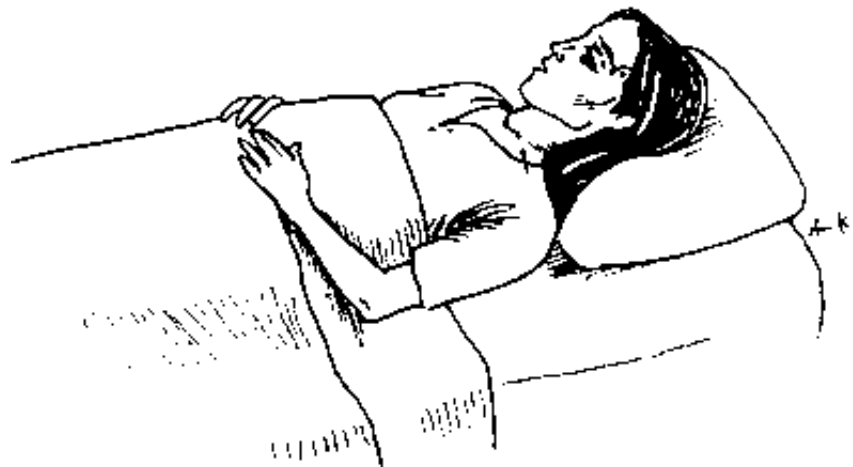
Caring for Someone Who Is Near Death

At some point there is nothing more that can be done for a person with AIDS. You may know this time has come when:

- **the body starts to fail.**
- **medical treatment is no longer effective or is not available.**
- **the person says she is ready to die.**

If the sick person wants to remain at home, you can help her die with dignity by:

- **giving comfort.**
- **having family and friends stay with her.**
- **allowing her to make decisions.**
- **helping her prepare for death. It may help her to talk about death, about fears of dying, and about worries for the family's future. It does not help to act as if she is not dying. Assure her that you will do what you can to prevent pain and discomfort. Talk about funeral arrangements if she wishes.**



Figure

As she nears death, she may be unconscious, stop eating, breathe very slowly or

very fast and unevenly, stop passing urine, or lose control of passing urine or stool.

Care of the body of someone who has died of AIDS

The AIDS virus can live up to 24 hours in a person's body after death. During that time, take the same precautions with the body as you did when the person was alive.

Working for Change

AIDS IS EVERYONE'S PROBLEM

It is important that everyone in the community know how AIDS is spread and how to prevent it. But this information will not help them unless they also realize that AIDS can happen to anyone - even them. If people think that AIDS can not touch them, they will not act to prevent infection.

◆ *Fight AIDS, not the people who have it.*

Placing the blame on any group of people (such as sex workers, homosexuals, or drug users) makes others think that only that group is at risk. It is true that some people, like sex workers, may be more likely to get AIDS (because their work requires that they have sex with many men). But everyone - especially young women - is at risk for AIDS. And every person in the community needs to take responsibility for fighting it.

It is also important to remember to fight against the conditions that lead to the spread of AIDS, and not against the people who have AIDS.

How you can help prevent AIDS

In the community

Education is one of the main ways a community can work to keep AIDS from spreading. Here are some ideas:

- **Train girls and women to work as peer educators. They can talk with others alone or in groups to help girls and women understand their bodies and sexuality, and gain the self-confidence and skills to demand safer sex.**
- **Tell the truth about women's risk of AIDS. Help people see that AIDS has roots in poverty and in women's lack of control over their sexual relations.**
- **Use theater and media to help women feel it is OK to know about and to prevent AIDS. For example, use a play or comic book to show that 'good' girls or women can discuss AIDS with their partners, or can buy condoms and ask their husbands or boyfriends to use them.**

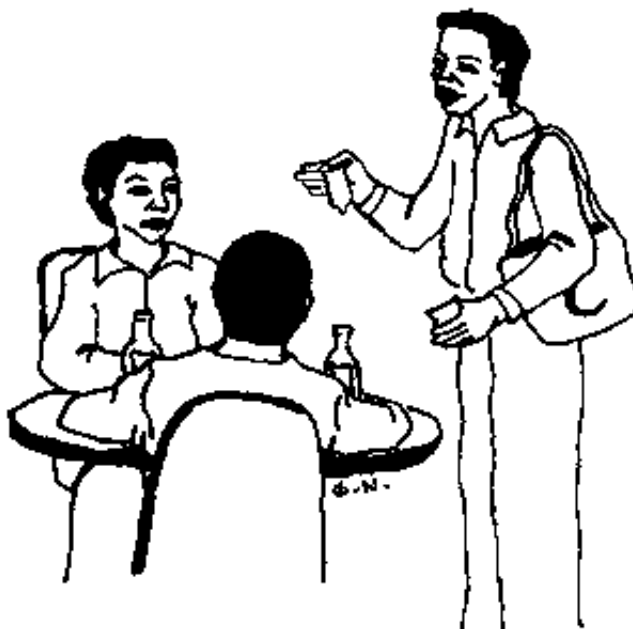


**sexual health
Figure**

At the same time, you can show different ideas about what it means to be a man or a woman. Help people question the idea that men should have many sex partners and that women should be passive about sex. Show how these ideas are

dangerous to both men's and women's health.

- **Help parents, teachers, and other adult role models become more comfortable talking about sex and AIDS with young people.**
- **Make sure that all people have access to information and sexual health services, including condoms, to keep AIDS from spreading in the community.**
- **Bring education about AIDS to community meeting places - like bars, schools, religious meetings, and military bases.**



Figure

Train men as outreach workers. They can go to the places where men gather and talk to them about AIDS.

Here is an example of how women can work together to protect themselves from AIDS:

To help fight the spread of AIDS, the women of Palestina, a small town in northeastern Brazil, began a 'sex strike'. After women in the community learned that a man infected with HIV had unsafe sex with at least two women in the town, they decided to stop having sex with their husbands and boyfriends. They demanded that their partners take the test for HIV before they would begin to have sex again and then insisted upon safer sex practices.

The women will now demand safer sex and proof of an HIV test before they have sexual relations with a partner. One woman said, "If he won't practice safer sex, we won't go together anymore."

If you are a health worker

Health workers can play a very important role in helping to stop the spread of AIDS. You can do this if you:

- **give information about how AIDS is spread and how it is not spread to every person you see - especially if they already have other STDs.**
- **encourage both men and women to use condoms, even if they are already using another form of family planning.**
- **use precautions against HIV infection with every person you see. Since most people with HIV appear healthy, it is best to act as if everyone you**

care for is HIV-infected. Any time you have to cut the skin or touch body fluids, follow the advice. This includes any time you must give an injection, stitch skin or tissue, help with childbirth, or examine a woman's vagina.

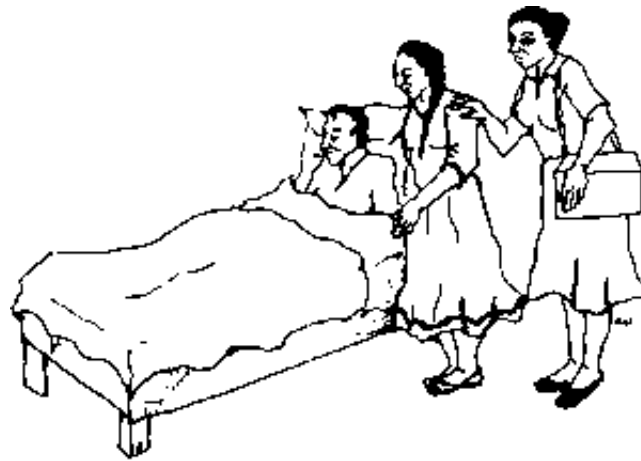
- **make health services private, confidential, and accessible to all members of the community, including young people.**
- **invite someone from a regional AIDS organization to meet with health workers in your area. He or she can help you learn about the best ways to treat the infections that people with AIDS often get. Discuss the other problems that people with AIDS face. Try to decide how you can help people using the resources you have, and think about where you might find more resources to help meet people's needs. If health workers can work together and share resources, they will not have to confront this huge problem alone.**

♦ *If every health worker can offer the same information and services, it will save people time, money, and energy because they will not have to search for the best treatment.*

Fight the fear and negative attitudes that many people have about AIDS

A good way to begin is to plan a meeting with other health workers in your area to discuss AIDS. Help all the health workers learn about AIDS so they will be able to provide accurate, consistent information to the people in their communities. If all health workers can give the same information, it will help prevent the fear caused by wrong ideas about AIDS. With less fear from their neighbors, people with AIDS - as well as those who care for

them - can become more accepted in the community. Then they can help others understand every person's real risk of getting AIDS.




Figure

A health worker's sympathy and compassion can also help others change their attitudes toward people with AIDS. Then she can fight HIV/AIDS together with the community.



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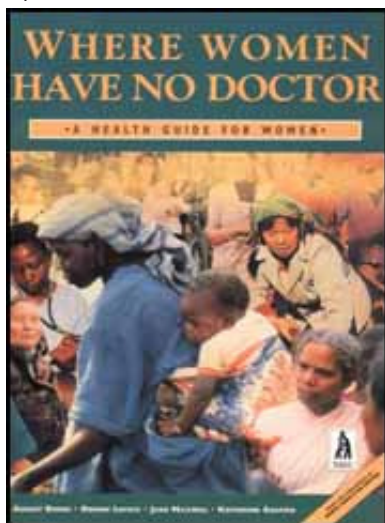
 **Where Women Have No Doctor - A Health Guide for Women (Hesperian Foundation, 1997, 600 p.)**

➔  **Chapter 18: Violence Against Women**

 **(introduction...)**

 **The Story of Laura and Lus**

 **Why Does a Man Hurt a Woman?**



- 📄 **Kinds of Violence**
- 📄 **Warning Signs**
- 📄 **The Cycle of Violence**
- 📄 **Harmful Effects of Violence**
- 📄 **Why Women Stay with Men Who Hurt Them**
- ☐ **What to Do**
 - 📄 **Make a safety plan**
 - 📄 **If you leave**
- ☐ **Working for Change**
 - 📄 *(introduction...)*
 - 📄 **Talk about it**
 - 📄 **Set up services to help women who leave**
 - 📄 **Use social pressure**
- 📄 **To the Health Worker**

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Chapter 18: Violence Against Women



Figure

Every day, women are slapped, kicked, beaten, humiliated, threatened, sexually *abused*, and even murdered by their partners. But often we do not hear about this violence, because the women who are abused may feel ashamed, alone, and afraid to speak out. Many doctors, nurses, and health workers do not recognize violence as the serious health problem it is.

◆ *There is no reason why a person should be beaten or abused in any way.*

This chapter is about the violence that occurs between a woman and her male partner. It can help you understand why violence happens, what you can do about

it, and how you can work for change in your community.



rape by someone the woman knows Figure

Although this chapter talks about violence between a woman and a man, violence can happen in any close relationship: for example, between a mother-in-law and her son's new wife, between parents and their children, between an older and younger child, between family members and an older person living in the home, and between partners of the same sex.

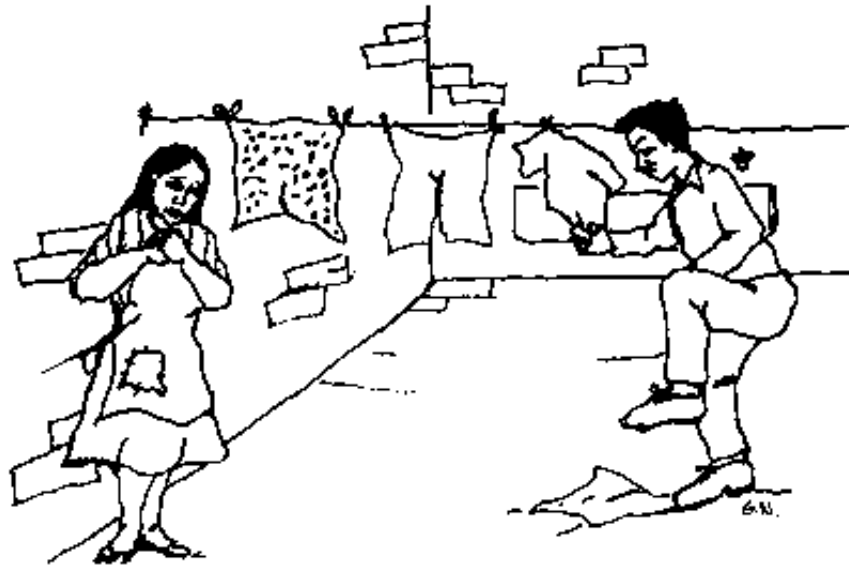
The Story of Laura and Lus

Lus was 12 years older than Laura and was already a successful merchant when they met, He sold his goods to the store where Laura worked as a clerk to help her family pay the rent Lus was charming and would talk about the kind of life they could have together. He told Laura he would buy her anything she wanted and she would be his "best woman." He often bought her new clothes that he liked to admire her in, telling her how pretty she would be if she stopped dressing the way she did. He eventually began to see her every day, and soon asked her to quit her job and marry him.

After they married, Laura expected Lus to keep his promises. Instead, things began to change. He would not allow her to go out, because she "looked so ugly." In fact, he took

all the beautiful clothes he had bought her and burned them, saying, "That stupid, ugly woman didn't deserve such clothes."

One day Lus came home in the middle of the day and tore all the clean washing down from the line, accusing Laura of sleeping with his friend. When she said that she had just gone to visit her mother, Lus called her a lying whore and hit her. He said she would not go to visit her family - they did not want her either. He never said anything more about it, but when he came home later that night, he brought her a present and told her how much he loved her and wanted to take care of her.



Figure

When Laura got pregnant, she thought Lus would start treating her better. But it seemed to give him more excuses to hurt her. When he got angry, he started hitting and kicking her in the stomach. She was terrified she would lose the baby, but she had no place to go. She believed Lus when he said her family did not want her, and besides, she had no

money of her own. There were times when Lus would go several weeks without losing control, and Laura would convince herself that everything was OK. He really did love her, after all. If only she could learn how to avoid setting him off. She would try even harder than before, but nothing helped.

Through the years, Lus drank too much, threw her against walls, and would force her to have sex even when her body ached from his beatings. Laura awoke one night to find him holding a knife to her throat. The next day, he told her she was imagining things, that she was crazy. He always said that if she told anyone "lies" about him he would kill her. She didn't tell anyone and she went out as little as possible. She hated the thought of anyone seeing her bruises and knowing what he did to her. Laura often thought about: leaving, but she did not know where to go.

After 12 years of being his wife, not only was Laura afraid of what he would do to her, but without him she would have no home, no money, no father for her children. Lus had said bad things about her to the people at the store where she used to work, and she knew that, because of her children, no one would take her in as a domestic servant. Laura felt so alone.

Laura's father was dead now and her mother lived with her brother's family. They did not have room for her and her children. Her sister was deeply religious and told Laura it was her duty to stay with her husband, even if she were killed. "That is the way it is meant to be." She had so much work to do at home she was always busy. And since Lus got mad when she went out or when someone came to visit, Laura stopped seeing her friends. She was sure they had long since given up on her. Besides, most people thought that it was okay for men to 'punish' their wives.

Then came the night when Laura's oldest daughter was 11. She came to Laura crying, saying Lus had hurt her "down there." Laura was shocked. She had thought the children would not be affected by Lus' behavior. She knew it would do no good to confront him, but she would NOT let it happen again.

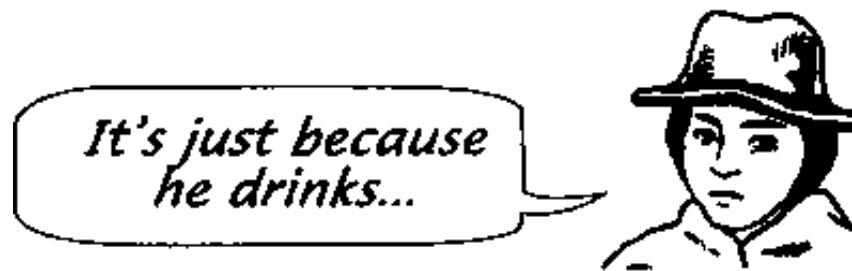
When Laura lost her last pregnancy, the health worker who examined her asked about her injuries. Laura had made some excuse. The health worker nodded her head and gave Laura a card with an address in the next town. She told her if Laura ever needed to leave, she and her children could go there, but to make sure that she was ready to leave when she did. Laura was ready now.

Why did Lus hit Laura? These are some of the wrong ideas that people have:



Figure

The truth: No man has the right to beat his wife. Nothing a woman does gives a man the right to hurt her, even if he thinks she deserves it - even if she herself thinks she deserves it.



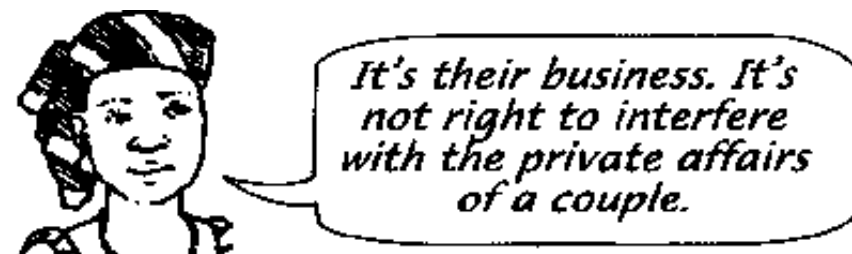
Figure

The truth: Alcohol does not cause violence, but it often makes it worse. Violence is also common in places where people do not drink alcohol.



Figure

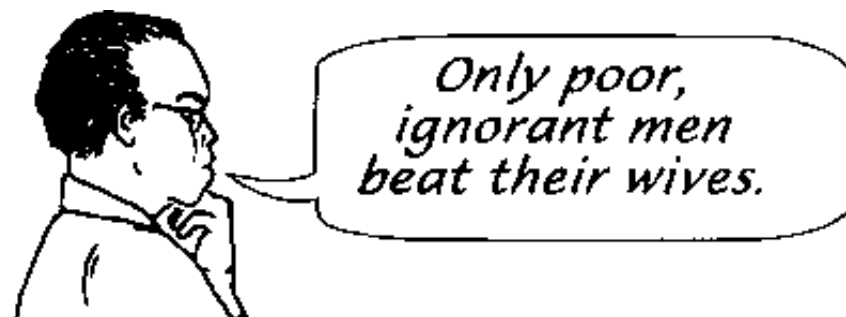
The truth: Beating is not a sign of love. Love means showing respect and kindness.



Figure

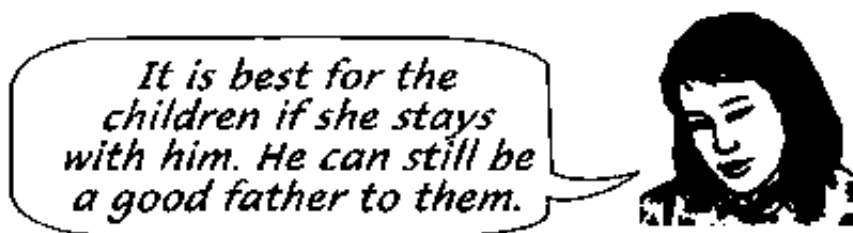
The truth: Violence is not just a family matter. Many women are hurt or killed.

Violence is a social and community health problem.



Figure

The truth: Violence is not just a problem of poverty or ignorance. Violence can happen in any home: rich or poor, educated or less educated, in the city or in rural areas.



Figure

The truth: It is not always better for the family when a woman stays with a violent man. He is teaching the children terrible, wrong ways to deal with their feelings, and about how women should be treated. He is not being good to his children if he is beating their mother - or them.

Why Does a Man Hurt a Woman?

A man may offer many excuses for hurting a woman - that he was drunk, that he lost control, or that she 'deserved it'. But a man chooses to use violence because it is a way he can get what he needs or what he feels is rightfully his as a man.

◆ *These reasons may explain why a man abuses his wife, but they do not give him permission to do so.*

When a man does not feel that he has power over his own life, he may use violence to try and control another person's life. It is natural for someone to want to control his or her own life in normal ways, but it is wrong to try and control someone else's life, especially with violence. Here are some of the reasons why some men hurt women:

1. Violence works.

- It offers the man a quick end to a disagreement without having to talk about the real problem or find a real solution.**
- A man may find the fight exciting, and have lots of energy afterward. He may want to have these feelings again.**
- If a man uses violence, he 'wins' and gets his way. The victim is likely to give him his way again the next time to avoid being hurt. This gives the man even more power.**

◆ *Violent or abusive relationships often happen when one person has more power over the other.*

2. The man has a wrong idea about what it means to be a man.

- **If a man believes that to be a man, he must control what a woman does, he may feel it is OK to hurt her**
- **Some men think that they have a 'right' to certain things - to a 'good' wife, to sons, to making all the decisions in the family - just because they are men.**



**sex and gender roles
Figure**

3. The man feels that the woman belongs to him, or that he needs her.

- **If the woman is 'strong', the man may feel afraid that he will lose her, or that she does not need him. He will take steps to make her more dependent on him.**

4. He does not know any other way to be.

- **If a man has seen his father or other people in his life react with violence when life is difficult and stressful, then he may have never learned any other way to behave.**



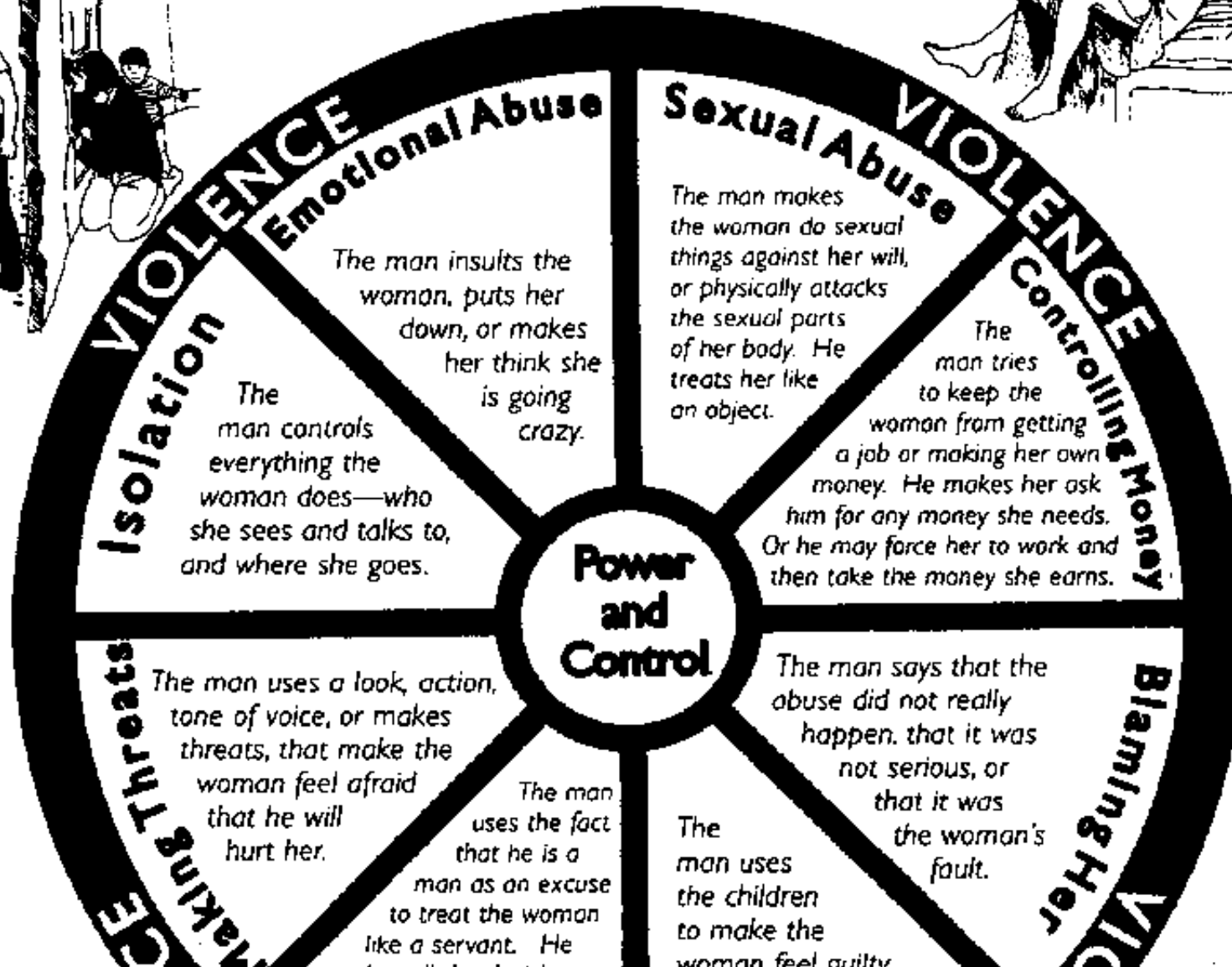
Figure

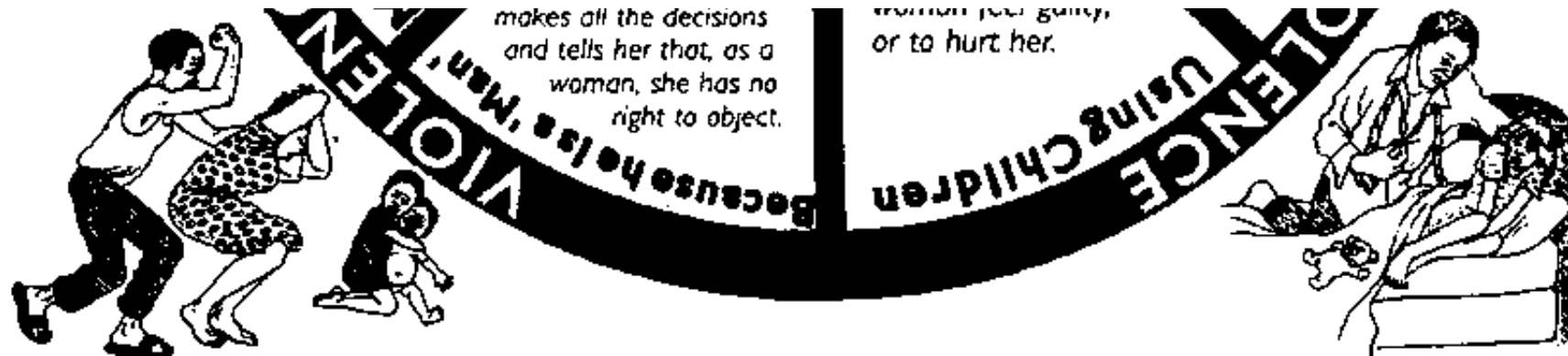
If men think of women and girls as their property - something they own - they are more likely to feel as though it is their right to treat them however they want.

Kinds of Violence

There are many different ways that a man tries to gain power over a woman. Beating is only one of them. But all of them can hurt a woman.

Imagine that the circle below is a wheel. Power and control are at the center of the wheel because they are the reasons behind all of the actions. Each section of the wheel is a behavior that a violent man may use to control a woman. Violence is the rim of the wheel - what holds it together and gives it strength.





Figure

One form of abuse often turns into another

In many cases, verbal abuse becomes physical abuse after a while. It may not seem like it at first, but the man may slowly begin to 'accidentally' push or bump the woman, or begin to sit down in the place the woman usually sits, so that she has to move. If this behavior works for him, it may get worse until he becomes violent. Not all women who suffer other forms of abuse are beaten, but all women who have been beaten have suffered from other forms of abuse.

Warning Signs

When an abusive relationship becomes violent, it is much harder to leave. The longer a woman stays, the more control the man has over her, and the less faith she may have in herself. Some men are more likely to become violent than others. There are certain signs that may mean a man will become violent. If you see these signs, and have a way to get out of the relationship, think carefully.

◆ ***It does not matter how much you love a person. Love cannot change someone.***

Only that person can choose to change himself.

Ask yourself these questions:

- **Does he act jealous when you see other people, or accuse you of lying to him? If you find you change your behavior to keep him from acting jealous, then he is controlling you.**
- **Does he try to keep you from seeing your friends and family, or from doing things on your own? It does not matter what reason he uses. He is trying to keep you from having their support. It will be easier for him to abuse you if you have nowhere else to go.**
- **Does he insult you or make fun of you in front of other people? You may start to believe what he says. This can make you feel as though you deserve to be treated badly.**
- **What does he do when he gets angry? Does he break or throw things? Has he ever physically hurt you or threatened to hurt you? Has he ever hit another woman? All of these things show that he has trouble controlling the way he acts.**



- **Does he feel insulted by people with authority, such as his teachers, bosses, or his father? He may feel he has no power. This can make him try to gain power over other people in other areas of his life by using violence.**
- **Does he claim that alcohol, drugs, or stress are the reasons he acts the way he does? If he puts the blame on something else, he may say things will get better if he gets a new job, moves to a new town, or stops using drugs or alcohol.**
- **Does he blame you or someone else for the way he acts, or deny that he**

is doing anything wrong? He is less likely to want to change himself if he thinks that the way he acts is your fault.

Some women are more likely to be abused

In many couples, the man becomes violent for the first time when the woman is pregnant. He may feel as though he is losing control because he cannot control the changes in her body. He may feel angry because she is paying more attention to the baby and less to him, or because she may not want to have sex with him. Also, many couples feel extra worried about money when they are expecting a new baby.



Figure

Women with disabilities are also more likely to be abused:

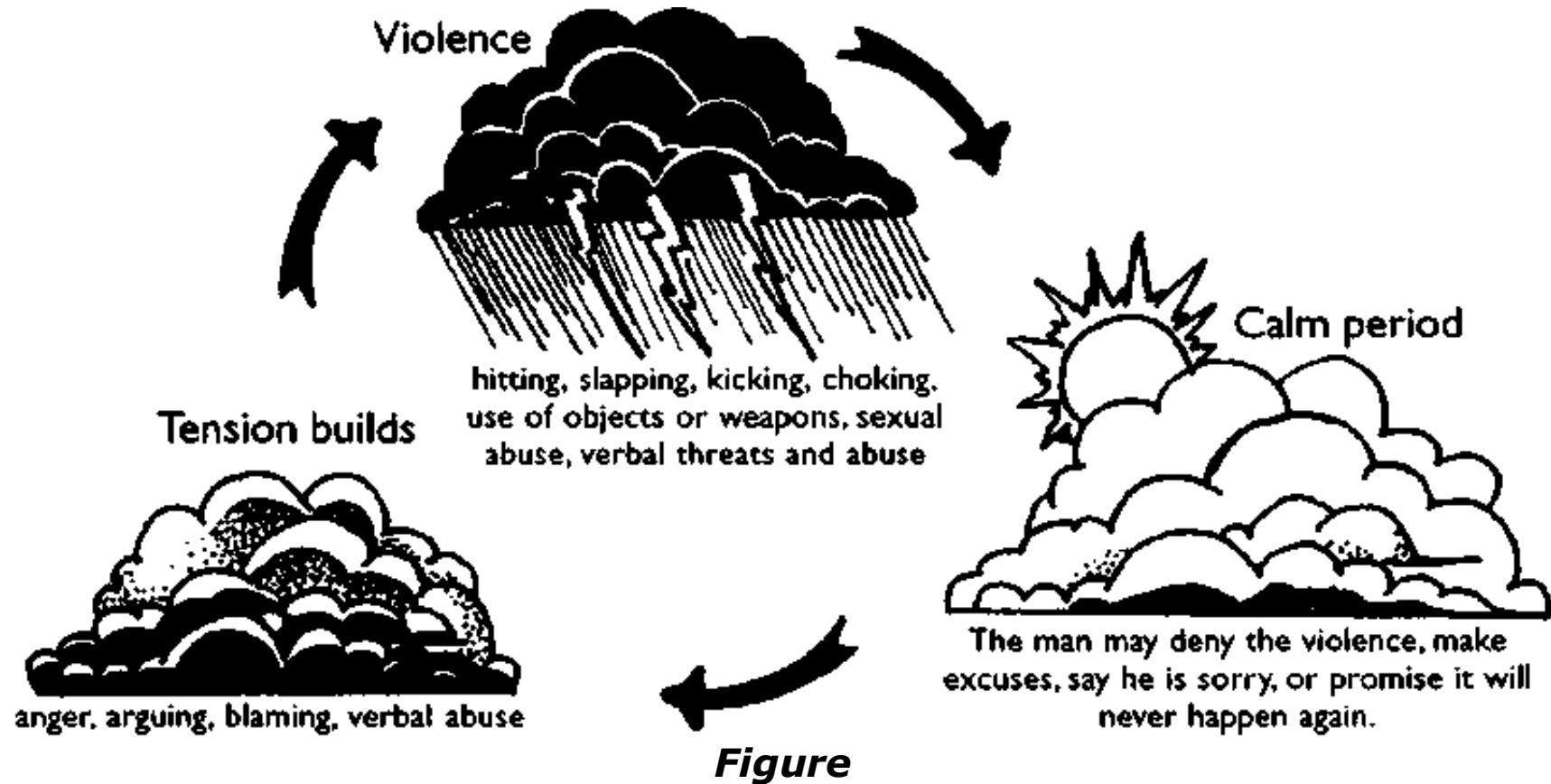
- Some men may feel angry that they did not get a 'perfect' woman.
- Men may think a woman with a disability is easier to control because she may be less able to defend herself.



Figure

The Cycle of Violence

The first violent attack often seems like an isolated event. But in many cases, after the violence first happens the following pattern, or cycle, develops:



As the violence goes on, the calm period gets shorter and shorter for many couples. As the woman's will is broken, the man's control over her becomes so complete that it is no longer necessary for him to make promises that things will get better.

◆ Some women try to make the violence happen so that it will be over with more quickly, and to get to the calm period sooner.

Harmful Effects of Violence

Violence not only hurts women. It also affects their children, and the whole community.

Women

In women, men's violence can cause:

- **lack of motivation or lack of a sense of self-worth.**
- **mental health problems, like *anxiety* and problems eating and sleeping. As a way to cope with the violence, women may begin harmful or reckless behavior - such as using drugs or alcohol, or having many sex partners.**



**mental health
Figure**

- **serious pain and injuries: broken bones, burns, black eyes, cuts, bruises, as well as headaches, belly pain, and muscle pains that may continue for many years after the abuse happens.**
- **sexual health problems. Many women suffer *miscarriages* from being beaten during pregnancy. They may also suffer from unwanted pregnancies, *sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)* or *HIV/AIDS* as a result of sexual abuse. Sexual abuse often also leads to a fear of having sex, pain during sex, and lack of desire.**



STDs, 261

AIDS, 283

lack of desire, 193

Figure

- **death.**

Children

In children, seeing their mothers abused can often cause:

- **angry or aggressive behavior - copying the violence. Or they may become very quiet and withdraw to escape notice.**
- **nightmares and other fears. Children in abusive families often do not eat well, grow and learn more slowly than other children, and have many illnesses, like stomach aches, headaches, and *asthma*.**
- **injury and death if the violence is turned on them.**

When a woman is abused at home, her children believe that this is how girls and women should be treated.



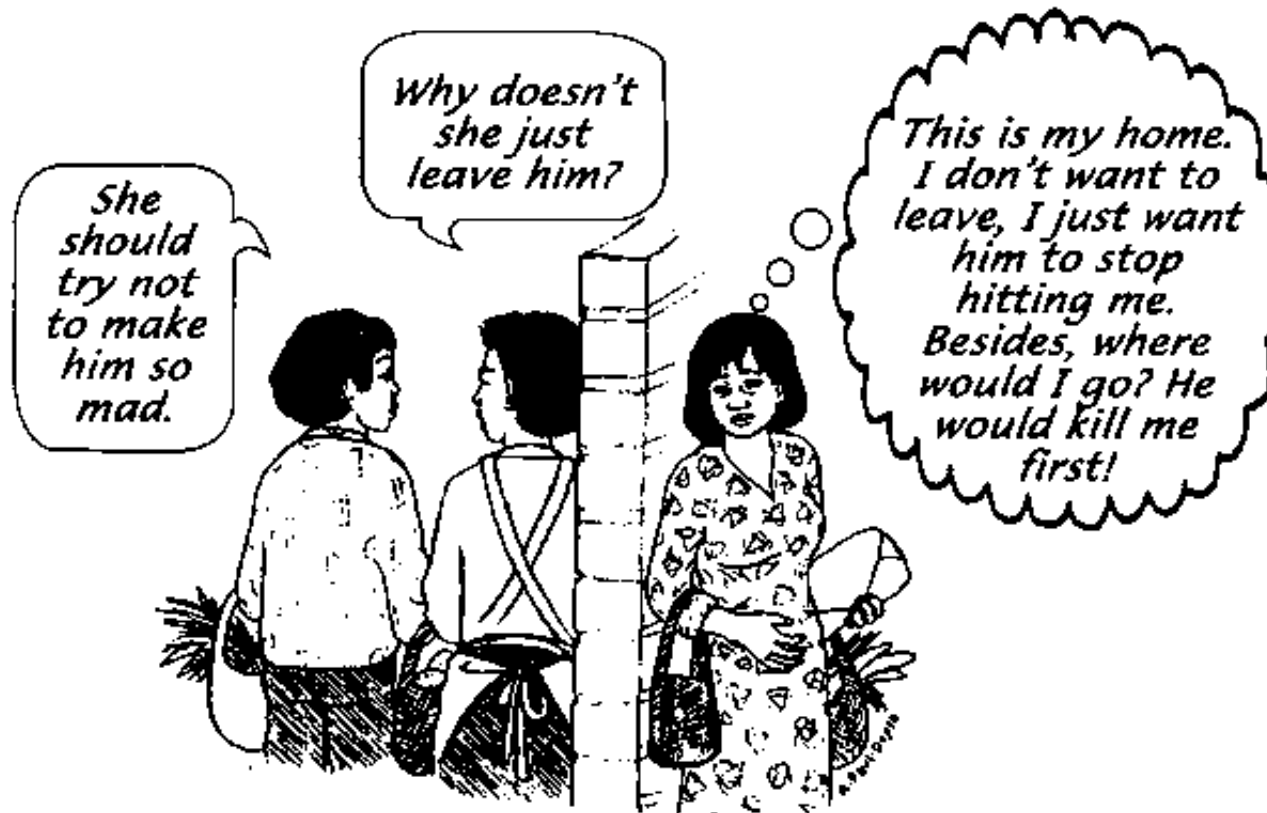
Figure

Community

In a community, violence can cause:

- **the cycle of violence to continue into new generations.**
- **the continued false belief that men are better than women.**
- **everyone's quality of life to suffer because women take part less in their communities when they are silenced or killed by the violence.**

Why Women Stay with Men Who Hurt Them



Figure

◆ ***If we ask why she does not leave, it says that we think the violence is her personal problem to solve. The whole community needs to be responsible for the health and well-being of every person in that community.***

“Why does she stay?” is the first question most people ask when they hear about a woman who is being abused. There are many reasons why a woman might choose to stay in an abusive relationship. They include:

- **fear and threats.** The man may have told her, “I will kill you, kill the children, kill your mother... if you try to leave.” She may feel she is doing

everything she can to protect herself and others by staying.

- **no money, and no place to go. This is especially true if he has controlled all the money and not allowed her to see her family and friends.**
- **no protection. There may be nothing to stop him from coming after her and killing her.**
- **shame. She may feel the violence is somehow her fault, or that she deserves it.**
- **religious or cultural beliefs. She may feel it is her duty to keep the marriage together, no matter what it costs her.**
- **hope for change. She may feel she loves the man and wants the relationship to continue. She may think there is some way to make the violence stop.**
- **guilt about leaving the children with no father.**

But perhaps a better question to ask is, "Why doesn't he go?" If we ask why she does not leave, it says that we think it is her personal problem to solve. It is wrong to think of the violence as only her problem.

- **The whole community needs to be responsible for the health and well-being of every person in that community.**
- **It is the man who is committing a crime by violating the woman's right to**

live free from physical harm, or by killing her. His actions should be challenged and stopped.

What to Do

Make a safety plan

A woman does not have control over her partner's violence, but she does have choices about the way she responds to him. She can also try to plan ahead how she can get herself and her children to safety until the man stops being violent.

♦ *Think about these things even if you do not think the violence will ever happen again.*

Safety before the violence happens again

- Tell someone nearby about the violence. Ask that person to come or to get help if the person hears that you are in trouble. Perhaps a neighbor, male relative, or a group of women or men can come before you are seriously hurt.**
- Think of a special word or signal that will tell your children or someone else in your family to get help.**
- Teach your children how to get to a safe place.**



Find someone you trust who can help you sort out your feelings and think about your choices.

Safety during the violence

- **If you can tell that he is going to become violent, try to have it happen where there are no weapons or objects that he can use to harm you, and where you can get away.**
- **Use your best judgement. Do whatever you need to do to calm him down so that you and your children are safe.**
- **If you need to get away from him, think about how you can escape.**

Where is the safest place to go?

Safety when a woman gets ready to leave

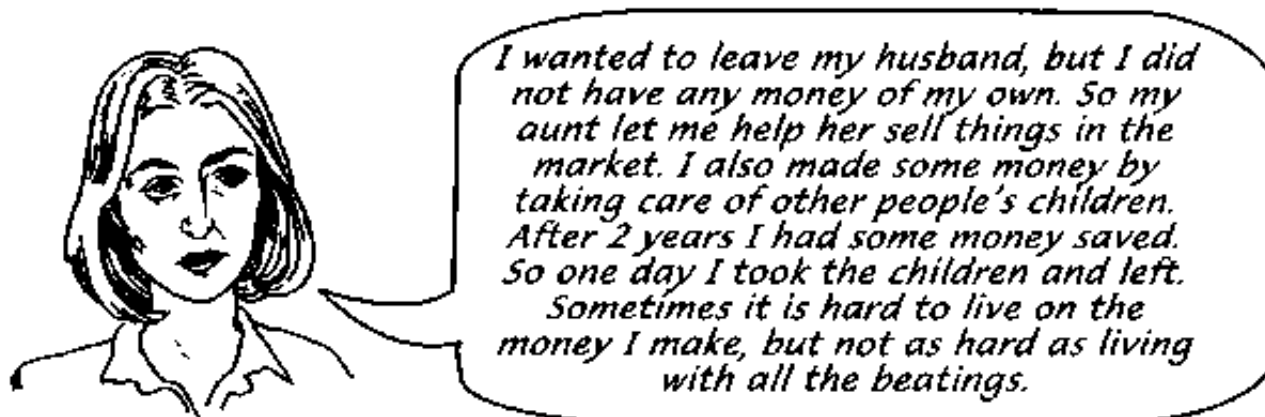
- **Save money any way that you can. Put money in a safe place (away from the house) or open a bank account in your own name so you can become more independent.**
- **If you can do so safely, think of other things you can do to become less dependent on him, such as making friends, joining a group, or spending more time with your family.**
- **See if there are 'safe houses' or other services for women who have been abused. These are special places in some towns and cities where abused women and their children can stay for a while. Try to find out before you leave if there is one that you can get to.**
- **Ask friends or relatives you trust if they would let you stay with them or lend you money. Be sure they will not tell your partner that you asked.**
- **Get copies of important documents, such as your identification or your children's *vaccination* records. Keep a copy at home and give a copy to someone you trust.**
- **Leave money, copies of your documents, and extra clothes with someone you trust so that you can leave quickly.**
- **If you can do it safely, practice your escape plan with your children to see**

if it would work. Make sure the children will not tell anyone.



Do you have skills that you can use to earn extra money?

If you leave



Figure

If you decide to leave, you will need to be prepared for some of the new difficulties you will face:

Safety. The most dangerous time for a woman is after she leaves. The man has lost control over her and will usually do anything to get it back. He may even try to follow through on his threat to kill her. She must make sure she is staying in a safe place that he does not know about or where she is protected. She should not tell anyone where she is staying. He may be able to force them to tell him where she is.

Surviving on your own. You need to find a way to support yourself and your children. If you can stay with friends or family, use that time to get more education or learn job skills. To save money, maybe you can share a place to live with another woman who also was abused.

Feelings. All the things you need to do to set up a new life may feel like too much to face. You may feel scared and lonely because you are not used to being alone in a strange place. You may miss your partner - no matter what he did to you. When things seem very difficult, you may not remember how bad it really was before you left. Give yourself time to feel sad about the loss of your partner and your former life. Try to stay strong. See if you can find other women in the same situation as you. Together you can support each other.



starting a support
group
Figure

Working for Change

For change to happen, people must stop thinking of violence against women as something that 'is just the way things are' or that is the woman's fault. Here are some ideas for helping stop violence in your community.

Talk about it

Talking about the abuse is the first step to changing it. Try to find other women who have the same problems with violent and abusive men and share ideas with each other Find men who believe that violence is wrong. Make violence something people talk about. Make it into something that people think is wrong.

♦ *Be careful! In some communities, working against violence can be dangerous.*

Set up services to help women who leave



Figure

- **Set up a 'safe house' or shelter as soon as possible. Keep the place hidden and secret.**
- **Get support from others - especially larger, more powerful organizations. For example, see if there is a network of health organizations in your country that can help. You can also talk with respected community members whom you trust. Get as many men as possible to work with you.**
- **Help women learn about their rights under the law. There may be special laws about families and violence that women can use.**
- **Find ways to train women in new skills, so that abused women have a way to support themselves.**

Use social pressure

In some communities in Central America, men volunteer to patrol their communities to warn the people of attacks, and to keep them safe from crime.

In these communities, violence against women is not tolerated. If a man is caught beating his wife, he knows the other men in the town will punish him.

What are the pressures that prevent people where you live from doing things that most people believe are wrong? In some places, it is the police. In others it may be the military, the family, or religion. In most places, it is a combination of these things.

Encourage community leaders and other men to speak out against violence against women and to show their disapproval of men who beat women. Try and use all of the pressures that work where you live to keep men from abusing women.

In some countries, women have organized to get laws passed that punish men who abuse their wives. But laws do not always work well for abused women. In some places, the people who are supposed to enforce the laws - especially the police, the lawyers, and the judges - cannot be trusted to help. But if the legal system and the police both work to protect women where you live, try to learn as much as you can about the laws and about women's rights.

Raise your children to lead non-violent lives. You can work for change at home by helping your children find peaceful ways to solve problems. Teach boys to respect themselves and to respect girls and women.



Figure

To the Health Worker

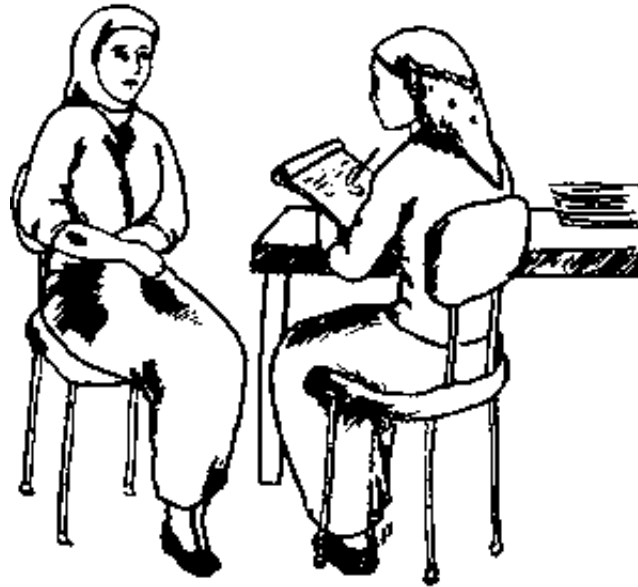
Health workers can take a more active role in stopping violence against women. It is not enough just to take care of a woman's wounds.

When you examine a woman, look for signs of abuse. Men often beat their wives where the marks will not show. Women who have been beaten may wear clothing to hide it. As a health worker, you are one of the few people who sees the private parts of her body.



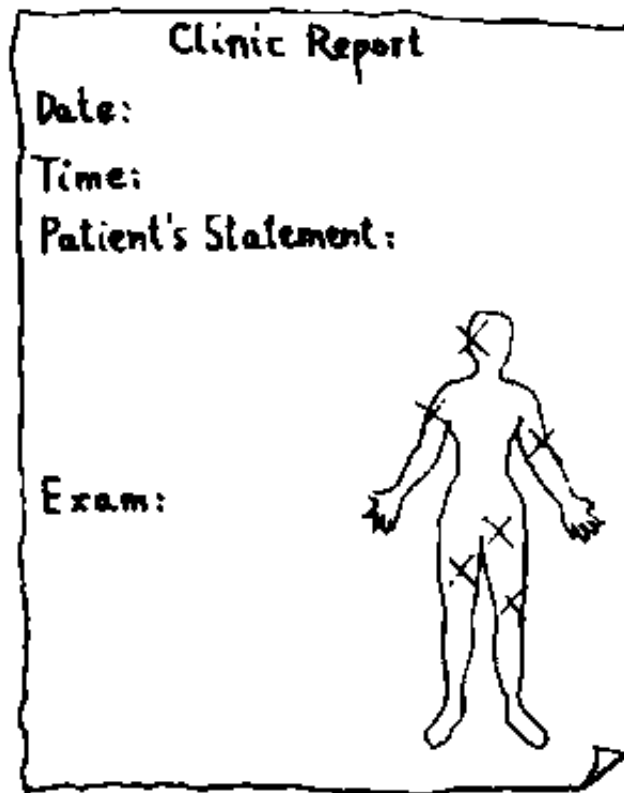
Figure

If you see an unusual mark, bruise, or scar, ask her how it happened. Or if a woman comes to you in pain, bleeding, or with broken bones or other injuries, ask her if she has been beaten. Remember that many beaten women will say they got injured by accident. Assure her that you will not do anything she does not want you to do.



Figure

Write everything down. When you see a woman who has been abused, draw a picture of the front and back of her body and mark the places where she has been injured. Write down the name of the person who abused her. Try to find out how many times this has happened before. Ask if other family members, such as her sisters or her children, have also been abused. If she is in danger, help her decide what she wants to do. Whether or not she wants to leave, you can help her make a safety plan. If she wants to go to the police, go with her. You can help make sure they take her claim seriously. Also, you can put her in contact with other women who have been abused. Together they may be able to find solutions.



Figure

◆ ***For Information about how to treat a woman's injuries, see Where There Is No Doctor or another general medical book.***

***What resources are available in your community or nearby for abused women?
Look for:***

- legal help.
- safe houses.
- money-earning projects for women.
- mental health services.

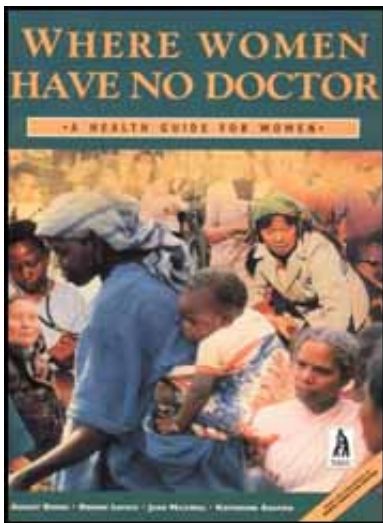
- programs that teach adults to read and write, or other education services.

Help the man. Men who are violent need help themselves. Talk to community or religious leaders to see if they can help find a way for men in your community to take responsibility to stop violence against women.

◆ ***Help your community to see the harmful effects of violence.***



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 **Where Women Have No Doctor - A Health Guide for Women (Hesperian Foundation, 1997, 600 p.)**

➔ **Chapter 19: Rape and Sexual Assault**

 **(introduction...)**

Kinds of Rape and Sexual Assault

 **(introduction...)**

 **Rape by someone the woman knows**













 **Rape by a stranger**

How to Avoid Rape

 **(introduction...)**

 **These ideas may help any woman avoid rape**

 **Avoiding rape by someone you know**

-   **Help children avoid sexual abuse**
-  **Self Defense for Women**
-  **If You Are Sexually Assaulted**
- What to Do if You Have Been Raped**
 -  *(introduction...)*
 -  **If you go to the police**
- Health Problems of Rape**
 -  **Pregnancy**
 -  **Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)**
 -  **Tears and cuts**
 -  **Sexual relations after rape**
 -  **Overcoming feelings about the rape**
-  **Working for Change**

Where Women Have No Doctor - A Health Guide for Women (Hesperian Foundation, 1997, 600 p.)

Chapter 19: Rape and Sexual Assault



Figure

Rape and sexual assault both mean sexual contact that a woman does not want. Rape is any time a man puts his *penis*, finger, or any object into a woman's *vagina*, *anus*, or mouth without her consent.

◆ *Rape is sexual violence. Women are not to blame for it.*

Rape is sometimes called sexual 'assault' because it is an act of violence, using sex as a weapon. Sexual assault can include rape as well as other kinds of unwanted sexual attention.

Some people think that forced sex is rape only if the man beats up a woman or leaves her *unconscious*. They think she must try hard to get away and risk being killed rather than be raped. But even if a woman does not fight back, it is still rape. No matter what she decides to do, if it was not her choice, it was rape, and it is never her fault.

◆ *As with other kinds of violence, the goal of the rapist is to gain power over and control his victim.*

Any woman can be raped, but there is an even greater risk if she:

- has a *disability* - if she is in a wheelchair, deaf, blind, or mentally slow.
- is a refugee, migrant, or displaced person, or has lived in war situations.
- lives on the streets or is homeless.
- is a *sex worker* (prostitute).
- has been arrested or in prison.
- is being *abused* by her husband or boyfriend.

A rapist may see these women as easy victims - because of their disabilities, or because they have lost the protection of a community.

Kinds of Rape and Sexual Assault

There are many different kinds of sexual assault. But only a few of them are seen by most people as rape. For example, sometimes life events can push a woman into having sex when she does not really want to. This can happen in a marriage. Some married women are made to feel that having sex is their duty, whether they

want to or not. Although society does not punish this type of forced sex, it is still wrong.

◆ *A woman often finds it harder to ask for help if the man is someone she knows. It is also harder to feel safe if she must see him again.*

For other women, having sex is a way to survive - to get support for their children, to have a place to live or some money, or to keep a job. No matter what the reason is, a woman should not be forced to have sex if she does not want to.

In any relationship, a woman can choose to accept or refuse a sexual approach. If she refuses, the man then has a choice to either respect her and accept her decision, to try and change her mind, or to force her. Even if the woman knows the man and says "yes," if saying "no" was not really an option, then it is rape.

Any time a woman is forced to have sex, whether or not there is other violence too, it can cause many problems with her health and emotions.

Rape by someone the woman knows

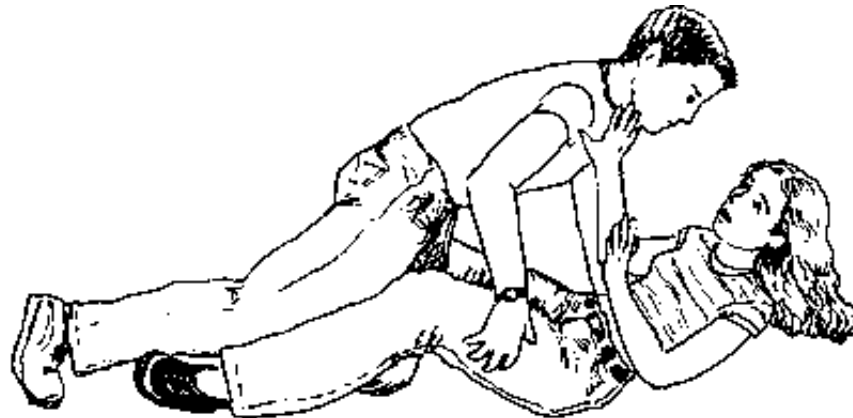
Most women who are raped know the man who rapes them. If the woman must continue to have contact with him, it can make it very hard for her to recover from the rape and to tell others about it.

Rape by a husband or ex-husband. If the law or traditional custom treats a woman as the property of her husband, he may think he has the right to have sex whenever he wants, even if the woman does not want it.



**sexual abuse
Figure**

A woman can be raped by her boyfriend. Her boyfriend may say he has the right to have sex because he has spent money on her, because they have had sex before, because she has teased him sexually, or because he has offered to marry her. But if he forces her, it is still rape. A woman may find it hard to talk about this kind of rape, because she fears others will blame her



Figure



**date rape
Figure**

Sexual harassment. A woman may be forced to have sex by a co-worker or by her supervisor or boss so that she can keep her job. She may be threatened with losing her job or other punishment if she tells anyone.



**sexual harassment
Figure**

Sexual abuse of children. A girl or boy can be raped by a man in the family or any adult. If a father, stepfather, uncle, brother, cousin, or any other family member makes a child have sex, or touches her or him in a sexual way, this is rape. It is important to realize that children may be confused and may not understand what is happening to them, especially if they trust the person who is abusing them. Other members of the family may not know of the abuse, they may deny that it happens, or they may say it is the child's fault. It is never right to blame the person who has been raped, but especially not a child.



Touching a child sexually is rape.

Rape by a stranger

This is the kind of sexual assault that most people think of when they hear the word 'rape.' A woman may be grabbed on the street, or attacked in her home. This kind of rape is very frightening, but it is much less common than rape by someone the woman knows.

Gang rape. A woman can be raped by more than one man. Sometimes a man starts raping a woman and other men see it and join in. Or sometimes young men and boys get together and rape a woman to prove their 'manhood' to one another

Prison rape. Many women are raped by police or prison guards after they have been arrested. Also, rape is common between male prisoners as a way to establish who has more power.

War. Soldiers or fighters often use rape to terrorize women and their community, and to make people feel ashamed. Soldiers may gang rape women and girls in front of their families to show the enemy's power. Women may be held in camps, and forced into prostitution or sexual slavery in order to stay alive, to keep their children safe, or to get food.

◆ *Those who survive war rape need special care. If a woman gets pregnant, she and her child may suffer from the reminder that she was raped by an enemy.*



Rape is a form of tenure when it is used in war.

How to Avoid Rape

There is no one right or wrong way to behave to avoid rape. But there are some things a woman can do that may make her less likely to suffer some kinds of rape. What a woman does depends on how well she knows the man, how afraid she is,

and how much danger she thinks she is in. Remember, if a woman is raped, it is not because she failed to avoid the rape, but because someone stronger forced himself on her.

These ideas may help any woman avoid rape

- **Do your work with other women. You will be safer and stronger if you work together in groups.**
- **Do not let anyone who makes you feel nervous into your home. Do not let him know if you are there alone.**
- **Try not to walk alone, especially at night. If you must go alone, hold your head up and act as though you feel confident. Most rapists will look for a woman who looks easy to attack.**
- **If you think you are being followed, try walking in another direction, or go up to another person, a house, or a store. Or, turn around and ask him very loudly what he wants.**
- **Carry something with you that will make a loud noise, like a whistle. Also, carry something that you can use to defend yourself. This could be a stick, something you can spray in his eyes, or even some hot spicy powder - like hot pepper or chili powder - to blow in his eyes.**
- **If you are attacked, scream as loudly as you can or use your whistle. If this does not work, hit back quickly to hurt him, so that you may be able to get away.**



Protect yourselves. Work with others.



**self defense
Figure**

Avoiding rape by someone you know

Learn to trust your feelings. A woman can learn to recognize when she feels good about a person or a situation, and when she does not. When a woman feels good about someone, she may feel warmth, caring, or attraction toward him. If she can learn to act on these good feelings, it can make her more confident that she will know when she does not like someone.

Be aware if you:

- have a lasting feeling that something is not right.
- feel afraid, or like you want to leave.
- feel uncomfortable with comments or suggestions the person is making.
- dislike the physical contact he makes.

It can be hard to act on these feelings because you may be afraid of what other people will think. In addition, if the person is someone you know or care about, you may not want to admit that he would do you harm. But it is always best to trust your feelings and get out of a situation that feels uncomfortable before anything bad happens.



Trust your feelings. It is better to offend someone if you are wrong than to be raped.

Be prepared to get away:

- **Avoid going somewhere alone with a person who makes you feel uncomfortable or who you do not know well.**
- **Always have a way to get home if you decide you need to leave. It is better not to go somewhere if you will not be able to get back without the person's help.**
- **Tell the person that his comments or touch make you uncomfortable. If he does not change the way he is acting you should get away from him as soon as possible.**

If he has power over you (for example if he is your boss, your doctor, a teacher, or an official):

- **The first time he does something that makes you feel uncomfortable, tell him to stop. If he is trying to take advantage of his power, he will look for someone who is easy to frighten. Let him know that you are not frightened. He is less likely to treat you badly (for example to fire you, refuse you medical care, or deny your request) if you can get him to stop bothering you before he has done anything that makes him look foolish.**
- **Talk to other women about him. You are probably not the only one he has bothered. If you must continue to deal with him, try to bring a friend with**

you so you are never alone with him. Warn other women to be careful.

◆ *Be aware that if a man cannot gain control over a woman through sexual violence, he may try to gain control over her in other ways.*

Help children avoid sexual abuse

- Teach children about the possibility that they may be touched sexually, and how to tell the difference between touching that is affectionate and touching that is sexual.**
- If possible, have girls and boys sleep separately, especially after age 10 or 11 years old.**
- Make sure children know who they can talk to if something should happen to them.**
- Believe a child who says he or she feels uncomfortable around an adult or older child - no matter who that person is.**

◆ *Sometimes sexual abuse of children continues for many years. A girl may be told that she will be harmed or even killed if she tells anyone about it.*

Self Defense for Women

Practice these self defense movements with a friend, so that you will be prepared to fight off an attacker. Hit him as hard as you can. Do not be afraid to hurt him - he is not afraid to hurt you.

If you are attacked from behind



Hit him hard in the stomach with your elbow.



Step down hard on his foot with your heel.

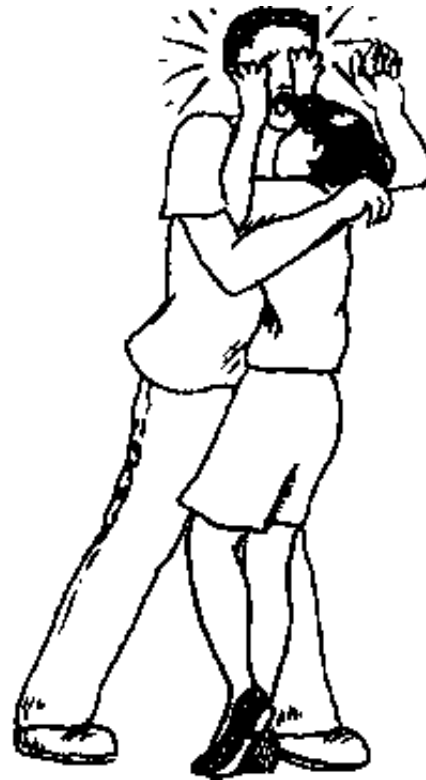


Reach back with your hand, grab his testicles (balls), and squeeze them hard.



With your heel, kick him hard in his lower leg or knee.

If you are attacked from the front



Dig your fingers hard into his eyes.



Make 2 fists and hit him on each side of his head, or on his ears.



Make your hands into fists and hit him as hard as you can on his nose.



Lift your knee, and push it as hard and fast as you can into his testicles (balls).

If You Are Sexually Assaulted

If a woman is able to resist her attacker, she will usually be able to avoid the rape, even if the rapist has a weapon. The more different ways a woman tries to keep from being raped, the more likely she is to be able to avoid the rape, or to suffer fewer injuries and mental health problems from the rape afterward.

It is impossible to know ahead of time how a woman will react when someone is trying to rape her. Some women are filled with rage and feel strength they did not know they had. Others feel like they cannot move. If this should ever happen to you, know that you will do what you can.

Here are some ideas that may help you during a sexual assault:

- Do not cry, plead, or give in. It usually does not help. In fact, women who try this often suffer more injuries than women who fight back.**
- Stay aware. Watch the rapist carefully. There may be times when he is not watching you, or when he loses his control.**
- Try different things. Kick, yell, bargain, trick him - do whatever you can think of to make him realize you are not an easy victim. Try to make him realize that you are a person, not an object.**



Figure

- **If you know the rapist, tell him how you feel. Do not let him believe that women like to be raped. Make him be aware of what he is doing to you.**
- **If the rapist is a stranger, try to memorize what he looks like. How big is he? Does he have scars, marks, or tatoos? What kind of clothes is he wearing? Try to remember them so that you can tell the police and warn the other women in your community.**
- **Use your best judgement. Only you can decide how much to fight back. In some rape situations, for example, during war, the rapist may have no reason to keep you alive if you resist.**

◆ ***If there are several people trying to rape you, or if the rapist has a weapon, you can still resist, but it is usually better not to fight back physically.***

What to Do if You Have Been Raped

Every woman's experience with rape is different. But there are a few things you need to do to help yourself recover.

First, ask yourself these questions:

- **Who can you ask for help?**
- **Do you want to tell the police about the rape?**
- **Where can you go for medical care?**
- **Do you want to try to punish the rapist?**

You need someone to talk to when you feel sad, hurt, scared, or angry, to go with you for medical care, and to help you figure out what to do. Choose someone who cares about you, who you trust will not tell others, and who is strong and dependable. Sometimes a woman's husband or parents are too upset themselves to be able to give much support.

◆ ***Do not blame yourself. You did not deserve to be raped. There was nothing you did that made it right for a man to force sex on you.***

If someone you know has been raped



Figure

- Reassure her that it is not her fault.
- Be supportive. Listen to her feelings, help her decide what she needs, and reassure her that she can go on with her life.
- Respect her wishes for privacy and safety. Do not tell anyone else unless she wants you to.
- Go with her to see a health worker, to report the rape to the police, to talk with someone who is trained to listen and support her, to see a lawyer, and to go to

court if she wants to do those things.

- Do not protect the rapist if you know him. He is a danger to every woman in the community.

The decision to use the law must be made carefully.

- **Can someone go with you to talk to the police?**
- **Has the law helped other women in your community who have been raped?**
- **Do you want the rape to remain private? Can the police keep others from learning about the rape?**
- **Did the rapist threaten to hurt you more if you reported the rape?**
- **If the rapist is caught and you can prove that he raped you, how will he be punished?**

If you think you may want to report the rape to the police, do it as soon after the rape as possible. Do not wash before you go, and bring the clothes that you were wearing in a bag. These things can help you prove that you were raped. Take a friend with you, and ask to have a female health worker examine you, if possible.

♦ *If there is no health worker who can treat you, the information from Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and Tears and cuts can help you prevent and treat*

some of the problems yourself.

If you do not want to go to the police, or if you cannot go until later you should see a health worker anyway - even if you are not badly hurt. Tell the health worker that you have been raped. She should then check you for cuts or tears, and give you some medicines to prevent pregnancy and *sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)*. Ask her to write down everything that she finds because it will help prove to the police or to others in the community that you were raped.



**emergency family
planning, 224**

**STDs, 261
*Figure***

To the health worker

If you see someone who has been raped:

Treat her with kindness and understanding. Do not blame her. Since she may find it difficult for you to see or touch her explain everything and wait until she is ready to be touched. Remember that her feelings about the rape may last for a long time, even years.

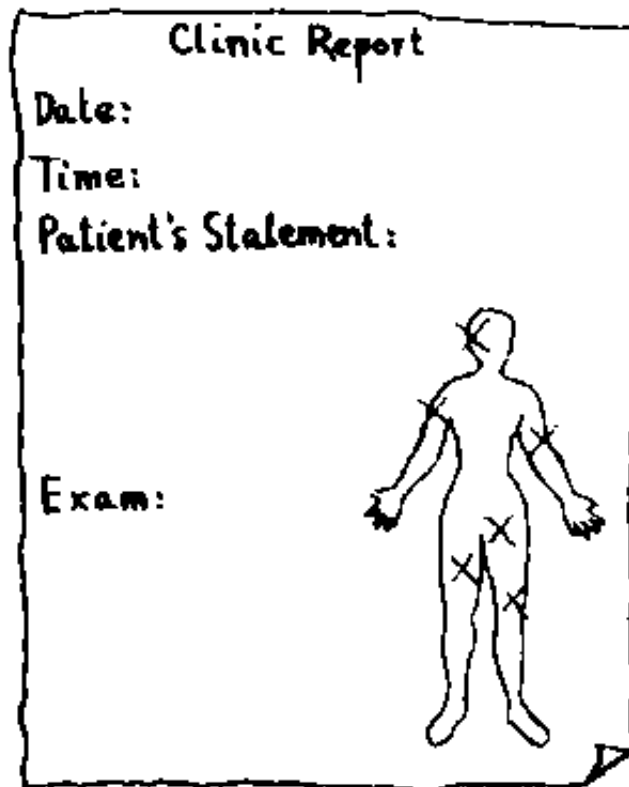
Treat her health problems. Give her medicines to prevent STDs and pregnancy.

If she is already pregnant, help her to decide what she wants to do.



Figure

Write down who raped her and exactly what happened. If your clinic does not keep records, make one and keep it somewhere safe. If you can, draw a picture of the front and back of her body and mark the places where she has been hurt. Show or tell her what you have written and that it can be used to support the fact that she was raped if she goes to the law.



Figure

Treat her mental health needs. Ask her whether she has someone to talk to. Help her to respect herself again and to gain control of her life.

Help her to make her own decisions. If she wants to go to the law, help her find legal services. Help her find other services in the community for women who have been raped.

Help her to tell her partner or her family. If they do not know already, offer to help her tell them. You can help them find ways to support her until she recovers. Remember that family members usually also need help to overcome their feelings

about the rape.

If you go to the police

In most places rape is a crime. But it may take a long time and be very difficult to prove you were raped.

The police will ask you what happened. If you know the rapist, tell them who it is. If you do not, you will need to describe what he looks like. You may have to go with the police to try to find him. You may also be asked to get a medical exam from a legal doctor who works with the police. This is not an exam to help you get well, but to help prove that you were raped.

In some countries, women have worked with the police to have specially trained female police officers to help victims of rape and violence.



Figure

If the rapist is arrested, you will have to identify him, either in front of the police or in front of a judge in court. If there is a trial, try to find a lawyer who has worked with rape cases before. The lawyer will tell you what to expect and help you prepare for the trial. Always take someone with you.

Going to court for a rape is never easy. Describing what happened may make you have the feelings of being raped all over again. Not everyone will be understanding. Some may try to blame you or say you are lying.

◆ *Always take someone with you to the police.*

Health Problems of Rape

Pregnancy

Pregnancy can be prevented if you act quickly and use emergency family planning. You must use it as soon as possible, but no later than 3 days (72 hours) after the rape.

IMPORTANT

In some countries, abortion is safe and legal if a girl or woman has been raped. Ask a health worker or women's organization if this is true in your country.

Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)

STDs are passed more easily with violent sex because the skin in the *vagina* is often torn and the *infection* can get into the woman's body easily. If the man who raped you had an STD, he may have passed it to you. Since you cannot know if he was infected, you should be treated just in case, so you can keep from getting the disease and passing it on to others. Take medicines for gonorrhoea, syphilis, and chlamydia, and watch for signs of other STDs. Take the medicines whether or not you think you were infected. It is better to prevent an STD than to wait for one to start.



**STD medicines, 261
the HIV test, 288
Figure**

You should also try to have an *HIV* test in 6 months. Until then, it is better to use condoms if you have sex to protect your partner from possible infection.

Tears and cuts

Sometimes rape damages the *genitals* by causing tears and cuts. These usually cause pain, but will go away in time. If there is a lot of bleeding, you may need to see a health worker trained to stitch tears. For small cuts and tears:

- **Soak your genitals 3 times each day in warm water that has been boiled and cooled. Putting chamomile leaves in the boiling water can help soothe the tears and help with healing. Or you can put gel from an aloe plant on the tears.**
- **Pour water over your genitals while passing urine so that it will not burn. Drinking a lot of liquid makes the urine weaker so it will burn less.**
- **Watch for signs of infection: heat, yellow liquid (*pus*) from the torn area, a bad smell, and pain that gets worse.**
- **After violent sex it is also common for women to have a *bladder* or *kidney* infection.**



Figure



wounds and sores, 306

bladder and kidney

infections, 366

Figure

Sexual relations after rape

You can have normal sexual relations again after rape. You will need to wait until your genitals no longer hurt and any tears have healed. For many women, having sex makes them think about the rape. If this happens to you, talk with your partner about why you need to wait.



Figure

Sometimes a woman's partner may reject her after she has been raped. He may feel ashamed or act as though he is angry with her. This can be very hard for a woman who is already dealing with many difficult feelings.

Overcoming feelings about the rape

The rape may still bother you long after your body has healed. Here are some common reactions:



Figure

It is important for a woman who has been raped to talk to someone or to do something to help herself feel better after the rape - every woman needs to find her own way to heal. For some women, this can mean performing a ritual. For others it means trying to punish the rapist, or working to prevent other women from being raped. Whatever you do, be patient with yourself and ask others to be patient, too.

◆ *It may take a long time before you feel better, but talking with someone you trust, or who has also survived rape, can help you to heal.*

Working for Change

Rape affects everyone in a community. Women who have been raped can suffer long-lasting problems because of the rape. But almost all women, whether they have been raped or not, learn to be afraid. They learn not to trust men, and they

learn not to do things that attract attention. Women learn not to walk alone, or not to talk to men they do not know.

To create a world in which rape does not happen, we need to work toward having:

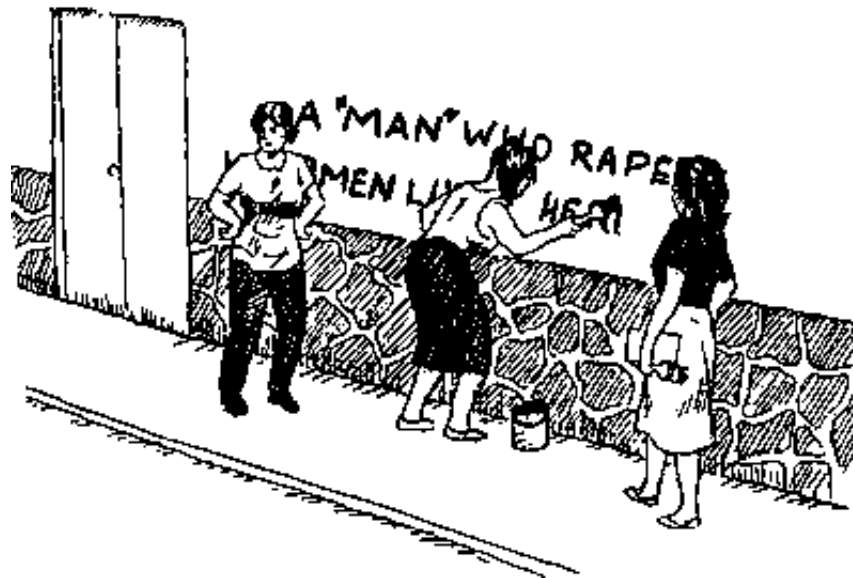
- **communities where a person's choices and behavior are not limited by whether the person is a man or a woman.**
- **an equal chance for everyone to participate in the community.**
- **the chance for men and women to talk openly and honestly with each other about what they each expect from a sexual relationship.**

But until we achieve these goals, we need to find ways to help women who have been raped. We can:

- **educate elected leaders, clergy, and teachers about rape. Ask for their help and make a plan for change.**
- **train doctors and health workers to treat women who have been raped. They should be trained to provide STD testing, emergency family planning, and how to listen and be kind to the woman and her family.**
- **encourage health workers to find out what information their country's laws require in order to punish a rapist, so they can help the woman fill out legal forms.**
- **teach women and girls how to defend themselves.**

- **teach boys and girls about sex and sexuality. Teach girls to be clear about their wishes, and teach boys to ask girls about their wishes and then respect them.**
- **learn about laws in your country that protect women who have been raped, and teach them to others.**

In a small town in El Salvador, the police refused to stop a known rapist because he was the son of a wealthy man. So the women of the town began painting the word 'rapist' outside his house. His family was so ashamed that they forced him to stop.



Figure

How a community in South Africa organized against rape

Early one Saturday morning, a 59-year-old woman was raped and stabbed by a man who

had raped other women in the past. The victim pointed the rapist out to the police. He was arrested and the woman was taken to the hospital. But the police released the rapist the same afternoon. He was not charged with rape or assault - he was free.

We women of the township were very angry. The police had protected a man who made women afraid to walk alone on the streets. The township's women's organization decided to organize a protest.

Most of us work as domestic servants for rich white women who live in a nearby city. So all of us stayed away from our jobs, demanding that the police charge the rapist with rape and assault, before we would go back to work.

We also asked the women we worked for to come to speak with us. We wanted to show and tell them about our problems. We know that all women, black and white, fear rape. We felt the white women might understand and be sympathetic to us. We also wanted the women whose husbands worked for the police to explain our problems to their husbands and how bad it was for them to release a violent rapist back into the township.

But the white women were not sympathetic - they just got angry. We think they were upset because they had to do their own housework. When the Employers' Federation came to see about the protest, we told the men, "Please do not speak for us. This is a women's problem. Men do not get raped." The Employers' Federation would not meet with us, but after a week, a group of white women came to talk to us. We showed them around the township, and they decided to meet with us again. We called off the protest, even though the rapist was only charged with assault, and not rape. But people in the township were so angry that the rapist could no longer live there.

The police arrested several of us who had organized the protest. They did not believe that women had organized the protest. They think men are behind everything that women do. But we women had become very strong.

It is very important to talk openly about the problem of rape. Most people don't talk about rape - they feel ashamed and shy. Often the family of the raped girl or woman does not want to talk about it.

But here it is different. We started organizing in the community for education, child care, pensions, and so on. We started talking about all the problems and things that we need to change. So we talk about rape, and any sexual assault on a woman. People now see sexual assault as another kind of oppression. Men and women think the same about this; we are united in the struggle.

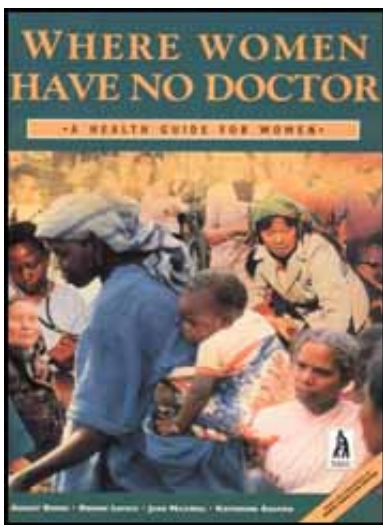
A raped woman is trusted. If she says she was raped, we support her, no matter who she is. Even if she is a drunkard, a rape is still a crime against her. In fact, it is worse because she was in a weak position. Our women and men do not blame a woman for a rape. We do not say that the rape was the woman's fault. So women can talk about sexual violence openly and they will get community support.



Figure



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 **Where Women Have No Doctor - A Health Guide for Women**
(Hesperian Foundation, 1997, 600 p.)

➔ **Chapter 20: Sex Workers**

 **(introduction...)**

Why Women Become Sex Workers

 **(introduction...)**

 **Story of a poor woman**

Health Problems of Sex Workers



STDs, INCLUDING HIV/AIDS

Pregnancy

Violence

How to Protect Yourself from STDs, Including HIV/AIDS

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Working for Change

Negotiating condom use

Strength through organizing

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Chapter 20: Sex Workers



Sex workers' unions are demanding protection of their legal and human rights.

A sex worker is anyone who trades sex for money or other favors. Many people picture sex workers as women who do not wear many clothes, flirt with men, and work in brothels or on the street. But women who sell sex are a diverse group. A sex worker may be a young girl or an older woman with 6 children at home. She may work in a brothel, in a bar or a club, on the street with a *pimp*, or in her own home. What most of these women share in common, though, is that they sell sex because they desperately need money.

◆ *Sex workers, like other women, are working to make a living.*

In this book we use the term 'sex worker' instead of 'prostitute'. We do this because many people think of a prostitute as a bad woman who should be punished. The term 'sex worker' emphasizes that sex workers, like other women, are working to make a living. For the same reason, we call the men who buy sex 'clients' or 'customers'.

There are also many women who do not think of themselves as sex workers, yet occasionally they trade sex for favors, like a place to live or a job. We call this 'survival sex'. These women face many of the same problems that sex workers face.

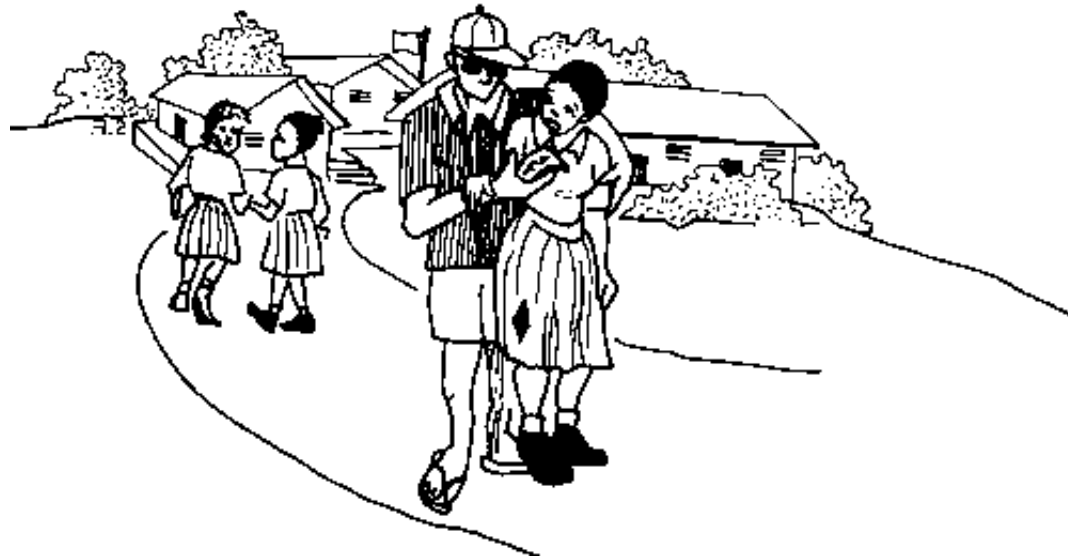
The purpose of this chapter is to provide information on the health problems sex workers face, and about ways sex workers can help themselves. It also helps people understand what life is like for women who must trade sex to survive.

Why Women Become Sex Workers

Many people think women become sex workers because they are immoral or too lazy to find other work. But most women do so because they need money and have no other way to earn it. These women need money for food and shelter, to support their children and families, to pay debts, or to buy drugs.

◆ *Most women who sell sex would rather have a job that pays well and that gives them dignity and respect.*

This desperate need often arises in situations a woman cannot control: for example, her husband dies, or she gets divorced, or her husband or family abandons her. Or she may be raped or have an unplanned pregnancy and find that no one will marry her. If she has no job skills or ways to get money, she sells the only thing she has - her body - in order to survive.



This young girl did not have enough money to be able to finish her education. She cannot find a job, so she must sell sex to buy food and clothes.

Story of a poor woman

Every morning around 9 o'clock, Nawal (not her real name) steps out of the tiny room she shares with her husband, locks her two small children inside, and walks to the wealthy area of town where she 'works'. Wearing a traditional dress with faded colors and a cheap black scarf thrown loosely around her head, she looks just like any other poor woman you see everywhere in Cairo, Egypt. She is not. Nawal is 20 years old and she is a prostitute.

'Working' a certain street until it is time to go home around 2 or 3 in the afternoon, Nawal earns an average of LE. 20 (US \$6) a day. She does not work on Fridays or religious holidays so she can spend time with her family: her husband, who works occasionally as a construction worker, a 4-year-old son, and a 1-year-old daughter.

Nawal's father was blind, and he made money by begging in central Cairo. When she was a young girl, Nawal spent more time in the street guiding her father around than at home. She never saw her mother. At 13, she got married.

Two years later, after giving birth to her son, she had to look for a job. Her husband was getting less and less work. With no education or skills, Nawal tried working as a house cleaner in an apartment building. But she stopped when the building guards refused to introduce her to customers unless she had sex with them.

Nawal does not use the word 'prostitute' to describe herself. She refers to herself as a servant. She knows she has to save money for her children: "I want my children to go to school so that they don't grow up to be criminals."

Because her work is not considered 'real' work, Nawal, and thousands of women like her,

get no help from the government or the police. Nawal has been robbed several times, but no one would help her. Officially, she does not exist. And the thing that really puzzles her is that a lot of people think that she enjoys sex work. She does not. She just does not know any better way to survive.

- from an interview by Ahmed Badawi

◆ ***Because many men fear they will become infected with HIV/AIDS when they have sex with older sex workers, there is an increasing demand for younger girl children to work in the sex trade.***

Other women are forced into sex work. Often women are tricked into thinking they are going to get jobs or rich husbands in other countries and are sold into sex work instead. Then it is almost impossible to stop selling sex. The woman may be in a new country illegally where she has no rights, no money, and no way to return home. She may have large debts to repay, or her employer may threaten to hurt her if she leaves. She has become a sexual slave.



This girl was sold by her family, thinking she would get a job in another country. Instead, she was sold again to a brothel owner who forces her to sell sex.



This woman lost her home and land when her husband died, because there were no laws saying his property must be given to his wife. Now she has no money. She started selling sex to feed her children.

Health Problems of Sex Workers

STDs, INCLUDING HIV/AIDS

Because of her work, a sex worker has a greater risk of getting *sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)* and HIV/AIDS than other women. Her risk is increased because sex work does not pay well, and so she must take a large

number of clients each day. She may want to protect herself by using condoms and other safer sex practices, but the men who pay her can make this difficult. They may demand sex in the *vagina* or *anus* but refuse to use *condoms*. They may even become violent if she refuses unsafe sex practices.

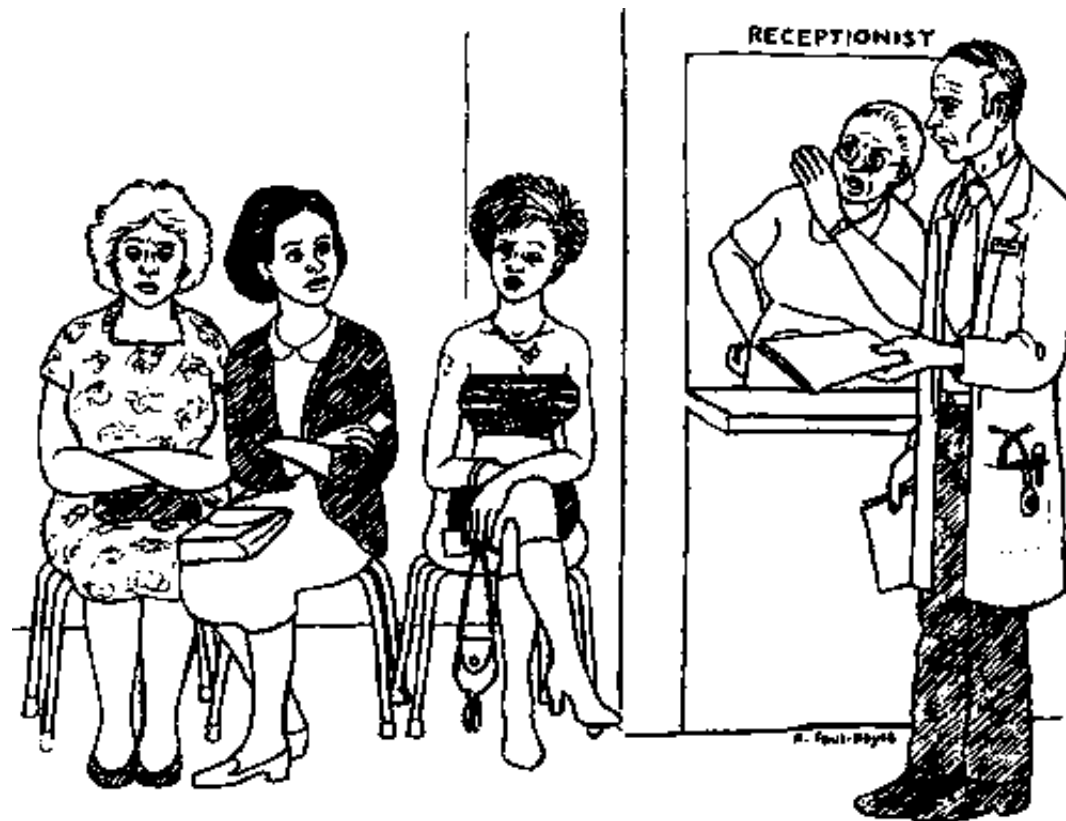
If a sex worker is *addicted* to drugs, her need for drugs may make her more willing to exchange unsafe sex for money or drugs, and less able to take care of herself.

As with any woman, if a sex worker gets an STD, it may lead to *infertility* or *cancer* of the *cervix*. *Infection* with an STD like herpes, syphilis, gonorrhea, or chlamydia greatly increases her chance of also becoming infected with HIV/AIDS. These risks are even more serious for young girls. Since their *genitals* are not fully grown, they can be damaged more easily during sex.



In some communities up to 9 out of 10 sex workers are infected with HIV.

Many sex workers do not have good information about STDs, or about how to treat or prevent them. Information and health services are often not available to sex workers because of people's prejudice against them. When sex workers do go to a health center for help, they may be treated badly or refused services.



Figure

Are sex workers responsible for HIV/AIDS?

Sex workers are blamed for much of the AIDS epidemic. But it is the men who buy sex from them who infect sex workers **and** often their own wives. By blaming sex workers, these men fail to take responsibility for spreading the disease.

Sex workers **want** to practice safer sex. But HIV and AIDS may not seem like the most important problem they face. They often have more immediate, daily problems - such as bad treatment by the police, low wages, dirty and expensive hotels, difficult or violent men, and problems with keeping clean, getting enough to eat, and taking care of their

children. If a sex worker does become infected with HIV, she may have no choice but to continue selling sex to survive. As one sex worker says:

"Those who blame us do so on full stomachs. I should feed myself and my children adequately. My children should go to school. To say that AIDS kills without giving me a well-paid job is like saying I should die of hunger. To me, that is the only way to survive."

Pregnancy

Women who sell sex need safe, effective, and low-cost *family planning* methods to prevent pregnancy. If these methods are not available in her community, a sex worker is likely to have an unwanted pregnancy. If she continues the pregnancy and must also continue selling sex, she puts both herself and her unborn baby at risk for *complications* or STDs. Or she may feel she has no other choice but to have an unsafe *abortion*. All these situations are dangerous.



**choosing a family
planning method, 200**

**unsafe abortion, 241
Figure**



**self-defense for
women
Figure**

Violence

A sex worker may live with others in a house for sex work (brothel) or work on the street. These conditions make it easy for her to be violently attacked, raped, or robbed, especially if she is a child. If a sex worker is 'owned' or controlled by a man who gets part of her money (pimp), he will often use violence to keep her under his control.

◆ In some places, women can be arrested for sex work simply by having condoms for their own protection.

Because sex work is illegal in most countries, a sex worker is often denied any legal rights, including protection from the police. Or she may have to pay the police a large part of her earnings in exchange for 'protection'. Since most laws are made to protect men from 'immoral' women, a sex worker may be arrested, beaten, harassed, or even *raped* by the police instead.



Figure

If you are being mistreated by the law because you are a sex worker, try to learn more about your rights. There may be a prostitutes' rights group in your city or country. Or you can write to one of the organizations listed for advice on how to organize a group.

How to Protect Yourself from STDs, Including HIV/AIDS

Many women do not have the choice to stop selling sex. If you must continue, it is important to protect yourself from STDs and HIV/AIDS. For more information, see the section on 'Safer Sex', and the chapters on "Sexually Transmitted Diseases and Other Infections of the Genitals" and "Family Planning".

Here are some other ideas:

- Use *latex* condoms every time you have sex. Make sure you always have condoms when you work.**



Figure

• **Hand sex (manual *masturbation*), oral sex, or sex stories (*fantasy*), are safer than sex in your vagina or anus if you cannot get a client to use a condom.**

♦ ***"If they don't want to use a condom, I ask them if they ever listen to the news, if they have ever heard of AIDS. I tell them I'm not willing to take the chance."***

- Jolanda

• **If you are unable to use a male or female condom, using spermicide alone or with a *diaphragm* will give less protection than a condom, but it is better than no method at all.**

- Spermicides give some protection against 2 common STDs, gonorrhea and chlamydia. But using spermicides too often can also irritate the skin in your vagina, making it easier for germs to pass through the skin and infect you with an STD, especially HIV. Spermicides used every other day are less likely to cause irritation.



Figure

- You can put your diaphragm in before you begin work, in case the man refuses to use a condom. Add spermicide between sex acts, but do not remove the diaphragm. It must stay in for 6 hours after you have finished working.



Figure

◆ Protecting yourself and others from STDs means having safer sex with your clients, and also with your husband or boyfriend.

IMPORTANT

Do not use chemicals like bleach or detergent to wash our your vagina. They can cause serious injury!

- **Inspect your clients' genitals for sores or *discharge* before you have sex. Refuse to have sex with any man who has signs of an STD. Remember you cannot tell by looking if a person has HIV/AIDS.**

Treatment for STDs when protection fails

It is always best to prevent STDs by practicing safer sex. But sometimes these methods fail. Condoms can break, or clients can refuse to use them.

♦ *STDs that are not treated quickly can lead to serious illness and even death.*

Get early treatment

If you think you have been exposed to an STD, early treatment can prevent the infection from getting worse. STDs that are not treated quickly can lead to serious illness and even death.

If possible, have regular exams for STDs. If you are having signs of an STD - discharge or bleeding from your vagina, pain or sores on your genitals, or pain in your lower belly - see a health worker trained to treat STDs as soon as possible. Even if you have no signs of infection, go to a health center or clinic at least once a month for treatment if you have unsafe sex often. If you use condoms every time you have sex, you may need to visit a health center less often.



Figure

Since you probably do not know what STDs you have been exposed to, you should be treated for as many as possible. Different *antibiotics* can treat different STDs, so you may need to take several medicines at once. Remember, no medicine can cure HIV/AIDS. See the chapter on “Sexually Transmitted Diseases and Other Infections of the Genitals” for information about how to treat STDs.

◆ *If you are at very great risk for getting STDs because of unsafe sex, a medicine called azithromycin can be useful because it treats a number of STDs with only one dose.*

Testing for AIDS

If you want to be tested for the HIV/AIDS virus, see The HIV Test. Check with

your local clinic to see if they have a National AIDS Control Program. They may have special programs for testing sex workers for HIV and for treating their problems if they have AIDS.

IMPORTANT

When you take antibiotics to treat STDs, be sure to take the recommended dose for the full amount of time. If you take too small an amount, or do not take it for the right number of days, your signs may go away, but the infection stays in your body and continues to cause damage. And the next time you try to treat the infection it will be harder to cure. Then you may need to use other, more expensive drugs. Many medicines that once worked for STDs are no longer effective because people used them incorrectly.

Working for Change

Negotiating condom use

In order to get more men to use condoms, men must believe that it is in their own interest and that of their sex partners to prevent STDs, including HIV/AIDS. This kind of education is best done at the community level.

As a sex worker, you can help by joining together with other sex workers to make condom use the expected or normal practice. Then clients will begin to want to use condoms.

◆ *Use role plays to practice negotiating condom use with your clients. Ask other sex workers to practice with you.*

When you are with clients, your attitude is important. If you believe in yourself and know what you are talking about, you are more likely to convince a man that condom use makes good sense. Here are some ideas:

- **Explain that condoms can:**
 - **protect him as well as you from disease.**
 - **make him less likely to pass on STDs to his wife.**
 - **make his pleasure last longer**
- **Assure him that you will still make sex good for him.**
- **If you practice oral sex, learn to put the condom on with your mouth.**



Figure

A sex worker in a discotheque in Duala, Cameroon, tells the following story:

Where I work, we understand the risk to our health and our lives from HIV and AIDS, so

all the girls are given condoms. We teach our clients that it is in their own interest to protect themselves. Most clients now agree. We make sure that the act will be enjoyable, so they will come back for more.

But there are always those men who think that by not using condoms, they are being 'real men'. That going 'live' is getting the real thing. We almost always find that after a guy has tried without luck to get 4 or 5 of us to have unsafe sex, he will either just leave or agree to see if he can have just as much pleasure with a condom on. If he insists on unsafe sex, we gather together and chase him out!

We do not like to lose clients, but we value our lives and our health. Slowly, things are changing. Where we work, Using condoms has become the smart thing.



Sex workers are organizing to improve their lives. They want the same things as other women.

Strength through organizing

Because of their low status as poor women and as sex workers, women who sell sex sometimes feel unworthy and unable to change their lives. Working alone, it can be very difficult for a sex worker to make her clients use condoms, or to protect herself from violence.

◆ *"I used to work in a club where we didn't always use condoms. There was a lot of pressure NOT to. So I left. Now I work in a house where condoms are the RULE. It saves me a lot of worrying and arguing."* - Anita

But in many places sex workers have learned that by working together they have more power to make the changes necessary to improve their lives. In some places sex workers are organizing to improve their working conditions, by insisting that their clients use condoms, or organizing against rough treatment from police. In other places, sex workers with the help of others in their community have started programs to get training, or to learn new skills so they will be less dependent on sex work.

Here are some ideas that sex workers from around the world have shared about how they are working together and working with others to make their lives better.

Teach each other how to make your work safer. You can get a group of sex workers together to talk about:

- how to use condoms to prevent STDs, including HIV/AIDS, and how to get treatment for STDs when necessary.

- family planning methods, how to get them, and how to use them.
- how to choose a customer and avoid dangerous situations.
- how to support each other in handling a client's unwanted demands.
- how to limit the time a sex worker spends with clients.

Organize for greater safety. Working together and supporting each other can help sex workers reduce the threat of violence from clients, police, and pimps. Join with other sex workers to plan how you can support and protect each other.

Learn new skills. You can work to organize programs that teach reading and writing or job skills. Sometimes sex workers can teach each other new skills, or it may be possible to get help from people in your community who can be teachers.



Figure

When a sex worker has other skills, she can earn some money doing other jobs.

She then has more choice over which man to have sex with, or she can refuse a client if she does not feel safe.



Figure

Create a loan fund. A group of sex workers in Nairobi, Kenya, joined their money to create a loan fund for their members. Many use the fund to pay their children's school fees. Other groups have used loan funds to help each other set up small businesses so they can earn money in other ways besides sex work.

Many groups of sex workers are trying to change the negative ways other people think

about them. For example, a sex workers' organization in Calabar, Nigeria does not allow members to fight in the streets or in the brothel. Members are also not allowed to use language or wear clothes that may offend the community. By changing the things that had made it easy for the community to criticize sex workers, they hope that people will begin to understand that sex workers are just women doing a job to survive.

The community can help

Community members can help sex workers to organize for safer working conditions. You can:

- **demand laws that punish those who exploit sex workers. This includes brothel owners, pimps and middlemen, police, clients, and drug pushers.**
- **pressure police to stop violent treatment of sex workers.**
- **work for laws that encourage condom use by clients of sex workers. For example, in Thailand, the Ministry of Health requires sex workers to use condoms. If they do not, the brothel can be shut down or have to pay a fine. This law has helped sex workers to insist upon condoms. This protects the sex workers, the men who pay them, and their wives.**



Figure

You can also work to prevent children from being sold or forced into sex work:

- **Talk with parents in your community about the dangers of selling girls into service in other countries.**
- **Provide help, such as jobs, *counseling*, and a place to stay, for children who run away from their families. With your help they will not be forced to sell sex to survive.**


To the health worker

You can make the biggest difference in the life of a sex worker by helping her to get the care she needs:

- Give the same respectful care to sex workers as you give to others.
- Learn to diagnose and treat STDs. See the chapter on "Sexually Transmitted Diseases and Other Infections of the Genitals".
- Learn which medicines provide the most up-to-date, affordable treatment, and try to keep a supply available.
- Find a regular and adequate supply of free or cheap condoms for your community. Make them available at health clinics, local shops, bars, cafes, and from outreach workers.
- Make sure health services are available, including family planning, *abortion*, and free or low-cost treatment of STDs and drug abuse.

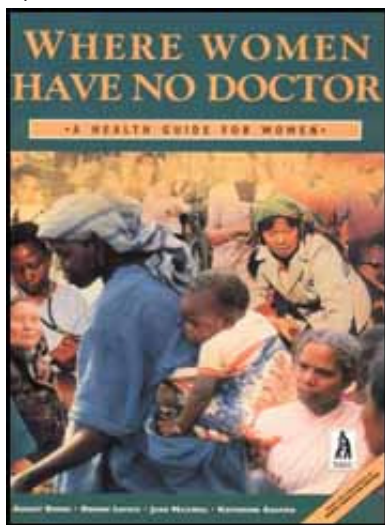


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  **Chapter 21: Pain in the Lower Abdomen**

 ***(introduction...)***



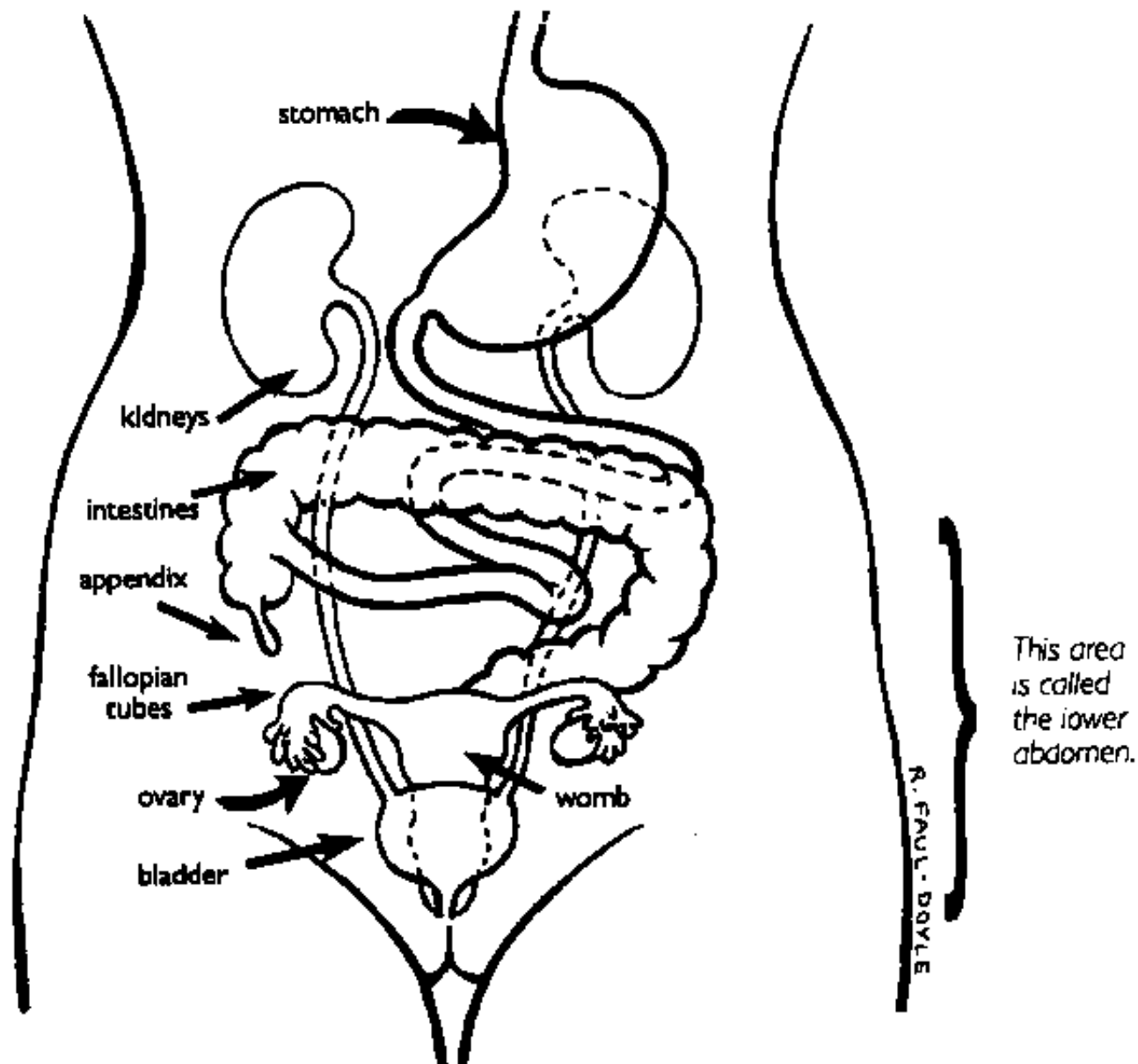
- 📄 **Sudden, Severe Pain in the Abdomen**
- 📄 **Kinds of Pain in the Lower Abdomen**
 - 📄 **(introduction...)**
 - 📄 **During monthly bleeding**
 - 📄 **After childbirth, abortion or miscarriage**
 - 📄 **With fever**
 - 📄 **With diarrhea**
 - 📄 **During pregnancy**
 - 📄 **With urination**
 - 📄 **With discharge or light bleeding from the vagina**
 - 📄 **During sex**
 - 📄 **When moving, walking or lifting**
 - 📄 **In the middle of the monthly cycle**
 - 📄 **Within 3 weeks of getting an IUD**
 - 📄 **Without other signs**
- 📄 **Questions about Pain in the Abdomen**

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Chapter 21: Pain in the Lower Abdomen

How to use this chapter:

- 1. For sudden, severe pain in the belly or abdomen, see Sudden, Severe Pain in the Abdomen and follow that advice.**
- 2. Look up the different kinds of pain on Kinds of Pain in the Lower Abdomen. Most of these problems are described in other parts of the book.**
- 3. If you are still unsure of the cause of the pain, look at the questions on Questions About Pain in the Abdomen.**
- 4. For information on how to examine a woman with pain in the abdomen, see How to Examine the Abdomen.**



The reproductive organs are in a woman's lower abdomen, along with other internal organs.

Most women have pain in the lower belly or abdomen at some time in their lives.

Often women are taught that this pain is normal for them, and that they should endure such pain in silence. Some people think that a woman's pain is not serious until she cannot stand, walk or talk. But when a woman waits that long to seek care for pain, the result could be serious *infection, infertility, loss of a pregnancy, and even death.*

♦ *Pain should not be a normal part of a woman's life - it is a sign that something is wrong. Seek care before you are so ill that you cannot stand, walk, or talk.*

This chapter describes different kinds of pain in the lower abdomen (below the *navel*), and what might be causing the pain. Some pain in the lower abdomen spreads above the navel and could have other causes. Some problems of the lower abdomen will also cause pain in the low back. If the pain seems different from what is described in this chapter, see a health worker trained to give an abdominal exam.

Sudden, Severe Pain in the Abdomen

Some lower abdominal pain is an emergency. If you have any of the following danger signs, go to the nearest hospital. A trained health worker will need to do an *examination* of your abdomen, a *pelvic exam*, and perhaps special tests. For information about how to do an abdominal exam and a pelvic exam, see How to Examine the Abdomen.

Danger signs:

- sudden, severe pain in the abdomen

- high fever
- nausea and vomiting
- swollen abdomen, which is hard like a piece of wood
- silent abdomen (no noises)



Figure

Kinds of Pain in the Lower Abdomen

Pain in the lower abdomen can have many causes. It can be difficult to find the cause because so many organs in the abdomen are close together.

During monthly bleeding

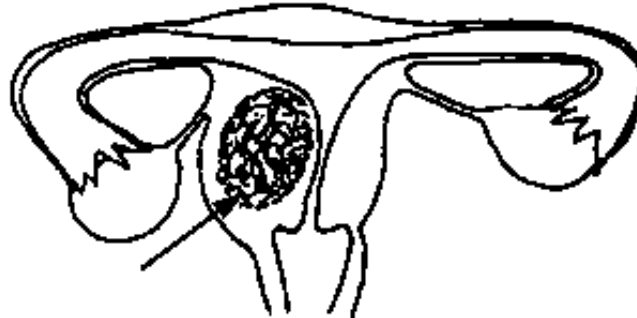
Pain in the lower abdomen can have many causes. It can be difficult to find the cause because so many organs in the abdomen are close together

Kind of pain	May be caused by	What to do
Severe, unusual pain during <i>monthly bleeding</i> or after a monthly bleeding was missed		URGENT! Go to a hospital right away.



pregnancy in the tube

Ongoing pain during monthly bleeding



fibroids

See 'pain with monthly bleeding', and 'problems of the womb'

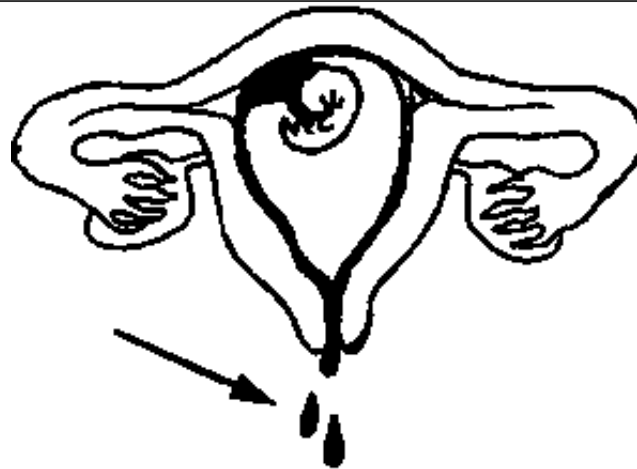
Use a mild pain medicine.

Cramps during monthly bleeding

normal squeezing of the womb. Some kinds of *intra-uterine devices* (IUDs) may make the pain worse.

See 'pain with monthly bleeding'

If the monthly bleeding is late



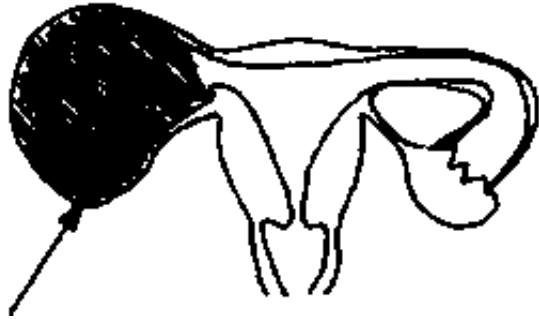
miscarriage

If pain becomes severe, go to a hospital.

After childbirth, abortion or miscarriage

Kind of pain	May be caused by	What to do
Pain after childbirth, miscarriage, or abortion	infection from pieces of afterbirth (placenta) left in the <i>womb</i> , or germs that got into the womb during the birth or abortion	See 'womb infection', and 'infection after abortion'.

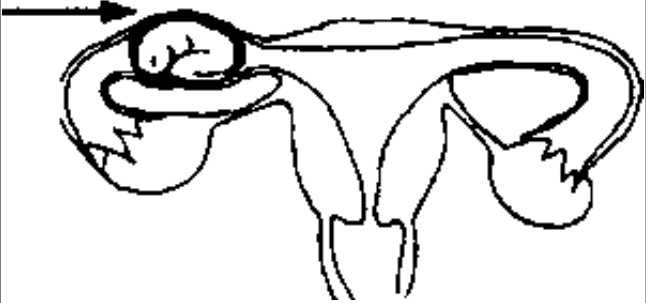

With fever

Kind of pain	May be caused by	What to do
Severe pain with fever (infection)		
with or after having an STD or pelvic infection on	 <p><i>another pelvic infection, or a pocket of pus in the abdomen (pelvic abscess)</i></p>	URGENT! Go to a hospital right away.
one side of the abdomen, with <i>fever, nausea, vomiting</i> , and no appetite	<i>appendicitis</i> or other <i>intestinal</i> infection	URGENT! Go to a hospital right away.
	kidney infection	See 'bladder and

With diarrhea

Kind of pain	May be caused by	What to do
Pain with <i>diarrhea</i>	intestinal infection from bacteria or parasites	See 'diarrhea'.

During pregnancy

Kind of pain	May be caused by	What to do
Severe pain in the first 3 months of pregnancy, often with bleeding that comes and goes	 <p><i>pregnancy in the tube</i></p>	URGENT! Go to a hospital right away.
Severe pain in the last 3 months of pregnancy, with or without bleeding		URGENT! Go to a hospital right away.



***placenta has pulled away
from the wall of the womb***

Mild, occasional pain during pregnancy

probably normal

No treatment
needed.

With urination

Kind of pain	May be caused by		What to do
Pain with frequent urination	<i>bladder or kidney infection</i>		See 'bladder and kidney infections',



Figure

Pain with blood in the urine

kidney stone

See 'kidney or bladder stones'.

With discharge or light bleeding from the vagina


Kind of pain	May be caused by	What to do
<p><i>Pain with discharge or light bleeding from the vagina, sometimes with fever</i></p>		<p>See 'pelvic inflammatory disease', 'womb infection', and 'infection after abortion'.</p>



Figure

pelvic infection which may be caused by a *sexually transmitted disease (STD)*, or by infection after miscarriage, abortion, or childbirth

During sex

Kind of pain	May be caused by	What to do
Pain during sex	pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), or scars from an old pelvic infection	See 'PID'.
		See 'problems of the ovaries'.



a growth on ovary (ovarian cyst)

fibroids

See 'problems of the womb'.

unwanted sex

See 'if sex is painful'.

When moving, walking or lifting

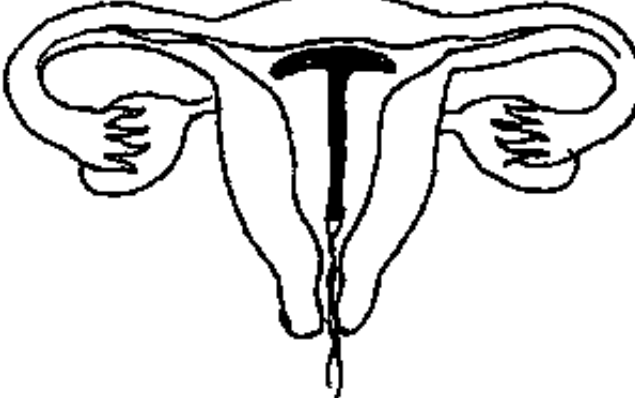
Kind of pain	May be caused by	What to do
Pain when moving, walking, or lifting	old pelvic infection, or any of the reasons listed above	Use mild pain medicine if needed.

In the middle of the monthly cycle

Kind of pain	May be caused by	What to do
Pain that lasts only a few hours in the middle of your <i>monthly cycle</i>	<p><i>the lining of the abdomen gets irritated when the ovary releases an egg (ovulation)</i></p>	<p>Use mild pain medicine if needed.</p> <p>See the chapter on "Understanding Our Bodies."</p>

because there is blood a small amount of blood

Within 3 weeks of getting an IUD

Kind of pain	May be caused by	What to do
Pain within 3 weeks of getting an intra-uterine device (IUD)	 <p data-bbox="869 829 1682 973"><i>infection with an IUD is most common soon after the IUD is put in</i></p>	See a health worker right away.

Without other signs

Kind of pain	May be caused by	What to do
Pain without other signs	pelvic infections, which can cause constant or on-and-off pain in the abdomen or lower back that lasts for months or years	See a health worker trained to do a pelvic exam.
	intestinal infection from bacteria or parasites	See a health worker or

	intestinal infection from <i>bacteria</i> or <i>parasites</i>	See a health worker or Where There Is No Doctor.
	<i>tumor</i> or growth on the womb or ovary	See a health worker trained to do a pelvic exam.

Questions about Pain in the Abdomen

If your pain does not fit one of the kinds described on the previous pages, these questions may help to learn more about it.

What is the pain like? Is it sharp and severe - or dull, achy, and not so bad? Does it come and go, or is it constant?

- **Terrible pain that comes and goes could be from a kidney stone. Severe grabbing, clenching, or cramping pain could be from an intestinal problem.**
- **Sharp, severe pain, especially just in one place, could be appendicitis or a pregnancy outside the womb in the tube.**

How long has the pain lasted?

- **Sudden, severe pain that does not get better is probably serious. It could be from a pregnancy in the tube, appendicitis or other gut problems, something wrong with the ovary, or pelvic inflammatory disease (PID).**
- **Pain that lasts for many days or weeks, especially if it is not severe, may**

be caused by scars from an old infection, indigestion, or nerves. It may be possible to treat this at home.

Does the pain affect your hunger?

- **If you have pain in the abdomen and you DO NOT want to eat anything, you may have a serious infection in your intestines, or appendicitis.**
- **If you have pain and you DO feel like eating, you probably do not have one of these problems.**

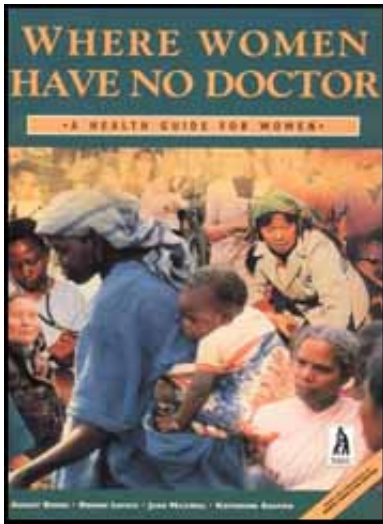
For more information on pain in the lower abdomen, see *Where There Is No Doctor* or another general medical book.


Yuni, go to the clinic today to see about this pain you are having. It will only get worse.



A woman who walks with pain today could die from it tomorrow. Get help early if you are not sure.





 **Where Women Have No Doctor - A Health Guide for Women (Hesperian Foundation, 1997, 600 p.)**

  **Chapter 22: Abnormal Bleeding from the Vagina**

 **(introduction...)**

 **Problems with Monthly Bleeding**

 **Heavy monthly bleeding, or bleeding that lasts a long time**

 **Light monthly bleeding**

 **Monthly bleeding that comes too often, or bleeding at other times**

 **When monthly bleedings come too far apart, or have stopped**

 **Other Kinds of Bleeding Problems**

 **Bleeding during pregnancy or after childbirth**

 **Bleeding after an abortion or miscarriage**

 **Bleeding after sex**

 **Bleeding after menopause**

Where Women Have No Doctor - A Health Guide for Women (Hesperian Foundation, 1997, 600 p.)

Chapter 22: Abnormal Bleeding from the Vagina

How to use this chapter:

Most of the causes of the bleeding problems in this chapter are described in other parts of this book. If you have a bleeding problem, look it up here and then turn to the numbered page listed for more information. If the problem is not covered in this book, see a health worker trained to do pelvic exams,



Figure

It is normal for *monthly bleeding* to change from time to time because of illness, stress, pregnancy, breastfeeding, a long journey, overwork, or a change in diet. But if a change in monthly bleeding happens suddenly, lasts more than a few months, or if it comes with other problems, it may be a sign of a more serious

problem.

◆ ***If monthly bleeding suddenly changes, always think about the possibility of pregnancy - even if a family planning method is being used.***

Danger signs

If a woman has any of these danger signs, she may need medical help right away. Turn to the numbered page listed for more information.

- bleeding and pain in the abdomen when regular monthly bleeding has been missed
- bleeding in late pregnancy
- heavy bleeding after childbirth, *miscarriage*, or *abortion*



**monthly bleeding
Figure**



pregnancy

Figure

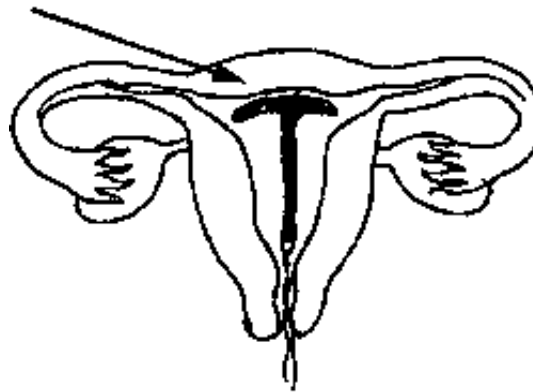
Problems with Monthly Bleeding

Heavy monthly bleeding, or bleeding that lasts a long time

- **Monthly bleeding is heavy if a pad or cloth is soaked through in less than one hour**
- **Monthly bleeding is long if it lasts for more than 8 days.**
- **Blood clots (soft, dark red, shiny lumps in the blood that look like liver) are also a sign of heavy bleeding,**
- **Heavy bleeding that goes on for many weeks, months or years can cause weak blood (*anemia*).**

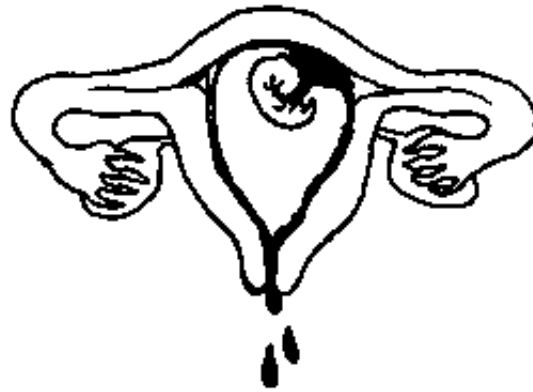
Causes:

- The *hormones* may be out of balance so the *ovary* does not release an egg. This is common for women under 20 and women over 40 years of age.
- An *intra-uterine device (IUD)* may be making monthly bleeding more heavy.



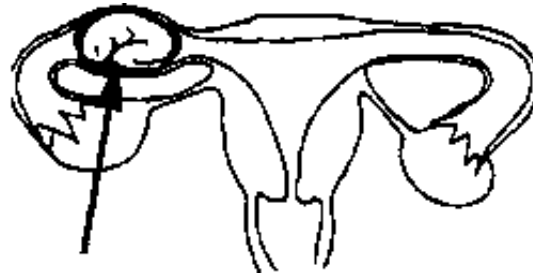
Figure

- *Miscarriage*, even if you did not think you were pregnant.



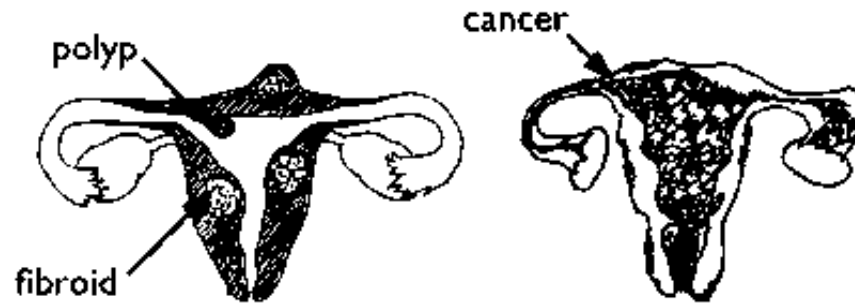
Figure

- If you have pain in the abdomen with bleeding, you may have a pregnancy outside the womb in the tube. URGENT. Go to a hospital right away.



Figure

- You may have a problem with the *thyroid gland*.
- You may have growths (*fibroids* or *polyps*) or *cancer* in your womb.



Figure

IMPORTANT

See a health worker trained to do pelvic exams if you have heavy bleeding and:

- ***blood gushes from your vagina.***
- ***monthly bleeding has been heavy and long for 3 months.***
- ***you think you might be pregnant.***
- ***you have severe pain with the bleeding.***

Light monthly bleeding

Light bleeding each month is not a health problem.



family planning,
changes in bleeding
Figure

Causes:

- **Some family planning methods - like injections, *implants*, and the pill - can make you bleed less after you have been using them for some time.**
- **Your ovaries may not have released an egg.**

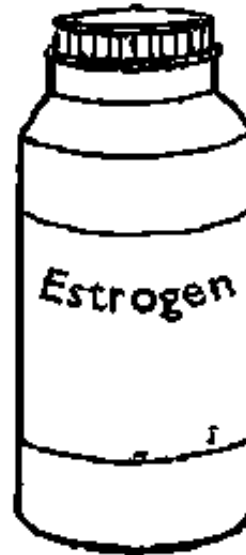
Monthly bleeding that comes too often, or bleeding at other times

Something may be wrong if monthly bleeding comes more often than every 3 weeks, or if it comes and goes without a regular pattern.

Causes:

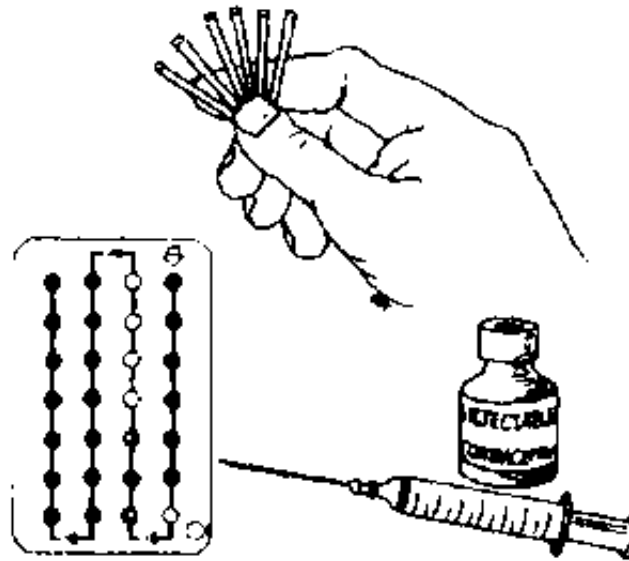
- **The ovary may not have released an egg.**
- **There may be growths (fibroids or polyps) or cancer in the womb, especially if monthly bleeding is heavy and not regular.**

- **Taking the medicine called estrogen after *menopause*.**



Figure

- **Some family planning methods - like the pill, *implants*, and injections - can cause you to bleed more often.**



Figure

◆ ***Hormonal family planning methods such as pills, implants, or injections, can change monthly bleeding.***

When monthly bleedings come too far apart, or have stopped

Monthly bleeding usually comes about every 21 to 35 days. It may be normal to have an even longer time between bleeding. But something may be wrong, or you may be pregnant, if your monthly bleeding does not come at all.

◆ ***If you are over 18 and have never had a monthly period, get medical help.***

Causes:

- **You may be pregnant.**
- **You may be pregnant and having a miscarriage.**


- **The ovary may not have released an egg.**
- **You may have a serious illness - like *malaria, tuberculosis* or *AIDS*.**
- **If you are over 40 or 45, you may be nearing menopause.**
- **Some family planning methods - like the pill, injections, and implants - can make monthly bleedings come far apart.**

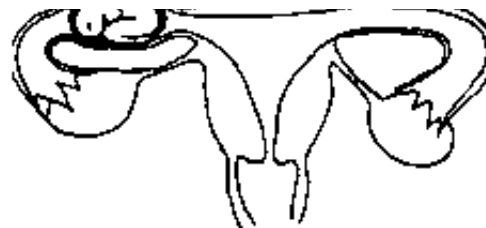


When a woman grows older, her monthly cycle changes.

Other Kinds of Bleeding Problems

Bleeding during pregnancy or after childbirth

Bleeding problem	May be caused by	What to do
Bleeding during the first 3 months with constant pain or pain that comes and goes		URGENT! Go to a hospital right away.



pregnancy in the tube

Bleeding during the last 3 months of pregnancy

the afterbirth (*placenta*) is coming off the wall of the *womb*

URGENT! Go to a hospital right away.



Figure

the placenta is covering the *cervix*

Bleeding during the first 6 months of pregnancy

Watch and wait. If bleeding becomes heavy, go to a hospital.





Figure

may be a *miscarriage* (especially if you also have *cramping* pains like birth pains)

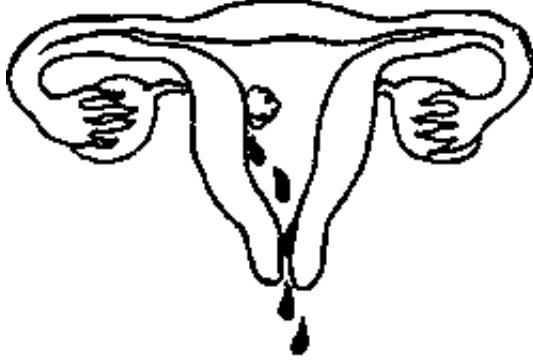
Heavy bleeding during or just after childbirth

pieces of the placenta are left in the womb



Figure

URGENT! See a midwife or go to a hospital if bleeding is heavy.

	the womb is too tired to squeeze or tighten	
Light, pink bleeding during the first 3 months of pregnancy without pain	this can be normal, or it may be a sign of early miscarriage	See 'bleeding early in pregnancy'.
Spotting or light bleeding instead of your normal monthly bleeding	the developing baby (<i>fetus</i>) is attaching to the wall of the womb (<i>implantation</i>). This is normal.	See the chapter on "Pregnancy and Childbirth."
	 <p style="text-align: center;">Figure</p>	

Bleeding after an abortion or miscarriage

Bleeding problem	May be caused by	What to do
Heavy bleeding, or bleeding that lasts longer than 15 days, or bleeding with pain or fever	pieces of the pregnancy may still be in the womb	Go to a hospital or clinic right away.

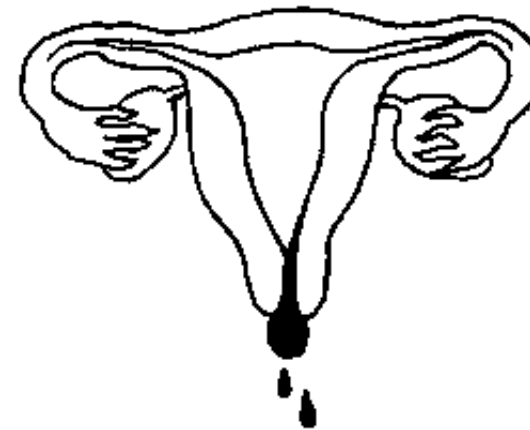


Figure

Bleeding like a normal monthly bleeding, but lasting 5 to 15 days, getting lighter and lighter

infection in the womb
this is normal

See 'what to expect after an abortion'.



Figure

Bleeding after sex

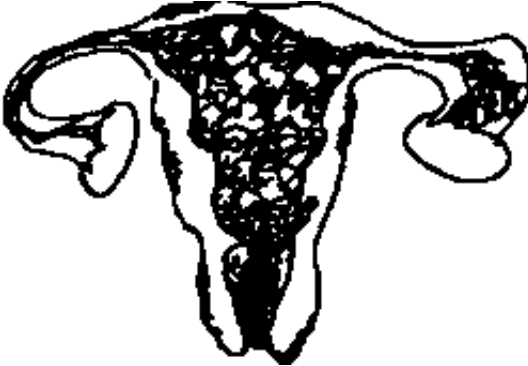
Bleeding problem

May be caused by

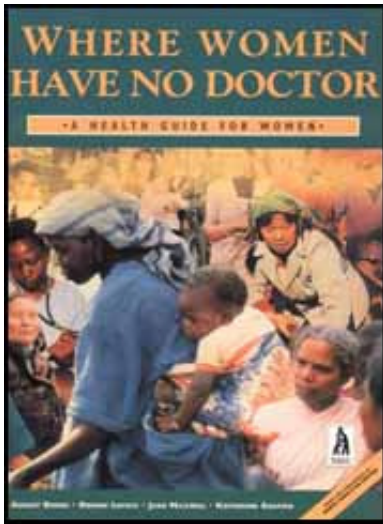
What to do


Bleeding during or after sex	<i>sexually transmitted disease (STD)</i>	See 'gonorrhoea and chlamydia'.
	<i>pelvic inflammatory disease</i>	See 'PID'.
	forced sex	See "Rape."
	growths or cancer of the cervix or womb	See 'cancer of the cervix' and 'problems of the womb'.

Bleeding after menopause

Bleeding problem	May be caused by	What to do
Bleeding that begins 12 months or more after menopause	growths or cancer of the womb  Figure	See a health worker trained to do a pelvic exam.
	growths or cancer of the cervix	You may need to have a Pap test or a <i>D and C</i> .





 **Where Women Have No Doctor - A Health Guide for Women (Hesperian Foundation, 1997, 600 p.)**

➔  **Chapter 23: Problems of the Urine System**

 **(introduction...)**

 **Infections of the Urine System**

 **(introduction...)**

 **What causes bladder and kidney infections?**

 **Signs and treatment**

 **Other Problems of the Urine System**

 **Blood in the urine**

 **Kidney or bladder stones**

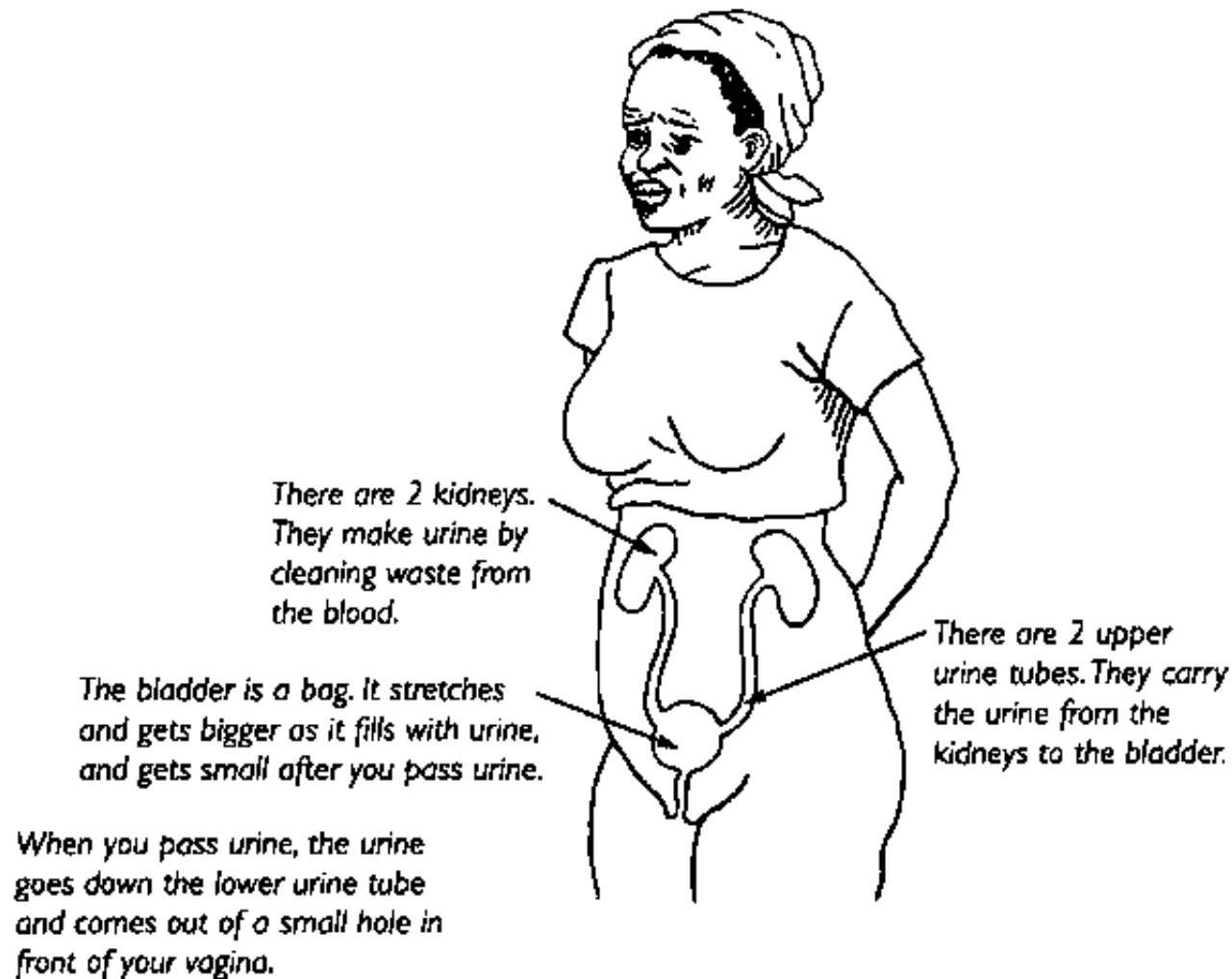
 **Need to pass urine often**

 **Leaking urine**

 **When You Have Problems Passing Stool or Urine**

Where Women Have No Doctor - A Health Guide for Women (Hesperian Foundation, 1997, 600 p.)

Chapter 23: Problems of the Urine System



Figure

This chapter describes the most common problems that affect the urine system. Sometimes these problems are difficult to tell apart. So if your problem seems different from those described here, get medical help. You may need special tests to find out what the problem is.

If you can identify the problem, it may be possible to treat the problem at home -

especially if treatment is started right away. But remember that some serious problems begin with signs that do not seem very bad. These problems can quickly become painful and dangerous. So if you do not feel better within 2 to 3 days, get medical help.

Female circumcision

This can damage the urine system and cause serious health problems for a woman all her life. If you have been circumcised and have problems passing urine, or *infections* that return again and again, talk to a health worker. You may need surgery to correct the problem. For more information, see the chapter on "Female Circumcision".

Infections of the Urine System

There are 2 main kinds of urine system infections. A bladder infection is the most common and the easiest to treat. A kidney infection is very serious. It can lead to permanent damage to the kidney and even death.



A girl or woman of any age - even a small baby - can get an infection of her urine

system.**What causes bladder and kidney infections?**

Infections of the urine system are caused by germs (*bacteria*). They get into the body from the outside through the urinary opening near the *vagina*. Infection is more common in women than in men because a woman's lower urine tube is much shorter. This means germs can more easily climb up the short urine tube into the bladder.

Germs often enter a woman's body or start to multiply when she:

- has sex. During sex, germs from the vagina and anus can be pushed up through the urinary opening into the lower urine tube. This is one of the most common causes of a bladder infection in women. To prevent infection, pass urine after having sex. This washes out the urine tube (but does not prevent pregnancy).**
- goes for a long time without drinking, especially if she works outside in hot weather and sweats a lot. Germs will start to multiply in the empty bladder. Try to drink at least 8 glasses or cups of liquid a day. When working in the hot sun, drink even more.**

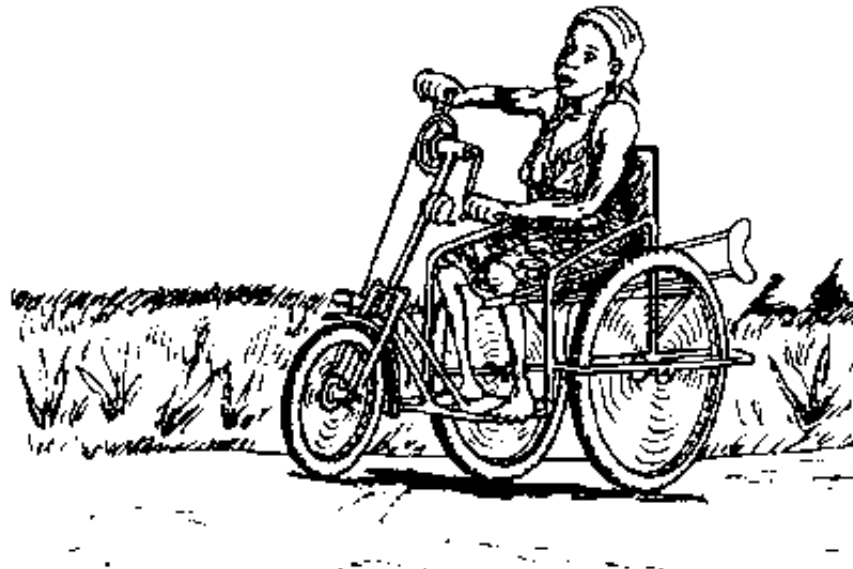


Figure

- goes for a long time without urinating (for example, when traveling). Germs that stay in the urine system for a long time can cause an infection. Try to pass urine every 3 to 4 hours.
- does not keep her genitals clean. Germs from the *genitals* - and especially the anus - can get into the urinary opening and cause infection. Try to wash the genitals every day, and always wipe from front to back after passing *stool*. Wiping forward can spread germs from the anus into the urinary

opening. Also, try to wash your genitals before having sex. Keep the cloth and pads used for your monthly bleeding very clean.

- **has a *disability*, especially those from backbone (spinal cord) injuries, or with a loss of feeling in the lower body. For more information, see the books *Where There Is No Doctor* and *Disabled Village Children*.**



Figure

- ◆ ***Teach little girls the correct way to wipe after passing stool.***

Signs and treatment

Bladder infection signs:

- need to pass urine very often. (It may also feel as though some urine is still left inside.)

- pain or a burning feeling while passing urine
- pain in the lower belly just after passing urine
- urine smells bad, or looks cloudy, or has blood or pus in it. (Dark urine can be a sign of *hepatitis*.)



urine smells bad

Kidney infection signs:

- any bladder infection signs
- fever and chills
- lower back pain, often severe, that can go from the front, around the sides, and into the back
- *nausea* and *vomiting*
- feeling very ill and weak

If you have signs of both a bladder and a kidney infection, you probably have a kidney infection.



Figure

When a woman has a kidney infection, she may be in great pain and feel very ill. This can be very frightening. If this happens to you, try to get a family member or a neighbor to help you get to a health worker or health post.

IMPORTANT

If your signs are serious, start taking medicine right away.

Treatment for a bladder infection:

Bladder infections can often be treated with home remedies. Start treatment as

soon as you notice the signs. A bladder infection can sometimes travel quickly up the urine tubes into the kidneys.

- **Drink a lot of water. Try to drink at least one cup of clean water every 30 minutes. This will make you pass urine often. Sometimes the germs will wash out of your urine system before the infection gets worse.**



Figure

- **Stop having sex for a few days, or until the signs have gone away.**
- **Make a tea from flowers, seeds, and leaves that are known to help cure urine infections. Ask the older women in the community which plants will help.**



Figure

If you do not feel better in 1 to 2 days, stop taking the home remedies and start taking the medicines in the box below. If you do not feel better in 2 more days, see a health worker. You may have an STD rather than a urine system infection.

♦ STDs, especially chlamydia, can cause a burning feeling when a woman passes urine.

IMPORTANT

Before taking any of these medicines, especially if you are pregnant or breastfeeding, first read about them in the "Green Pages" of this book.

Bladder Infection Medicines		
Medicine	How much to take	When to take
amoxicillin	3g (3000 mg)	once only by mouth
or		
co-trimoxazole 480 mg	4 tablets	once only by mouth
(80 mg trimethoprim and 400 mg sulfamethoxazole)		

Treatment for a kidney infection:

If you have signs of a kidney infection, home remedies are not enough. Start taking these medicines right away. But if you do not start to feel better after 2 days, see a health worker.



Figure

Kidney Infection Medicines		
Medicine	How much to take	When to take
amoxicillin	500 mg	3 times a day, by mouth, for 10 days
or		
co-trimoxazole 480 mg	2 tablets	2 times a day, by mouth, for 10 days
(80 mg trimethoprim and 400 sulfamethoxazole)		
If you cannot swallow medicines because you are vomiting, take:		
ampicillin	500 mg	Inject into a muscle 4 times a day.
or		

gentamicin	80 mg the first time only, then 60 mg each other time	Inject into a muscle 3 times a day.
------------	---	-------------------------------------

When you can swallow medicine again without vomiting, stop injections and continue with the medicine by mouth for kidney injections, for 7 more days.

Other Problems of the Urine System

Blood in the urine

If your urine has blood in it, and if there are no other signs of a bladder or kidney infection, you may have bladder or kidney stones (see below). Or you may have one of these diseases, if they are common in your community:

- ***Bilharzia* (blood flukes, schistosomiasis) can cause permanent damage to the urine system if it is not treated early enough. See a health worker trained in problems of the urine system for treatment, and to learn how to prevent bilharzia from happening again. For more information about bilharzia, see *Where There Is No Doctor* or another general medical book.**
- ***Tuberculosis (TB)* can damage the bladder and kidneys.**



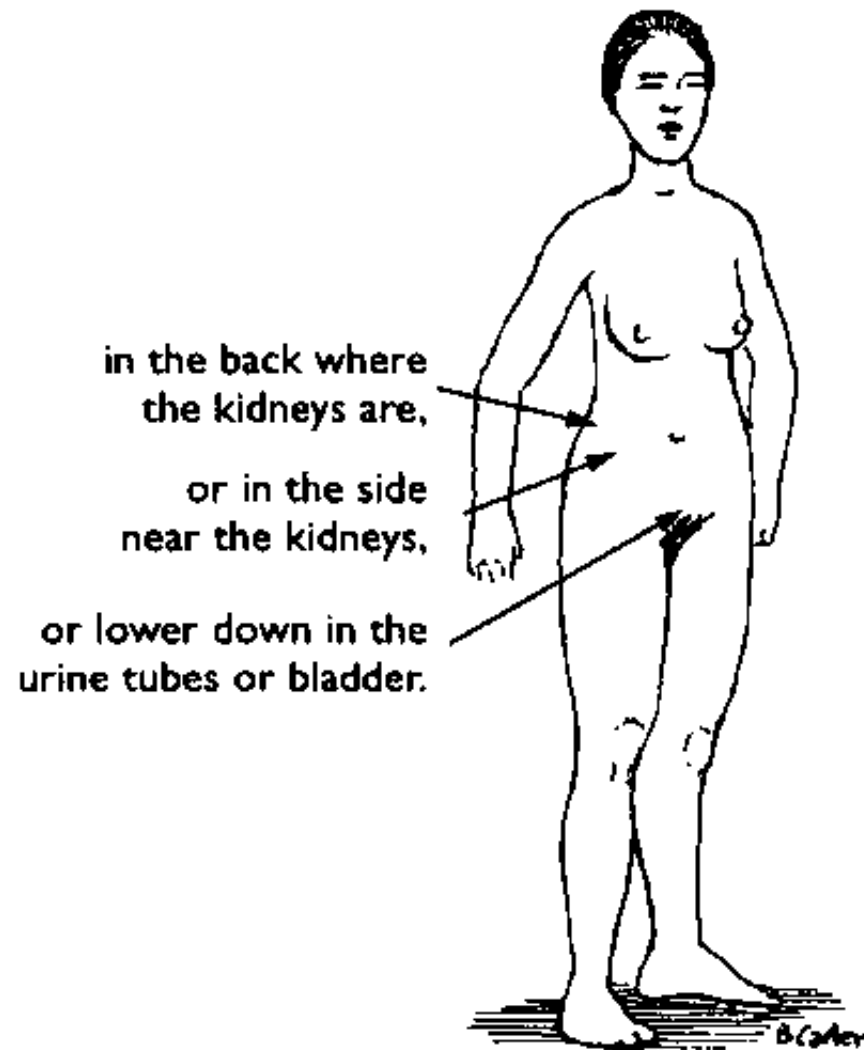
**tuberculosis
Figure**

Kidney or bladder stones

These are small hard stones that start to grow in the kidney, and then move through the urine system.

Signs:

- **Sudden, very bad pain:**



Figure

Other signs are:

- **Blood in the urine.** This can happen if the stones scratch the inside of the urine system.
- **Difficulty passing urine.** This can happen if a stone blocks the tubes.

Treatment:

- **Drink large amounts of liquid (at least 1 or 2 cups every 30 minutes). This will help wash the stone out of the kidney and down the urine tube.**
- **Take a pain medicine. If the pain is very bad, get medical help.**



**medicines for pain
Figure**

Sometimes the blocked urine tubes become infected. Treat this problem the same way you would treat a kidney infection.

Need to pass urine often

This may happen because:

- **the muscles around your bladder and *womb* have become weak. The 'squeezing exercise' may help strengthen these muscles.**
- **a growth (like a fibroid) in your abdomen is pushing against the bladder so it cannot hold much urine.**
- **you have a bladder infection.**

- **you have *diabetes*.**



**growths, 380
diabetes, 174
Figure**

Leaking urine

Poor control of urine (incontinence)

This can be caused by weak or damaged muscles around the bladder. It happens mainly to older women or to women after childbirth. The urine leaks out when a woman puts pressure on the weak muscles in her lower belly during sex, or by laughing, coughing, sneezing, or lifting. The 'squeezing exercise' may help.

Urine leaking from the vagina (vesico-vaginal fistula, VVF)

When a woman leaks urine all the time, she may have a hole between her vagina and bladder. (Sometimes the hole is between the rectum and the vagina, and stool leaks out.)

This serious problem happens as a result of a blocked birth. It happens to girls who have babies when they are very young, before their bones are fully grown. The problem can also happen to older women who have had many babies, if their muscles are no longer strong enough to push a baby out. In both cases, it is

difficult for the baby to get out. Its head presses on the skin between the bladder and the vagina, and damages the skin. This causes an opening (fistula) to form between the bladder and the vagina. Often the baby is born dead.

After the birth, the fistula does not heal and urine leaks from the bladder out through the vagina all the time. The girl or woman has to wear a cloth or pad all day and night to catch the urine.

If she cannot get help, fistulas can cause serious problems for a girl or woman in her daily life. Her husband, family, and friends may avoid her because she smells of urine all the time.



This girl's husband was embarrassed by the smell of her leaking urine. He made her leave his house.

Treatment:

After the birth, if you are leaking urine or stool, talk with a health worker as soon as possible to find out if she or he knows of a hospital where the fistula can be repaired. You should go to the hospital as soon as possible. If you cannot get to the hospital quickly, the health worker may know how to put in a plastic or rubber tube (catheter) through the urine hole into the bladder. This tube will drain the urine and may help the fistula heal. But you must still go to the hospital. When you get there, the doctor will examine you to see if the fistula has healed or if you need an operation to repair the fistula.

◆ *If you have leaking urine after giving birth, seek medical help right away.*

Do not despair. The problem can often be made better.

IMPORTANT

To help prevent infection while the tube is in, drink a lot of fluid (at least 10 to 12 cups a day). This will make you pass urine often and flush out germs.

Prevention:

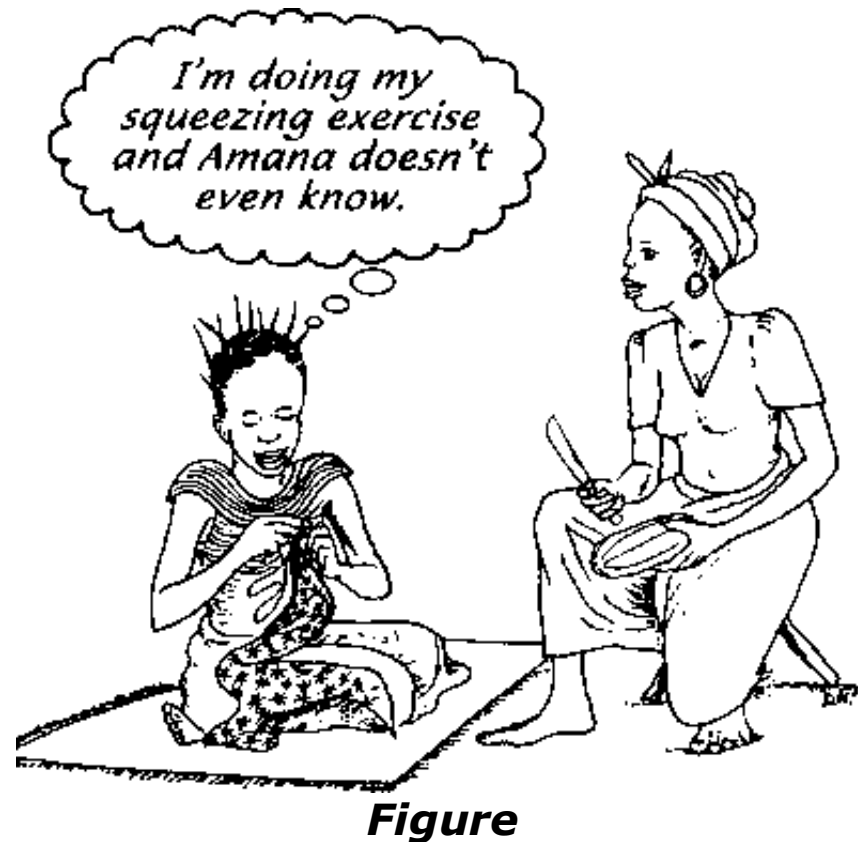
- Avoid marriage and pregnancy until a girl is fully grown.**
- If a girl under 17 is pregnant, she should try to see a trained midwife or health worker as soon as possible to find out how to have the safest birth.**
- Do not have babies too close together, so that your muscles can get strong again in between births.**



pregnancy Figure

The squeezing exercise

This exercise can help strengthen weak muscles that cause you to pass urine often or to leak urine. First practice while you are passing urine. As the urine comes out, stop it by tightly squeezing the muscles in your vagina. Count to 10, then relax the muscles to let the urine come out. Repeat this several times whenever you urinate. Once you know how, practice the squeezing exercise at other times during the day. No one will know. Try to practice at least 4 times a day, squeezing your muscles 5 to 10 times each time.



Figure

Some women may need surgery to help control leaking urine. If your urine leaks a lot and this exercise does not help, get advice from a health worker trained in women's health. The squeezing exercise is good for all women to do every day. It helps keep muscles strong and can prevent problems later in life.

When You Have Problems Passing Stool or Urine

Many women (and men) do not have normal control over when they pass stool or urine (especially persons who are near death, or who have a spinal cord injury, or a disability that affects the muscles of the lower body). This can be inconvenient

and embarrassing. It can also cause skin problems and dangerous infections, so it is important to stay clean, dry, and healthy.

Bowel control

This information will help those persons who have hard stools (constipation) or who have difficulty passing stool. You can learn to help the stool come out when it is easiest for you. The *bowels* work best when you are sitting rather than lying, so try to remove the stool when you are sitting on a toilet or pot. If you cannot sit, try to do it lying on your left side.

How to remove stool:

- 1. Cover your hand with a plastic or rubber glove, or a plastic bag. Put oil on your pointing (index) finger (vegetable or mineral oil both work well).**



To keep your finger clean, use a thin rubber glove or 'fingercot'.

- 2. Put your oiled finger into the anus about 2 cm (1 inch). Gently move the finger in circles for about 1 minute, until the muscle relaxes and the stool pushes out**



Figure

3. If the stool does not come out by itself, remove as much as you can with your finger.

4. Clean the anus and the skin around it well, and wash your hands.

To prevent hard stools:

- drink lots of water every day.
- keep a regular bowel program.
- eat foods that are high in *fiber*.
- exercise or move your body every day.

Bladder control



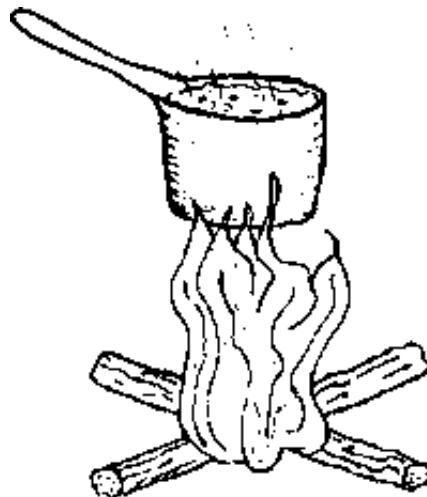
catheter

Sometimes it is necessary to remove urine from the bladder by using a rubber or plastic tube called a catheter. Never use a catheter unless it is absolutely necessary. Even careful use of a catheter can cause infection of the bladder and kidneys. So it should only be used if someone has a:

- **very full, painful bladder and cannot pass urine.**
- **vesico-vaginal fistula (VVF).**
- **disability or injury, and cannot feel the muscles that control passing urine.**

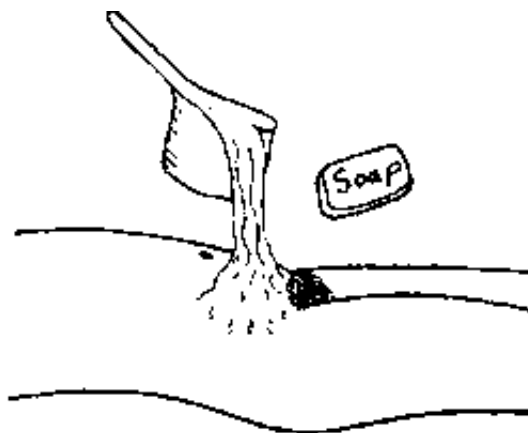
How to put in a catheter

1. Boil the catheter (and any syringe or tool you may be using) for 15 minutes.



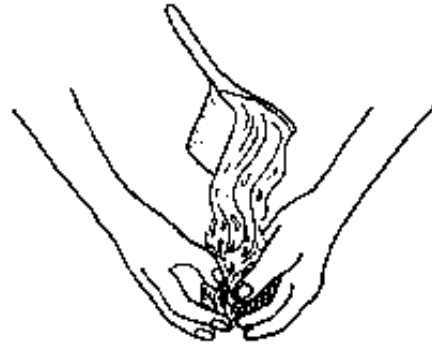
Figure

2. Wash well with soap and clean water between the folds of the vulva and skin around the genitals.



Figure

3. Wash your hands. After washing, only touch things that are *sterile* or very clean.



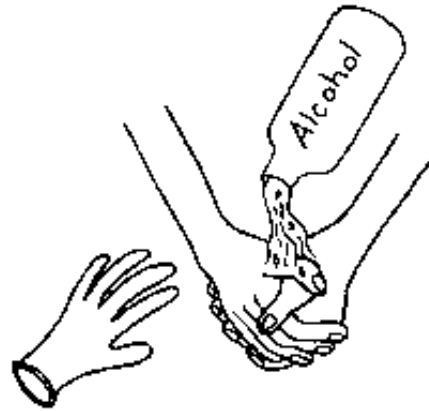
Figure

4. Put very clean cloths under and around the genitals.



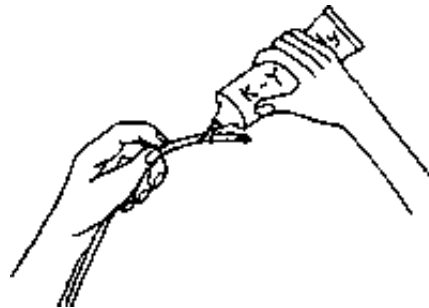
Figure

5. Put on sterile gloves, or rub hands well with alcohol or surgical soap.



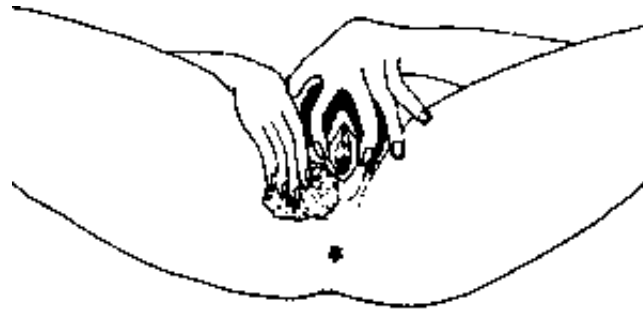
Figure

6. Cover the catheter with a sterile lubricant (slippery cream) that dissolves in water (not oil or petroleum gel).



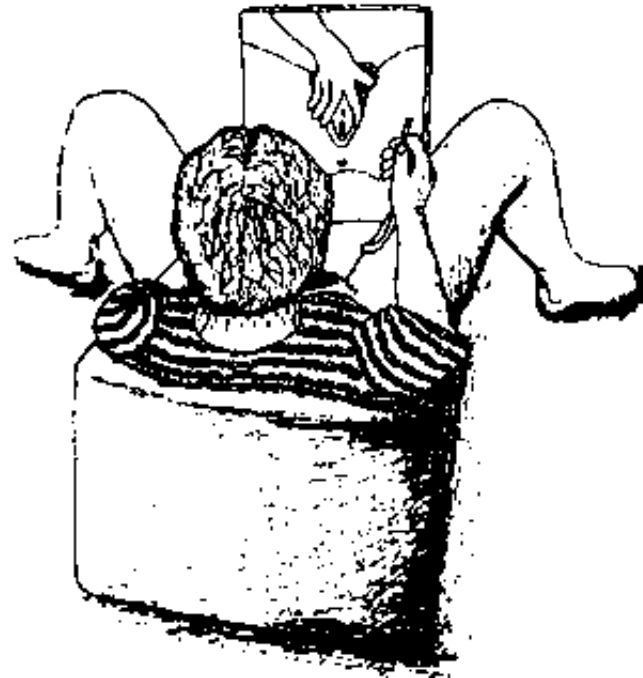
Figure

7. Open the folds of the vulva and wipe the opening with a sterile cotton cloth made wet with soap and clean water or with a solution of I teaspoon of povidone iodine to I cup of clean water.



Figure

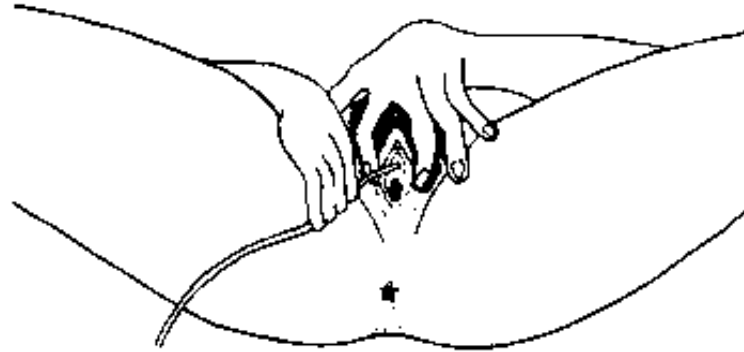
8. If you do this for yourself, use a mirror to help you see where the urinary opening is, and use your pointing (index) finger and third finger to hold the folds of the vulva open. The urinary opening is below the clitoris almost at the opening to the vagina.



Figure

9. Then, with your middle finger, touch below your clitoris. You will feel a sort of small

dent or dimple, and right below that is the urinary opening. Keep your middle finger on that spot, and with your other hand, take the clean catheter and touch the tip to the end of your middle finger, and gently guide the catheter into the opening until urine starts to come out.



Figure


You will know if the catheter goes into the vagina instead of the urinary opening because it will go in easily, but no urine will come out. Also, when you remove it, the catheter will have discharge (mucus from the vagina) in it. Try again with a clean catheter.

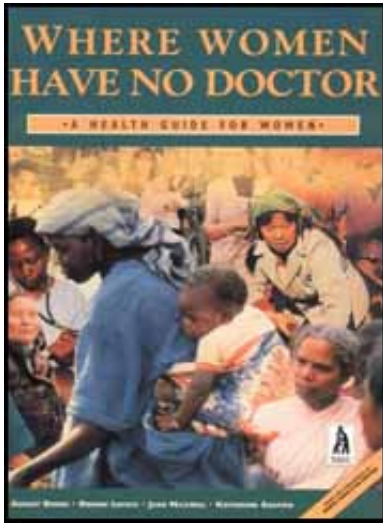
IMPORTANT

To avoid infection when using a catheter, it is important for you to be very clean, and to use only a catheter that is sterile, boiled, or very clean.



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 **Where Women Have No Doctor - A Health Guide for Women
(Hesperian Foundation, 1997, 600 p.)**



- ➔ **Chapter 24: Cancer and Growths**
 - (introduction...)**
 - Cancer**
 - (introduction...)**
 - Causes of cancer**
 - Finding and treating cancer early**
 - Problems of the Cervix (the Opening of the Womb)**
 - Common problems of the cervix**
 - Cancer of the cervix**
 - Problems of the Womb**
 - Common growths of the womb**
 - Cancer of the womb (cancer of the uterus, endometrial cancer)**
 - Problems of the Breasts**
 - (introduction...)**
 - Cancer of the breast**
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 - Mouth and throat cancer**

Cancer of the liver Cancer of the stomach

When Cancer Cannot Be Cured

Working for Change

Where Women Have No Doctor - A Health Guide for Women (Hesperian Foundation, 1997, 600 p.)

Chapter 24: Cancer and Growths



Figure

Cancer is a serious sickness that can affect many different parts of the body. If it is treated early it is often curable, but if left too long it can cause death. Many people who get cancer die from it, especially those with little access to health care.

Women often do not see a health worker or doctor unless they are very sick. So women who get cancer are more likely to get very sick or die because the cancer is not found early enough. Also, women who get cancer are sometimes considered 'cursed' and may be shunned by their families or communities. This isolation is not only bad for the women who are sick, but also for the whole community, since it keeps everyone from knowing about how cancer makes people sick.

WHAT IS CANCER?

All living things, like the human body, are made up of tiny *cells* that are too small to see without a *microscope*. Sometimes these cells change and grow in an abnormal way, causing growths (tumors). Some growths go away without treatment. But some growths get larger or spread and may cause health problems. Most growths do not become cancer, but some do.



Figure

Cancer starts when some cells begin to grow out of control and take over parts of the body. When cancer is found early, it can often be removed by surgery, or treated with medicines or *radiation*, and the chance of it being cured may be good. Once cancer spreads, however, curing it is more difficult and eventually becomes impossible.

◆ *'Tumor'* is another word for growth or swelling. Some tumors are cancer and some are not.

Cancer

Cancer of the *cervix*, *breast*, and *womb* are the most common 'women's' cancers. Other common cancers that both men and women get are cancer of the *lung*, *colon*, *liver*, *stomach*, *mouth*, and *skin*.

Causes of cancer

The direct causes of most cancers are not known. But these things may make you more likely to get cancer:

- **smoking tobacco, which is known to cause lung cancer, and also increases the risk of getting most other cancers**
- **certain viral infections, like *hepatitis B* or *genital warts***
- **eating foods with too much fat or with harmful chemicals**
- **using some medicines, like hormones, incorrectly**
- **working with or living around certain *chemicals* (like pesticides, dyes, paints, and solvents)**
- **living or working near nuclear power plants**

Also, if others in a woman's family (blood relatives) have had a certain kind of cancer, this may mean she is more likely to get that same kind of cancer (this is called a hereditary risk).

◆ *Cancer is not an infection. It is not 'catching' and cannot spread from one person to another.*



staying healthy Figure

Healthy living can prevent many cancers. This means eating *nutritious* food and avoiding things that may cause cancer. For example:

- **Do not smoke or chew tobacco.**
- **Try to avoid harmful chemicals in your home or workplace, including foods grown or preserved with them.**
- **Protect yourself from *sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)*.**

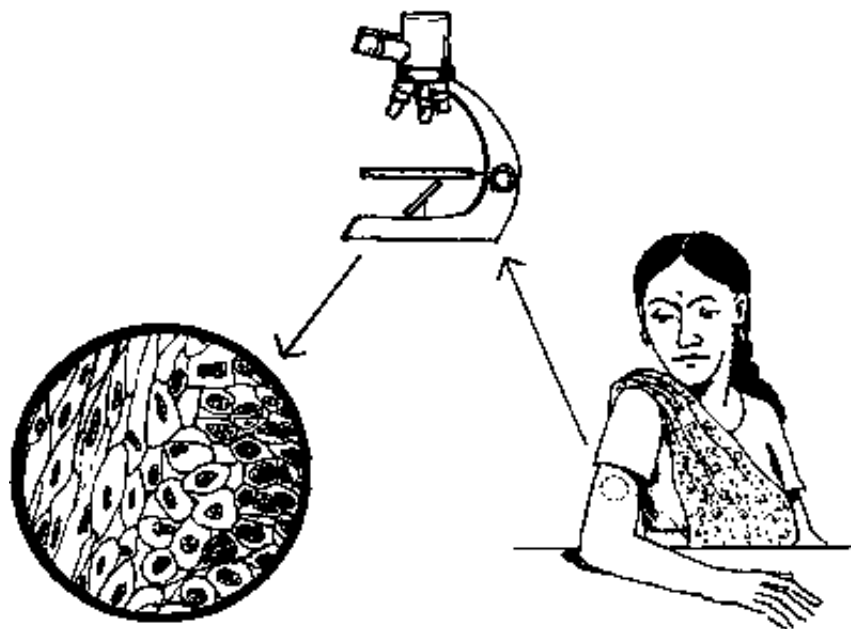


safer sex Figure

Finding and treating cancer early

Finding cancer early can often save a woman's life, because she can get early treatment, before the cancer spreads. Some cancers have warning signs that show something may be wrong. But usually, to find out if you have cancer, you must have a test that takes a few cells from the part of your body where the cancer may

be. Then the cells must be examined with a microscope, by someone who is trained to recognize cancer



Cancer cells are so small, you need a microscope to see them.

Cancers that do not have early signs can often be found with screening tests, routine tests given to people to see if everything is normal. A Pap test for cancer of the cervix is one kind of screening test.

If you have warning signs, or a test shows something may be wrong, do not wait. Follow the advice in this chapter for finding and treating the problem as soon as possible.

Problems of the Cervix (the Opening of the Womb)

Common problems of the cervix

Nabothian cysts are small blisters or bumps on the cervix that are filled with fluid. There are no signs, but they can be seen during a *pelvic exam* (with a *speculum*). These cysts are harmless, so no treatment is needed.



Nabothian cysts on the cervix

Polyps are dark red growths, sometimes found at the cervix. They also grow inside the womb. For more about them, see 'Common Growths of the Womb'.

Inflammation of the cervix. Many infections of the vagina - like trichomonas - and some STDs affect the cervix, and can cause growths, sores, or irritation and bleeding after sex. For information about those types of problems, including treatment, see the chapter on "Sexually Transmitted Diseases and Other Infections of the Genitals."



**STDs
Figure**

Cancer of the cervix

Cancer of the cervix is the most common cancer in the less-developed world. The main cause is a virus - human papilloma virus, or HPV - which is the same virus that causes genital warts. This cancer grows slowly for about 10 years, and if it is treated early it can be completely cured. But many women die every year from cancer of the cervix because they never knew they had it.



**genital warts
Figure**

A woman is at greater risk of getting cancer of the cervix if she:

- **is older than 35.**
- **began to have sex at a young age (within only a few years of starting her *monthly bleeding*).**
- **has had many sex partners, or has a partner who has had many sex partners.**
- **has had frequent STDs, especially genital warts.**
- **has *HIV/AIDS*.**
- **smokes tobacco.**



Mira's story

Figure

Warning signs:

There are usually no outward signs of cancer of the cervix until it has spread and is more difficult to treat. (There are often early signs on the cervix, which can be seen during a pelvic exam. This is why regular exams are so important.)

***Abnormal bleeding* from the vagina, including bleeding after sex, or an abnormal *discharge* or bad smell from the vagina can all be signs of a serious problem, including advanced cancer of the cervix. If you have any of those signs, try to get a pelvic exam and a Pap test.**

IMPORTANT

If you are treated with medicines for a vaginal discharge and do not get better, you should try to have your cervix examined and get a Pap test to look for cancer.

Finding and treating cancer of the cervix

Because cancer of the cervix does not have early warning signs, but can be cured if it is found early, it is good to be tested for it regularly, if possible. The tests are designed to look for abnormal tissue on the cervix. Such tissue may be slightly abnormal (mild dysplasia), more abnormal (severe dysplasia), or early cancer (before it has spread).

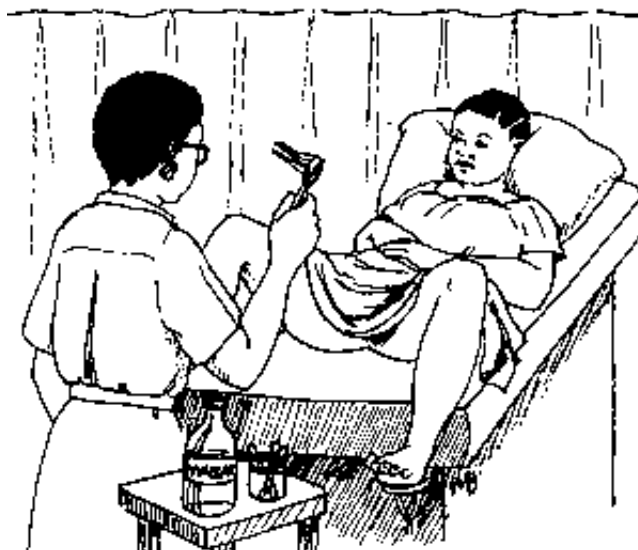
◆ *If you are a health worker, try to get training in testing for cervical cancer. Encourage your community to offer cancer screening.*

The Pap test

The most common test is the Pap test. For this test, a health worker scrapes some cells from the cervix (this is not painful) during a pelvic exam and sends them to a *laboratory* to be examined with a microscope. When you have this test, you must return for the results, usually after several weeks.

Visual inspection

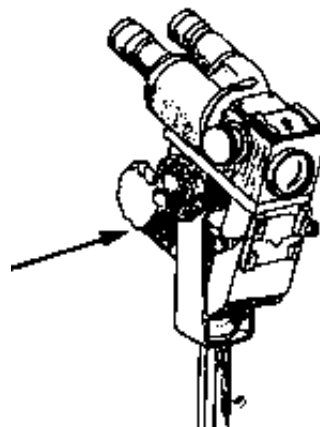
A new, low-cost method of screening women for cancer of the cervix uses a vinegar solution (acetic acid) which is painted on the cervix, and turns abnormal tissue white. The cervix is examined, sometimes with the aid of a small lens that makes it easier to see. If a woman has abnormal tissue, she may need other tests or treatment.



Regular testing for cancer of the cervix can save many lives.

Other tests used to find cancer

- **Biopsy.** A piece of tissue is taken from the cervix and sent to a laboratory to be examined for cancer cells.
- **Colposcopy.** This tool, available in some hospitals, magnifies the cervix (makes it look bigger) so it is easier to see signs of cancer



Figure

How often women should be tested

To find cancer of the cervix early enough to treat it simply and successfully, women should be tested at least every 3 years. In places where this is not possible, women should try to get tested at least every 5 years, especially women over 35.

You should be tested more often, if possible, when:

- you are more at risk for developing cancer of the cervix.

- you have a Pap test that shows some slightly abnormal cells. These cells often do not become cancer, and they return to normal in 2 to 3 years. But since those cells **could** be early signs of cancer, you should have another Pap test in 1 to 2 years to make sure cancer is not growing.

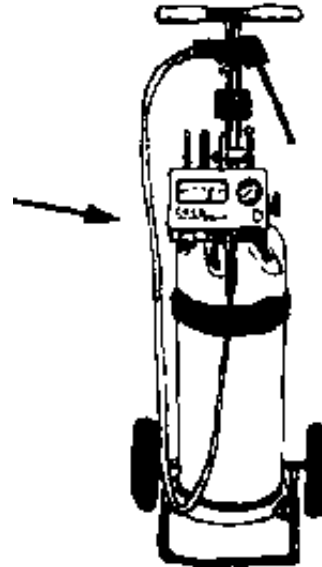
Treatment:

If a test shows that you have severe dysplasia or a more advanced cancer, you will need treatment. You and your doctor should decide together what treatment is best. Treatment in the early stages can be simple, using methods that remove or destroy the cancer tissue.



**deciding about
treatment
Figure**

In some places a method called *cryotherapy* is available, which freezes the cervix and kills the cancer. Another treatment is to remove part of the cervix (cone biopsy). If it is available, this treatment may be best if you still want to have children and the cancer has not spread, because you can keep your womb. When cancer is found and treated before it spreads, it can be cured.



Figure

◆ ***You may need to go to a large, special hospital for cancer treatment.***

If the cancer is found after it has grown for a long time, it may have spread beyond the cervix to other parts of the body. In this case you will usually need surgery to remove both the cervix and womb (hysterectomy). Sometimes radiation therapy can help.



**hysterectomy
Figure**

Deaths from cancer of the cervix can be prevented

When people do not know about the risks for cancer of the cervix and how finding it early can prevent death, more women die. To change this, we can:

- **learn what increases a woman's risk, and work together on finding ways to reduce these risks. It is especially important for girls to be able to wait until they are grown women before having sex. All women also need to be able to protect themselves from STDs.**
- **learn about cancer screening. Finding cancer of the cervix early can save lives.**

In some parts of the world Pap tests are available to women who live near hospitals. Other women are able to get Pap tests from clinics that offer maternal and child health services, family planning, and treatment for STDs.



Figure

Developing screening programs may seem too costly but it is cheaper than treatment. Screening programs can help the most women while costing the least if they:

- **target older women. Young women can also get cancer of the cervix, but women over 35 are most at risk.**
- **test as many women as possible, even if this means testing them less often. Testing all women at risk every 5 to 10 years will find many more**

cancers than testing only some women more often.

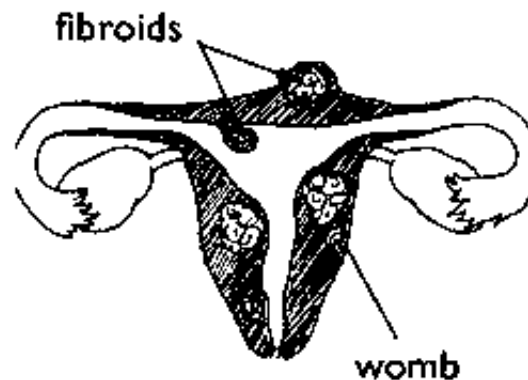
- **train local health workers in how to give Pap tests and do visual inspection.**

Problems of the Womb

Common growths of the womb

Fibroid tumors

Fibroids are growths of the womb. They can cause abnormal bleeding from the vagina, pain in the lower belly, and repeated miscarriage (losing a pregnancy). They are almost never cancer.



Figure

Signs:

- **heavy monthly bleeding or bleeding at unusual times of the month**
- **pain or a heavy feeling in the lower belly**

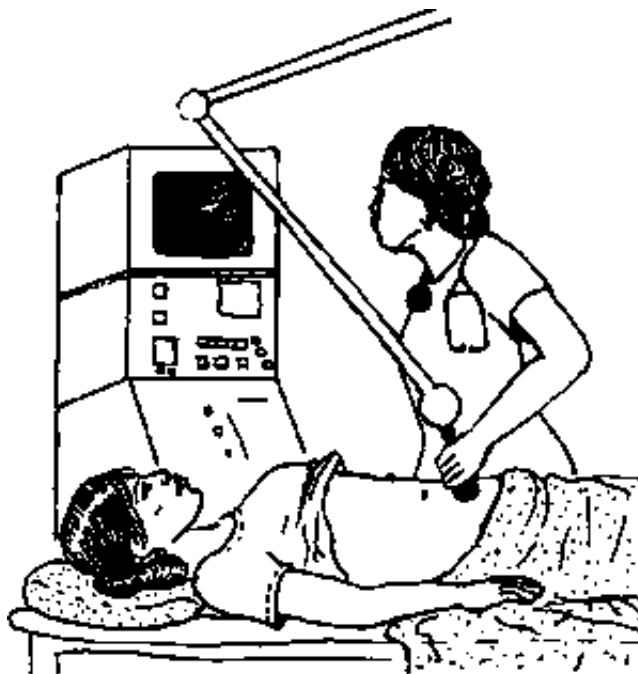
- deep pain during sex

Finding and treating fibroids



pelvic exam
Figure

Fibroids are usually found during a pelvic exam. The womb will feel too large or be the wrong shape. A test called an *ultrasound*, if it is available, can show how large the fibroids are.



An ultrasound test can show how large fibroids are.

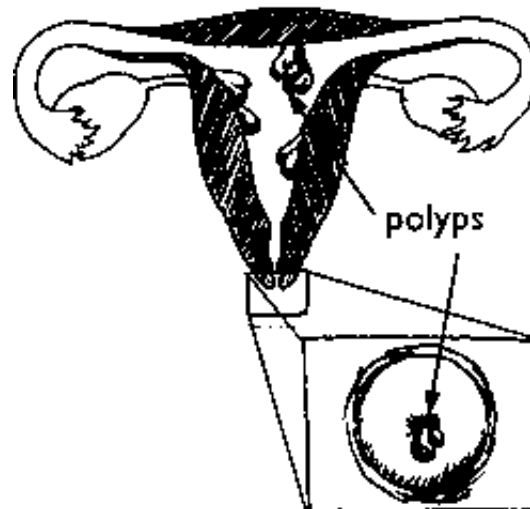
If fibroids cause problems, they can be removed with surgery. Sometimes the whole womb is removed. But most of the time, surgery is not necessary because fibroids usually become smaller after menopause and stop causing problems. If *monthly bleeding* is heavy because of fibroids, *anemia* may develop. Try to eat foods rich in iron.



**anemia
Figure**

Polyps

Polyps are dark red growths that can grow inside the womb or at the I cervix. They are rarely cancer.



Figure

Signs:

- **bleeding after sex**
- **heavy monthly bleeding or bleeding at unusual times of the month**

Finding and treating polyps

Polyps at the cervix can be seen and removed easily and painlessly during a pelvic exam by someone who has been trained. To find polyps inside the womb, the inside of the womb must be scraped out (this is called a D and C). The D and C also removes the polyps. The growth is sent to a laboratory to make sure there is no cancer. Once polyps are removed, they usually do not grow back.



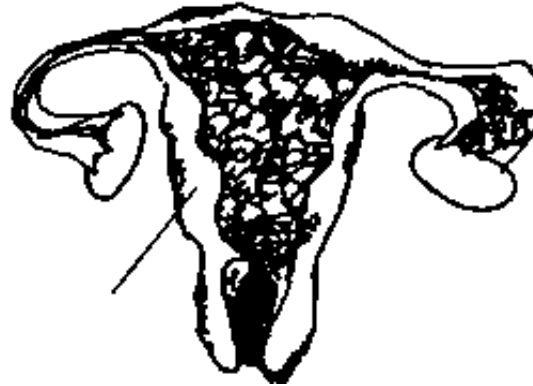
**D and C
Figure**

Cancer of the womb (cancer of the uterus, endometrial cancer)

Cancer of the womb usually starts in the lining inside the womb (the endometrium). If it is not treated it can spread to the womb itself and to other parts of the body. This cancer happens most often to women who:

- **are over 40 years old, especially if they have gone through menopause.**
- **are overweight.**
- **have *diabetes*.**

- **have taken the hormone estrogen without also taking progesterone.**



Cancer of the womb



**medicines during
menopause
Figure**

Signs:

- **heavy monthly bleeding**
- **irregular monthly bleeding, or bleeding at unusual times of the month**
- **bleeding after menopause**

IMPORTANT

If you have any bleeding at all, even light spotting, after you have finished menopause (12 months without monthly bleeding), get checked by a health

worker to make sure you do not have cancer.

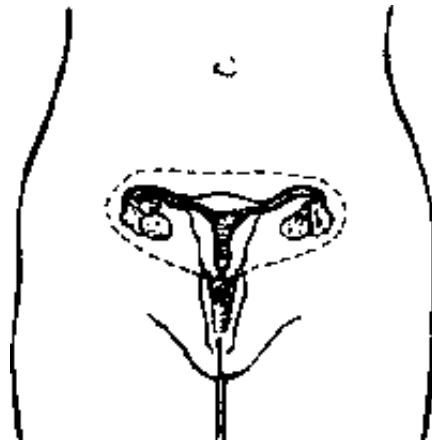
Finding and treating cancer of the womb

To find out if a woman has cancer of the womb, a trained health worker must scrape out the inside of the womb with a D and C, or do a biopsy, and send the tissue to a laboratory to be checked for cancer. If cancer is found, it must be treated as soon as possible with an operation to remove the womb (hysterectomy). Radiation therapy may also be used.



Figure

Hysterectomy



Figure

In a hysterectomy, sometimes only the womb is removed and sometimes the tubes and ovaries are also removed (total hysterectomy). Since your ovaries make hormones that help protect you against heart disease and weak bones, it is always better to leave them in, if possible. Talk to a doctor about this.

If cancer of the womb is found early, it can be cured. If it is more advanced, curing it is more difficult.

IMPORTANT

Any woman who is over 40 years old and has unusual bleeding should get checked by a health worker.



abnormal bleeding, 359

**heavy bleeding or
bleeding in the middle
of the month, 129**

Figure

Problems of the Breasts

Breast lumps



**breast examination
Figure**

Breast lumps are very common in most women, especially soft, fluid-filled ones (called cysts). These usually change during a woman's monthly cycle, and sometimes feel sore or painful when pressed. Few breast lumps are cancer. But since breast cancer is always a possibility, a woman should try to examine her breasts for lumps once a month (see 'warning signs' below).



Figure

Discharge from the nipple

Milky or clear discharge from one or both nipples is usually normal if a woman has breastfed a baby within the last year. Brown, green, or bloody discharge - especially from only one nipple - could be a sign of cancer Get checked by a health worker who can examine your breasts.



Figure

Breast infection

If a woman is breastfeeding a baby and gets a hot, red sore area on the breast, she probably has *mastitis*, or an *abscess*. This is not cancer and is easily cured. If the woman is not breastfeeding, it may be a sign of cancer



Figure

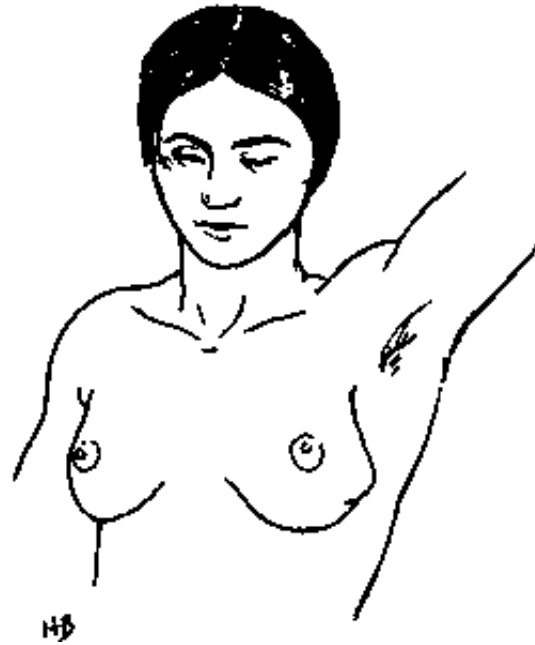


**breast infections
Figure**

Cancer of the breast

Breast cancer usually grows slowly. If it is found early, it can sometimes be cured. It is hard to tell who will get breast cancer. The risk might be greater for a woman whose mother or sisters have had breast cancer, or for a woman who has had

cancer of the womb. Breast cancer is more common in women over age 50.



Figure

Warning signs:

- **a hard painless lump with a jagged shape, that is in only one breast and does not move under the skin**
- **redness, or a sore on the breast that does not heal**
- **skin on the breast that is pulled in, or looks rough and pitted, like orange or lemon peel**
- **a nipple that is pulled inward**

- **abnormal discharge from a nipple**
- **sometimes, a painful swelling under the arm**
- **rarely, pain in the breast**

If there is one or more of these signs, get help from a trained health worker right away.

Finding and treating breast cancer



**how to examine
your breasts
Figure**

If you examine your breasts regularly, you are likely to notice if there are any changes or if a new lump develops. A special X-ray called a mammogram can find a breast lump when it is very small and less dangerous. But mammograms are not available in many places, and they are very expensive. And it cannot tell for sure if a lump is cancer.

The only way to know for sure that a woman has breast cancer is with a biopsy. For this, a surgeon removes all or part of the lump with a needle or a knife and has it tested for cancer in a laboratory.

Treatment depends on how advanced the cancer is and what is available where you live. If a lump is small and found early, just removing the lump may be effective. But for some cases of breast cancer, an operation may be needed to remove the whole breast. Sometimes doctors also use medicines and radiation therapy.

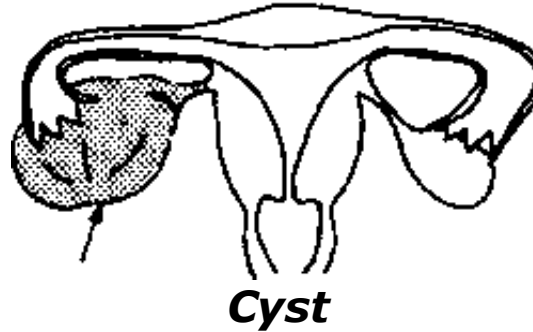
No one knows yet how to prevent breast cancer. But we do know that finding and treating breast cancer early makes a cure more likely. For some women it never comes back. In other women, the cancer may come back years later. It may come back in the other breast or, less often, in other parts of the body.

♦ *See a health worker right away if you have already had breast cancer and find another lump in the breast or notice other warning signs of cancer.*

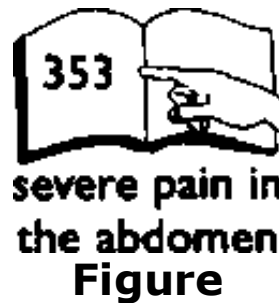
Problems of the Ovaries

Cysts on the ovaries

These cysts are fluid-filled sacks that women can get on their ovaries. They happen only during the reproductive years, between *puberty* and menopause. A cyst can cause pain on one side of the lower *abdomen* and irregular monthly bleeding. But most women only find out they have a cyst if a health worker feels one during a pelvic examination.



Most cysts last only a few months and go away on their own. But some can grow very large and must be removed by surgery. If you have severe pain, see a health worker right away.



Cancer of the ovaries

Cancer of the ovaries is not common. There are usually no warning signs, but a health worker might feel an ovary that is very large while doing a pelvic examination. Surgery, medicines, and radiation therapy are all used for treatment, and cure is very difficult.

Other Common Cancers

Lung cancer

Lung cancer is a growing problem that is often caused by smoking tobacco. It is more common in men because they usually smoke more than women. But because many women now smoke as much as men, they are starting to get more lung cancer. In some countries, more women now die from lung cancer caused by smoking than from any other kind of cancer. And in many places, girls are starting to smoke as early and as much as boys. As more girls and women smoke, even more women will end up getting lung cancer.

Lung cancer does not usually affect people until they are over 40 years old. If a woman stops smoking, her risk of getting lung cancer becomes much less. The signs (coughing up blood, losing weight, difficulty breathing) appear when the cancer is advanced and difficult to cure. Surgery to remove part of the lung, medicines, and radiation therapy are all used to treat lung cancer.



Smoking causes cancer.

◆ *The signs of lung cancer are the same as tuberculosis (TB). Seek medical help if*

you have these signs.

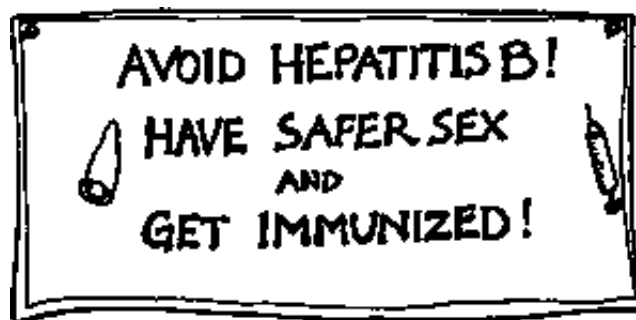
Mouth and throat cancer

Mouth and throat cancer can be caused by smoking and chewing tobacco. If you smoke or chew tobacco, and have sores in your mouth that do not heal, get medical advice.

Cancer of the liver

Some people who become infected with hepatitis B develop cancer of the liver years later. Signs of liver cancer are a swollen abdomen and general weakness. See a health worker if you think you may have liver cancer.

Hepatitis B can be prevented by having *safer sex* and by getting *vaccinated*. Babies can be protected against hepatitis B by vaccination at birth. Adults can be vaccinated at any time.



Cancer of the liver can be caused by hepatitis B.

◆ *Try to make hepatitis B vaccine available in your community.*



STDs, 261
hepatitis B, 271
Figure

Cancer of the stomach

Cancer of the stomach can occur in women and men over age 40. Usually there are no signs until it is advanced. Surgery is the only treatment and may not be successful.

When Cancer Cannot Be Cured

Many cancers can be cured, but others cannot, especially if the cancer has spread to several parts of the body. Also, hospitals that treat cancer are often far away, in large cities, and treatment is costly.



Figure

Sometimes, when cancer is found late, there is no cure. Then it may be best to stay at home in the care of your family. This time can be very difficult. Eat as well as you can and get enough rest. Medicines for pain, anxiety, and sleeping problems can make you more comfortable. Talking with someone close to you can help you prepare for death, and help you plan for your family's future after you are gone.

Working for Change

Many unnecessary deaths from cancer could be prevented if more cancers were found and treated earlier. To help make this happen, organize women and men to promote:

- **better cancer screening in local health services and rural areas.**

- **training for local health workers to do visual inspection for cancer of the cervix, Pap tests, and breast exams.**
- **more labs and trained technicians to read Pap tests.**
- **better education and more community awareness about how cancer can be prevented, who is at risk, what the warning signs are, and the benefits of cancer screening.**
- **lower cost care for women who have cancer.**

It is also important for women to:

- **learn to do breast self-examinations.**
- **know the signs of cancer especially cancer of the womb, breast, and cervix.**

When people in the community know more about the things that are likely to cause cancer, they may be better able to avoid them. This could prevent many cancers from starting. Help people in your community learn that they can prevent many unnecessary deaths from cancer if they avoid smoking or chewing tobacco, and if women are able to protect themselves from STDs.

