

About Mamta ...

MAMTA - Health Institute for Mother and Child is a national level non-governmental organization that has been working for over a decade on various Adolescent Health and Development issues, with special focus on young people's reproductive and sexual health and rights. It has been involved in building capacities of organisations on Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in 10 states of our country as well as in countries of South and South East Asia region. The organization has also initiated an interactive platform for dissemination of scientific and appropriate information through a web-portal for the young people and a Resource Centre with a vast collection of books and resource materials on health issues, particularly related to young people.



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Stepping into Adolescence



Mamta - Health Institute for Mother and Child
New Delhi



P R E F A C E

Adolescence is a transition phase between childhood and adulthood. This stage of life is characterised by rapid growth and development. Physical growth is accompanied by sexual maturation. As attitudes, values and behaviours that determine a young person's future begin to crystallise and take shape, they are expected to assume greater personal responsibility.

For most young people, the transition from childhood to adulthood is paved with emotional, psychological, physical and social conflicts. They become worried and curious about the changes in their bodies and seek answers to their concerns about these new experiences. Many-a-times, parents do not discuss these issues as they find them embarrassing, and hence young people rely on their peers for information, thus many-a-times receiving wrong or inadequate information.

This document has been designed to provide young people with accurate information regarding the physical growth and development, consequences of early marriages and early pregnancy, and the sexual and reproductive rights. Pubertal changes like menstruation, nightfall in boys, secondary sexual characteristics like breast development, body hair, gain in height and weight etc. have also been discussed. It has been prepared in the form of illustrated stories and in 'comic' style, so as to make it interesting and easily understandable by the adolescents.

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Growing Up

Jyoti is the eldest among her two brothers and sister. Now she is 12 years old and all the household chores are her responsibilities.



She goes to school everyday.



After coming back from school, she gives fodder to the cattle and milks them.



She cooks and does many more things.



Her father works as a tailor in the village.



And her mother, Kamla is confined to the bed, as she is suffering from a chronic illness. After giving birth to four children, she has become very weak. Also, she has become quite short - tempered. She feels that no one understands what she is going through, both mentally and physically.



The girls are growing older. What will happen to them? Who will keep an eye on them?



Sarla, Jyoti's aunt, came home one day.



She is a Biology teacher of class X in a school in the neighboring village.



Aunt was meeting Jyoti and others after nearly four years. She met everyone warmly.



Later, after taking bath she sat on the cot to bask in the sun.



Jyoti was busy serving food. Lajjo Mousi, their neighbor, came to meet Jyoti's mother and aunt.



She looked at Jyoti and said,

You are quite old now. You should wear a dupatta and stop wearing frocks. See how long your legs have become.



Jyoti was excited. She started thinking about the next day, what food she would cook, whom would she invite.

In the evening she took her best friend, Binno to invite Rajjo, Munni and Sitara for the next day.



They thought they should invite Shambhu and Gopal too, but hesitated wondering if it would be alright to do so.



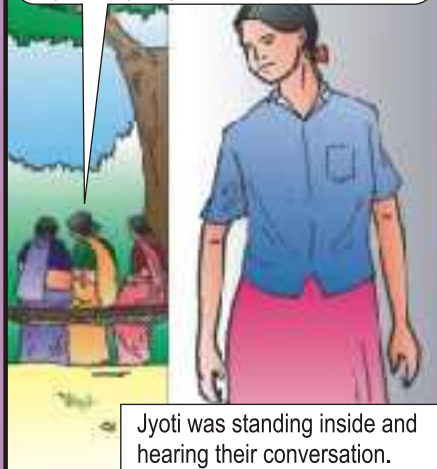
Then quickly sitting next to Jyoti's mother, she asked-

Have you talked to Jyoti about menstruation?



I haven't talked to her. She will understand on her own.

Aren't you thinking about Jyoti's marriage? Do you have any boy (match) in your mind?



Jyoti was standing inside and hearing their conversation.

Jyoti got a little upset and went away from there.



Next day, Jyoti got up early in the morning and started preparing food. She had asked her friends to get some food from their home as well. She was thinking about what they would discuss with Aunt Sarla.



Aunt Sarla was also doing her preparations. She sat till late and was drawing some pictures.



Around 12.30 at noon, everyone came.



Aunt Sarla called out to Jyoti.

What's wrong, why are you looking so troubled? Do you want to share something with me? Tell me, I am like your friend.



Aunty, 3-4 months back suddenly I had a lot of pain in my stomach and legs, and my clothes got stained with blood. I did not understand what had happened? I got very scared. I was scared to share it with mother. My friends said one should not discuss such a thing with anyone and it happens to every girl. But why does it happen? Is this a disease?



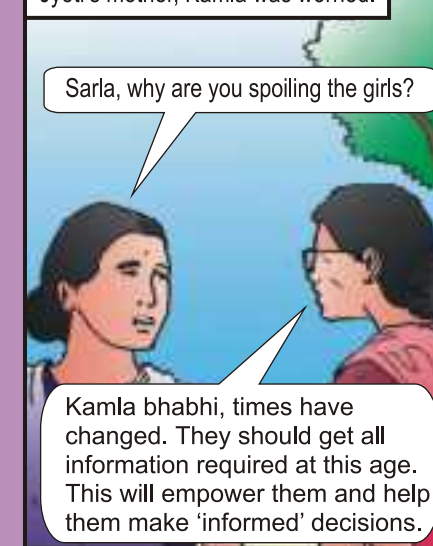
And Aunty, I have hair growing in some parts of my body. This was not there earlier. Even my breasts are changing, which makes me a little embarrassed.

Wait for a while. Like you, your friends too will have similar doubts about these issues. Tomorrow is a Sunday, Call all your friends home for lunch and we will sit on the terrace and talk about these issues.



Jyoti's mother, Kamla was worried.

Sarla, why are you spoiling the girls?



Kamla bhabhi, times have changed. They should get all information required at this age. This will empower them and help them make 'informed' decisions.

Everyone sat in a circle on the terrace and Sarla took out 2 drawings and placed in front of them.



The girls were looking embarrassed.



Sarla aunt took out a chart paper that had the drawing of some parts of the human body. She asked Rajjo-



Tell me, what is this and what are its functions?

This is the Head and it 'thinks'.

Aunt took out another drawing and on seeing this the girls started murmuring and giggling.



Ha ha ha

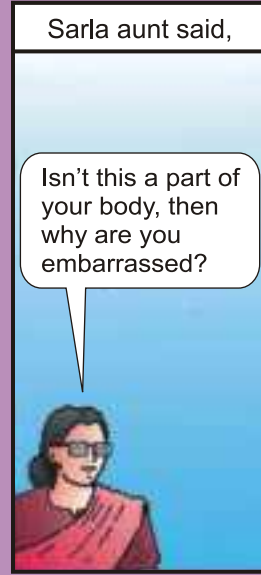
Ha ha ha

Showing the drawing, she asked Binno,



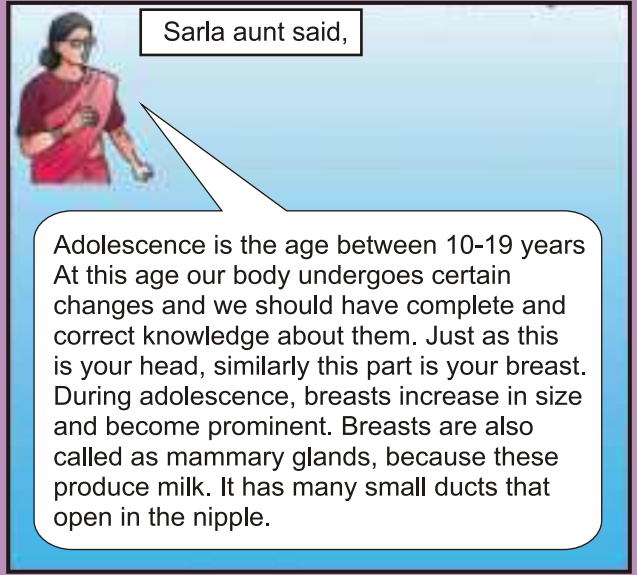
What is this called and what is its function?

Binno got embarrassed and didn't say anything.



Sarla aunt said,

Isn't this a part of your body, then why are you embarrassed?



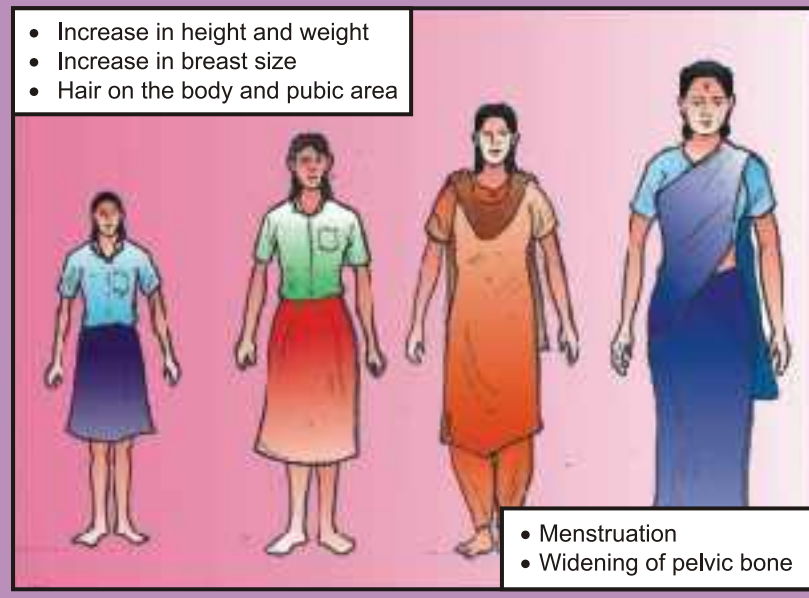
Sarla aunt said,

Adolescence is the age between 10-19 years. At this age our body undergoes certain changes and we should have complete and correct knowledge about them. Just as this is your head, similarly this part is your breast. During adolescence, breasts increase in size and become prominent. Breasts are also called as mammary glands, because these produce milk. It has many small ducts that open in the nipple.



Aunt showed another drawing and said,

These are some of the changes that a girl goes through while growing up:



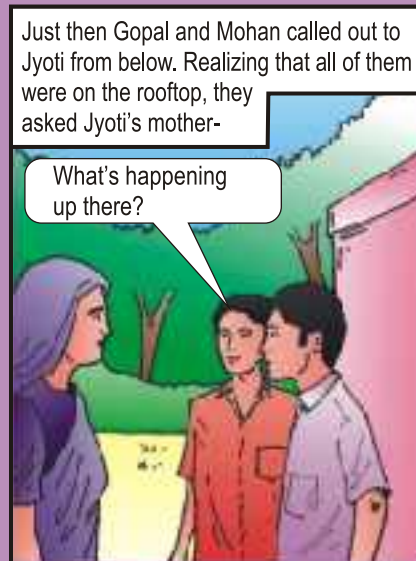
- Increase in height and weight
- Increase in breast size
- Hair on the body and pubic area

- Menstruation
- Widening of pelvic bone



Aunt Sarla then showed them another drawing and pointing to it, she said-

Like you have hair on your head, arms, legs; similarly when you are about 11-12 years of age, hair start appearing in the pubic area and under the arms.



Just then Gopal and Mohan called out to Jyoti from below. Realizing that all of them were on the rooftop, they asked Jyoti's mother-

What's happening up there?



On hearing that Sarla aunt was talking about the changes that occur in young boys and girls, they quickly went upstairs. On seeing them Sarla aunt said-

Its good that you are also here, please sit down. I was just talking to these girls about the changes that occur during adolescence.



Jyoti said,

I have heard that girls grow only up till the age of 12-13 years of age, is it true?

Girls gain maximum height during this period and then the rate of growth slows down. Compared to girls, boys start rapid height gain a little later, around the ages of 13-14 years.



Binni elbowed Jyoti and whispered to her,

Ask her about 'blood' discharge?

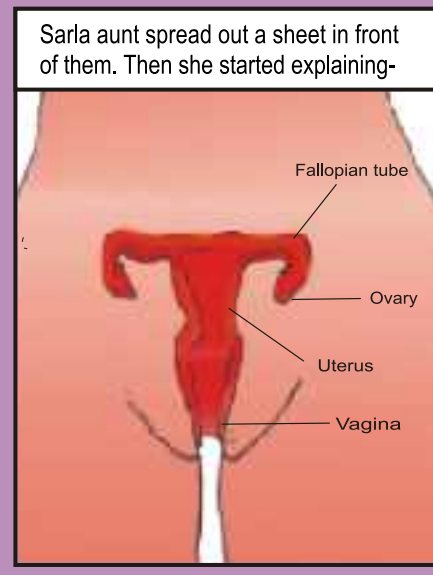


Sarla aunt understood what the girls were referring to and started smiling,

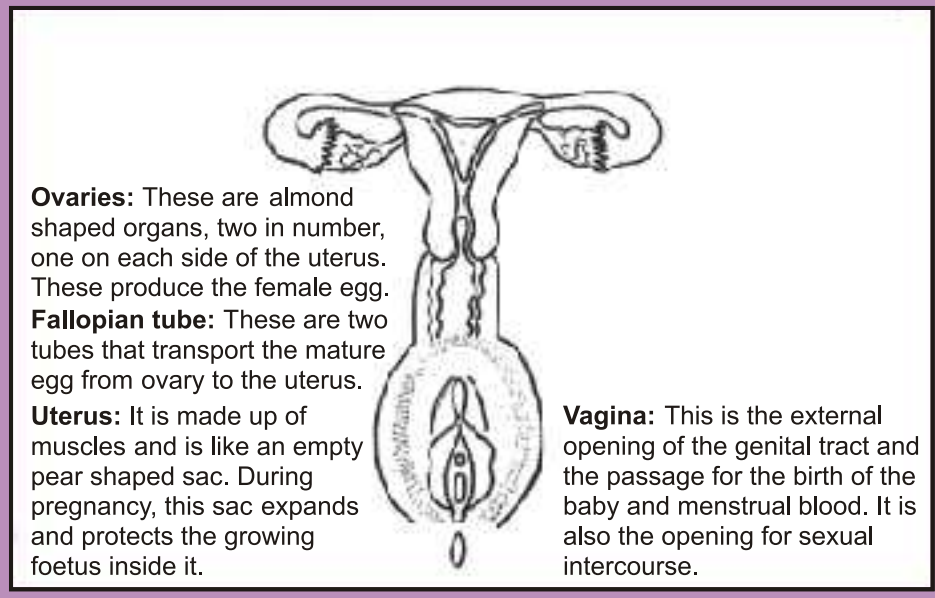
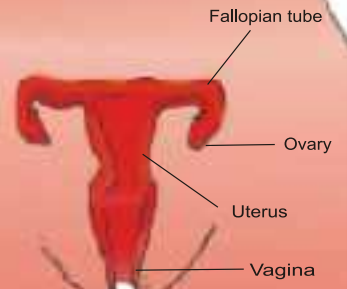
Why are you embarrassed to talk about your own body? O.K, tell me, who bears the child, girls or boys?

Girls, Aunty!

ha ha ha



Sarla aunt spread out a sheet in front of them. Then she started explaining-

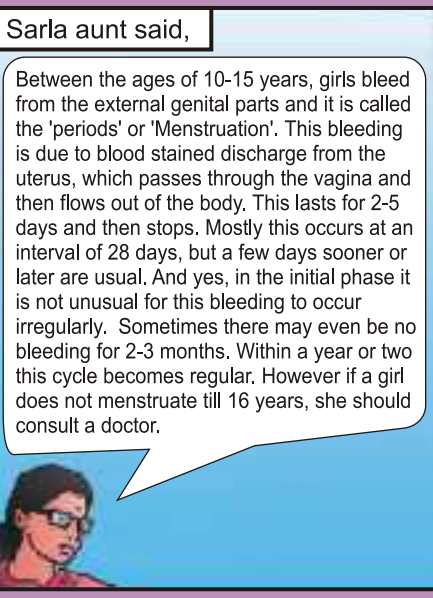


Ovaries: These are almond shaped organs, two in number, one on each side of the uterus. These produce the female egg.

Fallopian tube: These are two tubes that transport the mature egg from ovary to the uterus.

Uterus: It is made up of muscles and is like an empty pear shaped sac. During pregnancy, this sac expands and protects the growing foetus inside it.

Vagina: This is the external opening of the genital tract and the passage for the birth of the baby and menstrual blood. It is also the opening for sexual intercourse.



Sarla aunt said,

Between the ages of 10-15 years, girls bleed from the external genital parts and it is called the 'periods' or 'Menstruation'. This bleeding is due to blood stained discharge from the uterus, which passes through the vagina and then flows out of the body. This lasts for 2-5 days and then stops. Mostly this occurs at an interval of 28 days, but a few days sooner or later are usual. And yes, in the initial phase it is not unusual for this bleeding to occur irregularly. Sometimes there may even be no bleeding for 2-3 months. Within a year or two this cycle becomes regular. However if a girl does not menstruate till 16 years, she should consult a doctor.

Rajjo asked,

But aunty, why does this bleeding occur?



Sarla aunt said,

Certain glands in the body secrete hormones, which affect the reproductive organs. Under their influence, one egg matures in either ovary every month. This egg passes through the uterine duct into the uterus. The uterus also develops a thick inner lining, which is made up of blood vessels and tissues. This is a preparation for receiving a fertilized egg and providing it with adequate nutrition. If the egg meets with a sperm from a man/boy, then the egg is fertilized and embeds itself into the thickened wall of the uterus. But if this does not happen, then the inner lining of the uterus begins to shed. The blood vessels, blood, tissues and mucous flows out as menstrual discharge. This cycle is repeated after approximately 28 days.

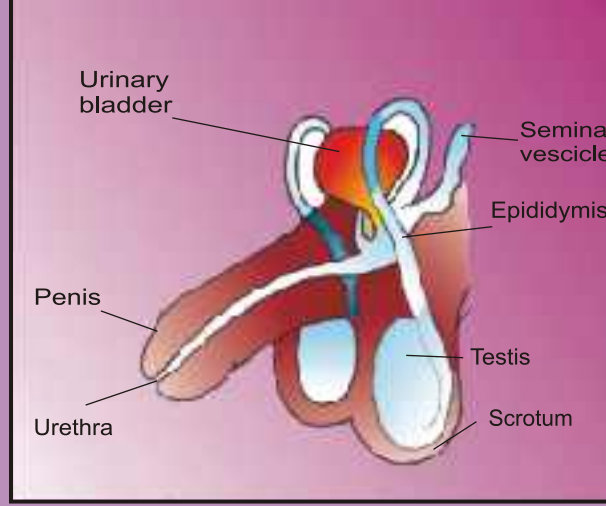


Rajjo said,

Aunty, we have heard that during 'periods' girls should not enter the kitchen or the temple, because at that time she is unclean.



Sarla aunt put another picture in front of them



During adolescence, boys observe changes in their external genital organs, they grow in size, hair grows on the thighs and the pubic region, the testes become larger, and the scrotum (skin covering the testes) becomes darker. The testes continuously produce sperms, which are present in a fluid called semen. Sometimes the excess semen flows out of the phallus (penis), during sleep and is what you all know as 'Nightfall' or 'Nocturnal Emission'.



Mohan asked,

Aunty, does it happen to all boys, or is it an illness?



Aunt said,

This is a social practice in certain places but is not based on any scientific fact. Menstruation is a natural phenomena related to fertility. Without this process how would the mankind survive generation after generation? But yes, one should be careful about maintaining good hygiene during menstruation. Take bath daily and change 'cloth' regularly. Take nutritious food, like milk, green vegetables, and fruits. Continue your daily routine. A little exercise will keep you energetic.



The girls looked satisfied. Then Jyoti said,

Aunty, girls have so many changes. Do boys experience some changes as well?



Gopal and Mohan also said,

Yes, we would also like to have some information. Can you tell us about physical changes in boys?



Aunt said,

Nightfall is a natural phenomenon during adolescence and boys usually get frightened unnecessarily. They assume that they have some kind of illness.

Gopal said,

Aunty, doesn't semen drain out something vital from the body that makes a boy weak?



Aunt replied,

Semen is a fluid containing the sperms and is continuously replenished like any other body fluid. There is no relation between physical weakness and 'nightfall'. This is again a myth and does not have any scientific basis.



It was getting darker and Kamla was getting anxious.



Sarla aunt said,

- Some of the changes are:
- Rapid gain in height and weight
 - Broadening of shoulders
 - Cracking of voice
 - Appearance of beard and mustaches
 - And hair all over the body.....



Gopal raised his hand as if to say something, but he could not bring himself to say it.



Aunt saw him and said,

Gopal, do you want to say something?



Gopal said,

Yes, I want to know about the changes that occur in the other areas like thePenis. Does it happen to all the boys or.....?



She called aloud,

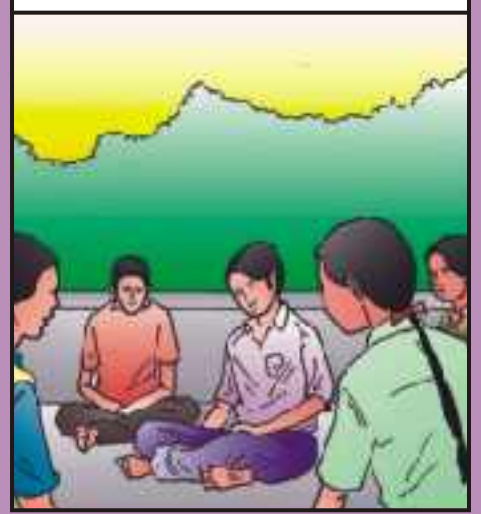
It is enough, stop it now!



Aunt was also tired.



But all the boys and girls were keen to continue the discussion.





Things to Remember



- **Adolescence** is that stage of life, which every person experiences between 10-19 years of age, signifying transition from childhood to youth.
- During this phase, an adolescent experiences rapid physical, emotional and psycho-social changes.
- Physical changes in boys and girls include changes in the genital organs and their functional maturation.
- Menstruation in girls and nightfall in boys is a normal phenomenon.
- Adolescents are more likely to experiment or indulge in risky behaviour, like smoking, drinking and substance abuse with consequential health hazards.
- Parents and teachers should improve communication and support the adolescents in seeking appropriate information.

Gift of Information



Jyoti lives with her parents and two younger brothers in a small town. She studies in class X and her brothers, Suresh and Gopal, are in class IX and VIII respectively. For the last few years, her mother Kamla has been suffering from a chronic disease and is confined to bed. So, the responsibility of all household chores is on Jyoti's shoulder and she has to manage her studies as well as home simultaneously.

Jyoti is very excited today. Today is a holiday and it is her 16th birthday. She has invited some of her friends to her house in the evening. She is busy in preparing some food for her friends.

Jyoti is feeling like a very important person today. Father brought some sweets for her. Her brothers wished her 'happy birthday' and they are also bouncing with joy as they heard that Jyoti is going to make some special food today. Only her mother didn't say anything and she's looking very disturbed.

When Jyoti went to her mother to share her plans for the evening, she showed no interest and said, "It's not very comforting for a mother to see her

daughter turning 16 years old. My health is deteriorating by thinking about your marriage all the time and worrying about your safety when you go out of home? I can't move out of the house; who'll take care of arranging your marriage? Who will find a suitable match for you?"

Jyoti remained silent and all her joy evaporated with her mother's anger and depressing words. Kamla continued, "I told your father to discontinue your education last year and get you married. He didn't listen to me, now where would I go to find a suitable match? Do you think we would be able to find any boy with more education than you in our locality for you to get married?"

Lajjo mousi, their immediate neighbour, suddenly entered into the room and said, "Why are you scolding the poor girl on her birthday? I know a boy in my maternal place. He works in a shop there and his mother, Sushila, is a good friend of mine. She is also looking for a suitable match for her son. He is 19 years. I think it's a perfect match. If you want, I can talk to Sushila and fix the date of marriage for the next month."



Lajjo mousi asked Jyoti, "Don't you feel excited about getting married? You'll get so many gifts and it's a very good thing for your mother, since she will be relieved of her worries regarding your marriage."

Jyoti kept quiet for a while and then she remembered the words of their class teacher who had provided them some very good information during their social science class. Then she said, "Marriage of a girl before 18 years and a boy before 21 years is legally not allowed. So, I think I'm not in position to get married now."

Both Kamla and Lajjo mousi remained quiet for a little while and then her mother said, "Forget about the laws, they are not meant for us. What's wrong in getting married before 18 years? We also got married before that age and we don't find any justification for this type of restriction. Do you think you have learnt more than us by reading a few books?"

Jyoti was in a fix, she was neither ready for the marriage nor she could argue with her mother, as she didn't know much about the matter. Suddenly all three of them heard a voice from behind that said, "Yes, I can tell you the justification behind this restriction."

All three turned to look back and saw Sarla, Jyoti's aunt, standing at the door. Sarla is a Biology teacher in the high school. Sarla said, "Happy Birthday Jyoti. I came few minutes back and was listening to your conversation. Let me tell your mother and Lajjo why it's important to observe the age of marriage as mentioned by our country's laws."

After making herself comfortable on a chair, Sarala said, "What is the meaning of marriage?"

Jyoti's mother said, "Look Sarla, we are not as much educated as you are but I'm worried about Jyoti's marriage because I want her to have a happy family of her own where she would spend the rest of her life with her husband and children."

Sarla said, "You are absolutely right. Marriage is the first step towards a happy family. But everything should happen at an appropriate time. The legal age for marriage is 18 years for girls and 21 years for boys. Marriage before that is considered as 'child marriage' and the consequences of such marriages are not good."

Lajjo mousi said, "What could be the consequences, Sarla? You are just complicating the matter."



Sarla said, "Well, the first thing that will happen is that Jyoti's education will get discontinued and this will close all her options for a better future. Do you want her to spend the rest of her life taking care of children and household chores."

She continued, "I am not saying that she should not do the household work; but don't you think if Jyoti is educated and mature, she will be able to take care of her children much better. Take your own example Kamla, you had children when you were just 15 years. I have been a witness to all the struggles you went through, taking care of them when you yourself were just a child. Do you want to place Jyoti in similar circumstances."

Lajjo mousi was about to say something but Sarla continued saying, "Kamla, you need to understand that if Jyoti studies further, there are so many advantages. She will be able to take more mature decisions in life. She will be respected in her family and as parents you should be proud of it. And Jyoti is such a bright student, it would be wrong if she was deprived of the opportunity to study further. Don't you think that if Jyoti is educated, she will be able to help her children with their studies; something that you were unable to do despite wanting to help them."

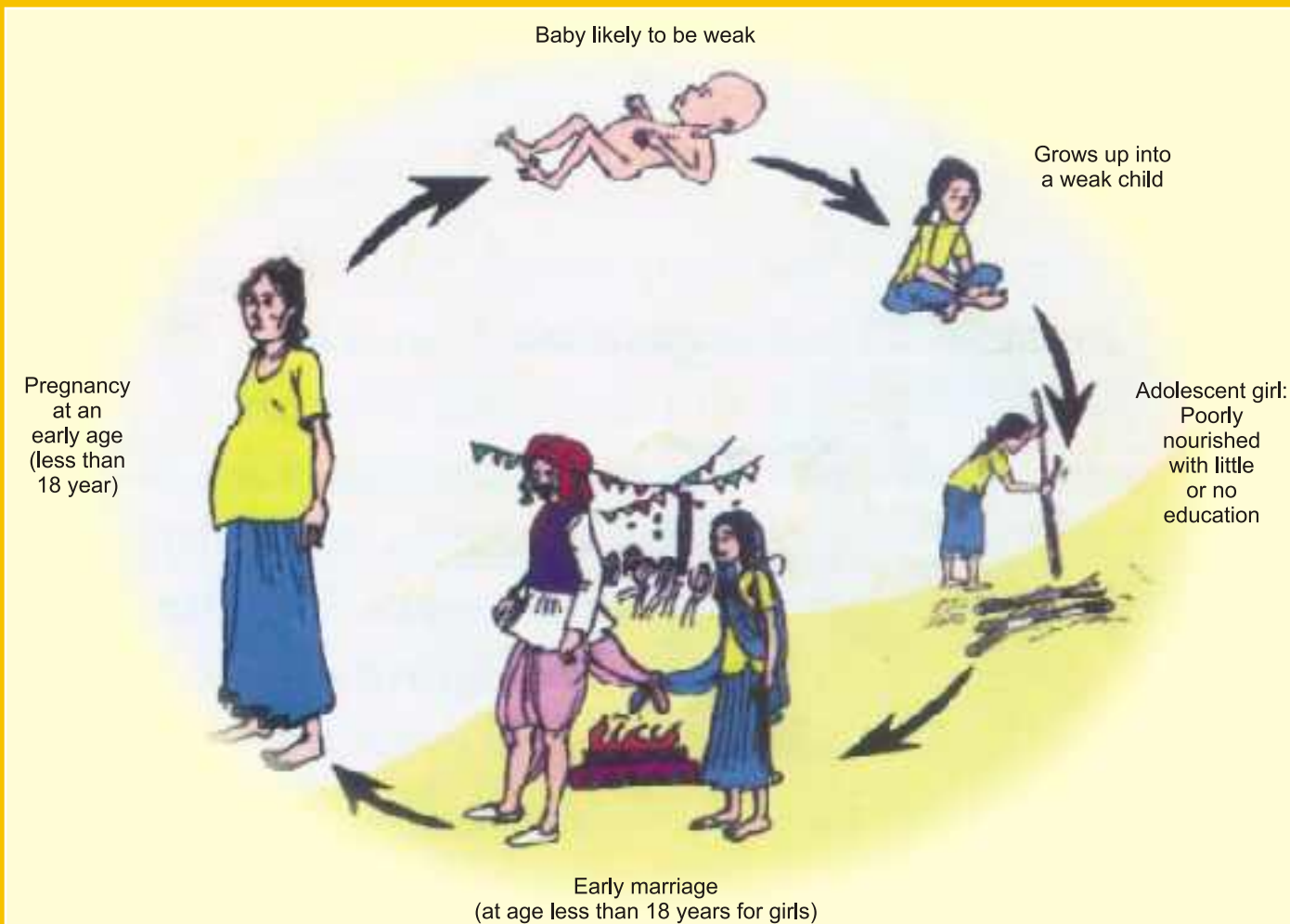
"Apart from these, marriage before 18 years also leads to various health problems for the young girls," she added.

Kamla looked a little perplexed and she asked, "What is the relation between marriage & health?"

Sarla said, "The expectations from elders of the family to have a grandchild soon after marriage, leads to many health problems for the girl as well as to her children."

Sarla continued, "Girls show maximum growth during the age 10-16 years, but the bones do not become mature till 18 years. Hence, if a girl becomes pregnant before 18 years of age, it can have life long health consequences because her body is not mature enough and not prepared to give birth to a baby. Very young girls experience a lot of problems and complications during childbirth."

"Lajjo, remember what happened to your sister's daughter. She was married when she was just 15 years and a year later, her baby died at the time of delivery and she has still not recovered from the complications till now. Remember the trauma she had to bear. Do you want Jyoti to experience the same trauma? Is this the kind of happy family that you are planning for Jyoti?"



Small mothers: Small babies - a vicious cycle

After taking a short pause, Sarla said, "Kamla, you were just talking about a happy family with children, but the babies born to these young mothers also face so many health risks. There are chances that the baby will be born before the term (nine months) and is weak. These newborns require a lot of care and have less chances of survival."

Sarla added, "Kamla, I had often been giving your example to so many people that despite the fact that you yourself were not educated, you were encouraging Jyoti to study. We have so many hopes for Jyoti and she is such a good student. And who knows, you might find an even more educated and better established match for her, who will be able make her happy."

Lajjo was not looking convinced. She asked, "But Sarla behen, don't you think it's not safe to allow a young girl to stay unmarried. The times

are 'bad' and anything 'bad' can happen to girls any day. Now-a-days children are getting more education and boys and girls are mixing freely. It can create problems. If something like this happens, we will not be able to face our relatives and the community."

Sarla was annoyed to hear this, but she said calmly, "That can happen anytime Lajjo and that can happen with anyone at any age. But how can you justify the act of pushing a young girl into so many risks assuming that you are giving her a secure life. Moreover, education enables them to take well thought out decisions and act reasonably and not do the 'bad' things as you are saying."

After this discussion, Jyoti's mother looked as if she was lost in thoughts for a long time. After some time, she said, "Oh Jyoti, I had been so harsh with you on your birthday. Don't get upset

and start making arrangements for the evening and invite all your friends".

"How many of them are coming?"

Jyoti became very happy and said, "I have invited my old friends and two of my new friends from school. Altogether they are eight. And I'm not going to make much. Actually it would be a get-together of my old friends and I'll introduce my new friends to them also. Moreover, Binni has come from her in-laws' house yesterday, after a long time. I have invited her also."

Jyoti devoted the whole day cooking food for her friends. Sarla helped her in cooking.

In the evening, all friends gathered at Jyoti's house. They were very happy to see Sarla aunty who was very friendly with all of them. Everyone was chatting with each other and enjoying. Jyoti introduced her two new friends, Seema and Geeta with all her other friends.

Suddenly, there was some noise outside and Jyoti saw her brother, Gopal coming with four of his friends. Jyoti was quite surprised, as she had not invited them. But she welcomed them and asked them to join them for the get-together.

Everyone seemed to be having a lot of fun. Only Binni was very quiet.

Then Sarla entered the room and started talking with the boys and girls. She asked Binni, "What is the matter Binni? Why are you looking so upset?"

Binni said, "N...nothing aunty, I'm fine."

Then Jyoti said, "Yes aunty, I also think there is something wrong with her. Is there any problem in your in-laws' house?"

Binni said, "Not exactly. But I'm worried about something and since Sarla aunty is here, I would like to talk to her about my problem. I think she can help me out, but I don't understand whether I should talk about my personal problems on an occasion like this."

Everyone said, "Come-on Binni! We're all friends. Tell us what happened?"

Binni said, "My mother-in-law keeps saying that she is waiting to see the face of her grandchild and hopes that it happens soon. We have been married only for about six months now and my husband is still studying; and I don't want to have a baby so soon. Recently, I heard that one can decide whether to have a baby or not, but I don't have any clear idea about that."





Sarla said, "Well Binni, I think it was not a right decision on your parents part to get you married at such an early age and again, if you plan for a child now, it would be another wrong step."

Seema asked, "What's wrong in getting pregnant now? I think Binni is mature enough to take care of her baby."

Sarla said, "Oh Seema, I didn't expect it from you! You are an educated girl. Don't you know the consequences of having a baby at such a young age?"

Seema felt a little embarrassed and said, "Sorry Aunty, but I heard my mother saying that if a girl gives birth to a child at a young age then she can take care of the baby properly, and also that the chances of getting pregnant decreases with age."

Sarla said, "Well, Jyoti do you have something to say about this?"

Jyoti enthusiastically explained what she had heard from aunt Sarla in the morning. All her friends were listening to her very attentively.

After she finished, Binni said, "Oh Jyoti, how did you know all these things? You have given us

such useful information. But how can we refuse to get married against our parents' wishes."

Sarla added, "You can talk to your parents and others in the family and try to convince them that delaying the age at marriage will ensure optimum physical, mental and emotional development of the girl for the benefit of family and society at large. In this way, you will also be able to fulfill your educational aspirations for a better quality life. It must not be forgotten that early marriage leads to early pregnancy with dire consequences for the health of mother and child."

Sarla said, "There is so much to discuss on this issue; but Jyoti has made some delicious food for you and it is getting cold. Let's have our food and we'll continue discussing about all this tomorrow. I will be here for the next 2-3 days."

Binni was looking better and she said, "That's a very good idea. Why don't you all come to my house tomorrow? We can all sit together and talk about it."

Everyone agreed, "That's good. We're feeling hungry. Let's go and celebrate Jyoti's birthday."

Know your rights

In the last story, we recognised the fact that young people are not able to convince parents and family members regarding their marriage, continuing education or delaying pregnancy. Young people are not able to do so because they are often unaware regarding their basic rights. They also do not have enough skills to negotiate effectively on these issues. As a result, young people are highly susceptible to sexual and reproductive health problems, including sexual abuse; maternal mortality; teenage pregnancy; female infanticide and unsafe abortions.

Good sexual and reproductive health is essential for young people's empowerment and their ability to lead productive lives. In this section, you will get information regarding the **sexual and reproductive rights** that we all should be aware of. These rights have been derived from the 'basic human rights' to which each human being is entitled.

Young people are humankind's future. Their full participation and integration in society requires that they be enabled to manage their sexual and reproductive lives responsibly and in an informed way, through education and services that meet their development needs.



What are the goals of sexual and reproductive rights?

The goals of reproductive and sexual rights for young people are:

- To protect and promote the rights of young people to access sexual and reproductive health information and services.
- To ensure that all young people have full, continuous and equal access to necessary health and nutrition information and services as they mature and throughout their life span.
- To reduce the number of adolescent pregnancies and HIV.

Understanding Sexual and Reproductive Rights

In a village, Meena lies on her bed, frail and weak, struggling to survive through yet another childbirth. She is 18 and about to give birth to her third child that she did not want to have. Her two young daughters are playing outside unaware of their mother's plight.

Meena was pulled out of school when she was 8. She was married off at 12 and had her first baby at 14. Her husband insisted on having another one soon after, hoping for her to bear a son who would carry the family name. Now Meena is worried, as another baby will be added to the family and this would further constrain the already meagre resources. She wonders if she will live through this childbirth and be able to take care of all her children.



The Right to life

No woman's life should be put at risk by reasons of pregnancy, especially if they are "too early, too many, too close".

The Right to health care and health protection

All women have the right to appropriate services in connection with pregnancy and confinement.

The Right to decide whether or when to have children

All young persons have the right to decide freely the number and spacing of their children and have access to information and services to enable them to exercise this right.

Mohit and Rani are in the waiting room of a family planning and STD clinic. They have been together in a relationship for a year now. They have heard about HIV from the newspapers and television and are aware that it can be prevented through safe sexual practices. Rani is attending the clinic together with Mohit so that they can gather some more information and acquire means for a safe relationship.

They both approach the clerk at the registration desk who inquires about the purpose of their visit. Both of them are hesitant to explain. The clerk then makes a snide remark to his colleague hinting at the loose morals of the present generation. He tells the two of them that they will have to wait since the doctor is busy, examining patients with genuine problems and they will only be wasting his time with such nebulous concerns.



The Right to information and education

All persons have the right correct information related to their sexual and reproductive health, rights and risks and effectiveness of all the methods of fertility regulation and the prevention of unplanned pregnancies.

The Right to equality and to be free from all sorts of discrimination

No person should be discriminated against in their access to health care/services on the grounds of race, colour, sex or sexual orientation.

The Right to privacy

All persons have the right not to be subject to arbitrary interference with their privacy, family, home or correspondence.
All sexual and reproductive health care services, including information and counseling, provided to the clients would remain confidential.

The Right to freedom of thought

All persons have the right to freedom of thought and speech related to their sexual and reproductive lives.



16 years old Raja is returning from school in a small town in Uttar Pradesh. His steps are light and he feels he could almost fly. He is on the top of the world because of the excellent results in class tests and wants to share the good news with the family. He is dreaming of the day when he graduates from the college as a doctor to fulfill his childhood dream. His mother is at the door waiting for him with a box of sweets. Raja wonders how his mother knows about his results. "We've been lucky to find a pretty looking girl from a good family for you, the wedding would take place on the nearest auspicious day. Finally, I will be able to see my grandson's face soon," says his mother.

Raja suddenly feels as if all his dreams of becoming a doctor have been shattered.

The Right to choose whether or not to marry and to found and plan a family

All persons have the right to choose to marry or not to marry and to found and plan a family.

Sita, 18 years old, is married for the last 1 year. She conceived in the very first year of her marriage and delivered her first child. She and her husband now want to use family planning method in order to avoid another pregnancy soon. She consults the local health counselor who discusses the various contraceptive options with her. She finally decides to start using oral contraceptives. But she often forgets to take them and is afraid that she may get pregnant. So, she returns to the health counselor and shares her concern regarding missing pills on certain days and also missing them when she does not have a new packet to start. Also she feels that her family members will not support her decision to delay the second child and they may come to know about her using pills.

The health counselor tells her that it may be a good idea for her to consider Copper T, as this would take care of her concerns. Sita approaches the nearby health centre in her village only to find that this contraceptive is not available, as they do not have trained personnel for this purpose. Sita is disappointed.



The Right to the benefits of scientific progress

All persons have the right to have the benefit of scientific progress and access to the available reproductive health care technology.

If you are seeking more information on these issues please visit us at:

www.yrshr.org

This web-portal has been designed for young people and provides scientific information related to young people's reproductive and sexual health and rights. The various sections that will be of interest to you are:

Information Base strives to satisfy your quest for knowledge on issues concerning young people. You will have access to accurate and scientific information that has been put together by our team of technical experts.

E-Counseling: A team of qualified medical professionals and psychologists address queries on various issues ranging from personal growing up concerns to sexual and reproductive health problems and much more. You can feel free to post your queries and concerns, all that you ever wanted to know but hesitated to talk about. The response to these will be prompt without revealing your identity.

FAQs: If you are keen to know what other young people of your age are curious about, you can visit this section and get an idea. You may find answers to many of your own queries.

Hot Debatable: The ability to react and put ones thoughts across is a unique boon to us, which no other species on this planet Earth has. To get across your viewpoint just post your thoughts here and join the debate..... Learn from people and let people learn from you through this section.

If you are working on young people or looking for more information or resources on adolescents and young people, you can visit the following sections:

Theme Based Section attempts to bring more clarity on sexual and reproductive health issues relevant to program managers and service providers working with young people, through a theme-based article.

E-Library is equipped with the online access catalogue of the collection of books/reports, articles and audio-visuals for disseminating information to a wider audience.

Database on Young People in India contains data pertaining to young people (10-24 years) in the areas of Population distribution, Fertility, Mortality, Family Planning, Nutritional status, Health care, Reproductive health, Marital status, Education, Social, Crime data and Workforce based on authentic source, such as Census 1991, NFHS-II, RCH-1998/99, SRS, NACO and Crime data of Ministry of Home Affairs.