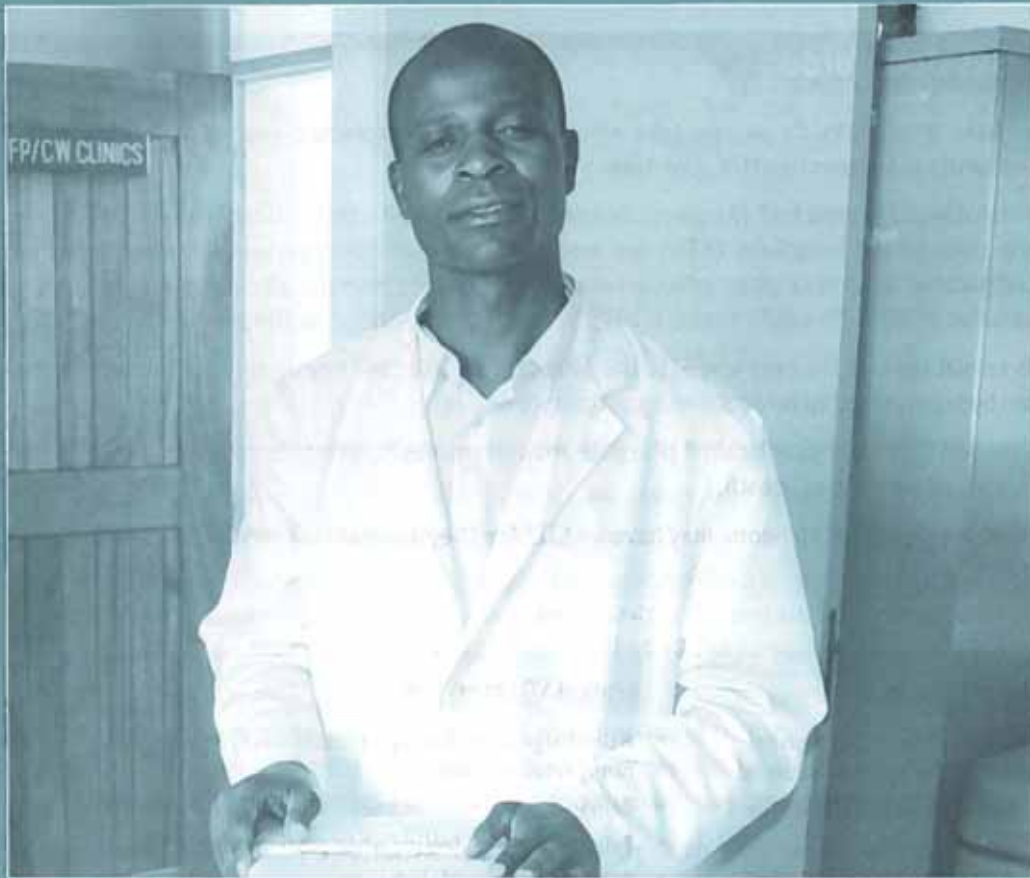


Sexually transmitted infections



This chapter will focus on preventing STIs, recognizing symptoms of STIs, and the importance of going for prompt treatment at a health centre.

1. What are STIs?



Session objectives

By the end of this discussion, participants should be able to:

- Know the most common STIs and how they impact health.
- Explain how STIs are transmitted.
- Know what people should do if they think they have an STI.
- Describe how to prevent STIs.
- Explain what happens if STIs are not treated.



Session guide

1. **Ask:** What risks do people take when they have unprotected sex? [Possible answers: pregnancy, infections like HIV, and other STIs.]
2. **Ask:** What does STI stand for? [Answer: sexually transmitted infection.] What is an STI? [Answer: Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are mainly transmitted through sexual contact with an infected partner. STIs occur when infection-causing germs pass from one person to another.] What are examples of STIs? [Possible answers: HIV, Chlamydia, gonorrhoea, or herpes.]
3. **Ask:** Is sexual contact the only way STIs are spread? How else can they be spread? [Answer: some STIs can be transmitted to infants during pregnancy or birth]
4. **Ask:** How do STIs impact your health? [Possible answers: diseases, infertility, chronic pain, cervical cancer, and, in some cases, death.]
5. **Ask:** What are signs that someone may have an STI? Are they different for men and women?

Signs of STIs in men	Signs of STIs in women
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A wound, sores, ulcer, rash or blisters on or around the penis.• A discharge, like pus, from the penis.• Pain or a burning feeling when passing urine.• Pain during sexual intercourse.• Pain and swelling of the testicles.• Abnormal swelling or growths on the genitals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A discharge from the vagina that is thick, itchy or has a funny smell or colour.• Pain in the lower abdomen.• Pain or a burning feeling when passing urine.• Pain during sexual intercourse.• Abnormal bleeding from the vagina.• Itching in the genital area.• Abnormal swelling or growths in the genitals.• Vaginal secretions that change colour, have a bad smell, become much thicker or much more watery, or cause irritation.

6. **Explain** that most men can tell when they have an STI because there are clear signs. Women can have an STI without knowing it, because there are often no signs. Sometimes only a trained health worker can find signs of an STI in a woman. Sometimes it is necessary to examine samples of a woman's blood or vaginal discharge to find out if she has an STI, and which type of STI she has.
7. **Ask:** What should people do if they think they have an STI? (Answers: They should consult a health worker for advice, tests, and treatment. Since most people have few or no symptoms of an STI, it is important to go for treatment even if you think you are at risk for STIs.) **Ask:** Why do some people wait to be tested and treated for STIs? Allow participants to discuss.
8. **Ask:** How can STIs be prevented? [Answers: abstaining from sexual activity, being in a mutually faithful relationship with a partner who is not infected, and using condoms can prevent some STIs.]
9. **Ask:** Why is it easier for women to be infected with an STI? Allow participants to discuss.
10. **Explain** that the differences between men and women's bodies, as well as social and economic status, cause women to be infected with STIs more than men.
 - During sex, the man's penis goes inside the female and his sexual fluids, which may carry infection, stay inside her body.
 - It can be very difficult for a woman to refuse sex with her husband or to insist that he use a condom.
 - Women and girls are more likely to have experienced unwanted sex.
11. **Divide** the group into male-only and female-only groups. Ask each group to have two volunteers role play what they would do or say if they noticed that their sexual partner had sores or an unusual discharge or smell in the genital area. After each role play, participants should discuss the following questions:
 - Do you agree with what the character decided to do?
 - Would you have done anything differently? If so, what?
 - Was this role play similar to what would happen in real life? Why or why not?
 - How will the decisions made in the role play influence the lives of the characters?

Allow several pairs of volunteers to role play the situation and participants to discuss each one.

12. **Ask** participants to come back together in the larger group. Ask the male and female groups to share their role-plays and discuss.
13. **Ask:** What should you do if you think that you have been infected with an STI? [Answers: seek proper medical treatment right away; inform your sexual partner(s); and abstain from sexual contact until there is no evidence of infection and you have finished all the prescribed medicine.]
14. **Divide** the group into pairs of males and females (where not possible use groups of 3). Ask the pair to role play a situation where they are husband and wife. One of them has an STI (they can choose which person). The person with the STI needs to inform his or her partner about the infection and encourage their partner to go for testing. Then ask them to switch roles so the other person now has the STI.

At the end of the role play, ask the large group to come back together and ask the following questions:

- What did you find difficult about this situation (i.e., telling your partner about the STI)?
- Was there anything that made it easier to talk with your partner about the STI? If so, what?
- What are some good ways to start a discussion with your partner about STIs?
- What can someone do if their partner reacts badly to the information about an STI?
- How did you encourage your partners to go for testing? Did your strategy work (i.e., did your partner agree to go for testing?)



Main messages

- STIs can be prevented. Use condoms, abstain from sex or be sure you are in a mutually exclusive faithful relationship in order to protect yourself from STIs.
- STIs can have a negative impact on your health including causing disease, infertility, cancer and even death.
- STIs can be treated. If you have any STI symptoms, go to a health centre immediately for treatment by a trained health care provider.
- If you have an STI, it is important to notify your partner and encourage your partner to go for treatment as well.



Activity: STI true or false

Introduce this activity by telling the group that we are going to talk about myths and common beliefs about STIs.

Divide the group into four teams (or fewer depending upon number of participants being trained) and ask each team to stand in one corner of the room. Explain that you are going to play a game and the team with the most points wins. Taking turns for each team, read out one of the statements listed below. The team must decide if the statement is true or false. If the team answers correctly, they score two points. If they can explain why the answer is correct, they get an extra point.

If the team cannot explain their answer, another team can try for the extra point. When all statements have been answered, announce first, second, third and fourth places.

Questions

1. A person can always tell if she or he has an STI.

False. People can and do have STIs without having any symptoms. Women often have STIs without symptoms because their reproductive organs are internal, but men infected with some infections like Chlamydia also may have no symptoms. People infected with HIV generally have no symptoms for some time, even years, after infection.

2. With proper medical treatment, all STIs except HIV can be cured.

False. Herpes, an STI caused by a virus, cannot be cured at the present time.

3. Condoms are the most effective safeguard against the spread of STIs.

False. Abstaining from sexual intercourse is the best way to prevent the spread of STIs. Condoms are the next best thing; only abstinence is 100% effective.

4. Using condoms will help prevent the spread of STIs.

True. Condoms can help prevent the spread of STIs but they must be used correctly. Condoms are not 100% effective because people do not use them properly. Improper use can cause them to occasionally break or come off during intercourse. Abstinence is the safest method to avoid STIs.

5. The organisms that cause STIs can only enter the body through either the woman's vagina or the man's penis.

False. STI bacteria and viruses can enter the body through any mucous membrane, including the vagina, penis, anus, mouth, and in some cases, the eyes. HIV can also enter the body when injected into the bloodstream from shared needles or a blood transfusion. Babies can also get STIs from mothers during pregnancy and childbirth.

6. You cannot contract an STI by masturbating, or by holding hands, talking, walking or dancing with a partner.

True. STIs are only spread by close sexual contact with an infected person. Anyone can be infected by having oral, anal or vaginal sexual contact with a partner who is infected. In the case of HIV, sharing needles with an infected partner can infect a person.

7. Practicing good personal cleanliness after having intercourse should be encouraged.

True. While personal cleanliness alone cannot prevent STIs, washing away your partner's body fluids right after intercourse is good practice. Washing does not, however, prevent pregnancy or stop HIV from entering the body through the mucous membranes in the mouth, anus, penis or vagina.

8. It is possible to contract some STIs from kissing.

True. It is rare, but possible to be infected by syphilis through kissing, if the infected person has small sores in or around the mouth. Kissing can also spread the herpes virus, if active sores are present. HIV is not spread by kissing.

9. The following are examples of STIs: syphilis, dysentery, gonorrhoea, jaundice, and diabetes.

False. Syphilis and gonorrhoea are the only STIs in this list. All require medical treatment right away, but none is treated with the same medicines used to treat STIs.

10. The most important thing to do if you suspect you have been infected by an STI is to inform your sexual partner(s).

False. The most important thing is to get medical treatment for yourself immediately. Once you have started medical treatment, the health worker can inform your sexual partners, or you can if you prefer. In the meantime, it is also important for the infected person/s to abstain from any sexual contact until their treatment has been completed. You or your partner can suffer serious physical damage, and can continue to infect each other, or others, if the infection is not properly treated.

11. Only people who participate in sexual activity can contract an STI.

False. Infants can get STIs such as herpes, gonorrhoea, and HIV infection before and/or during birth, or during breastfeeding.

12. A young woman using oral contraceptives (the pill) should still insist that her sexual partner use a condom, to protect against STIs.

True. Oral contraceptives do not prevent STIs, so a condom is necessary for protection unless both partners know they are faithful to one another and are currently infection-free.

2. Condom use



Session objectives

By the end of this discussion, participants should be able to:

- Understand how condoms prevent STIs and pregnancy.
- Describe how to use a condom correctly.
- Respond to condom myths with factual information.



Session guide

1. **Ask:** What is meant by unprotected sex? [Answer: having penetrative sex without a condom.]
2. **Ask:** What are the risks of unprotected sex? [Answers: pregnancy, infection.]
3. **Ask:** Do you think condoms work well at preventing STIs (including HIV)? Why? Allow participants to discuss.
5. **Ask:** Do you think condoms work well at preventing pregnancy? Why? Allow participants to discuss.
6. **Explain** that when used properly every time you have sex, condoms work very well to prevent HIV transmission and pregnancy. Condoms also help to prevent the transmission of any other infection that is spread through semen or vaginal fluids. Reasons why condoms may not protect against pregnancy or HIV transmission are that people do not use them properly and people do not use them each and every time they have sex.
7. **Ask:** What can cause condoms to break or tear?
8. **Explain** that when condoms break or tear, it is usually because people are not using them properly. Manufacturers and regulatory agencies test condoms to make sure that they are safe and strong enough to use during sex. It is very rare for a condom to break or come off when they are used by people who are experienced using condoms. It is important to practice putting a condom on properly. The following tips can help make male condoms work best:
 - Never open the condom package with sharp objects like teeth, scissors, knives, and pencils.
 - Never unroll a condom before putting it on. Condoms should always be unrolled onto the penis, rather than pulled on like a sock.
 - Having intercourse for more than 20 minutes or having very intense intercourse can increase the risk that a condom may slip off.
 - Carefully check the condom package to be sure that it is not damaged.
 - Check the expiry date on the package. Do not use a condom that is hard or dry or if it has changed colour.
 - Use only water-based lubrication such as K-Y jelly, or creams, or saliva. Oil-based products such as petroleum jelly, hand lotion, or mineral or vegetable oils should never be used because they can weaken latex, making the condom more likely to break.
 - Use a new condom for each act of intercourse. A male condom should never be washed and reused.

- Starting to unroll the condom wrong side out on the penis and then flipping it over to put it on correctly may contaminate the outside of the condom. If this happens the condom should be thrown away and replaced with a new one.
 - Many condoms have a space on the end for semen. If the condom does not have one, you can hold the end of the condom while unrolling it onto the penis. This creates a space for the semen.
 - Condoms should be stored in a cool place. Condoms should not be stored in pockets, wallets, or any place that gets warm. Be sure to regularly check expiry dates on condoms, and throw them out when they are expired. If the packaging is damaged in any way, the condom should not be used.
9. **Explain** that there are many myths about condoms in our community. Read each one of the statements below and ask participants to talk about whether or not they think it is true and why.

Condoms have HIV inside of them.

Condoms do not contain HIV. Condoms are tested in the factory like other medical devices. HIV is a virus that must be in body fluids to survive. HIV cannot live outside of a body for very long and could not survive in a condom.

Condoms have holes.

Condoms do not have holes that let HIV pass through. Many studies have shown that latex condoms do not have holes big enough for HIV to travel through. Laboratory studies show that latex condoms (that are not broken) act as a barrier to microorganisms, including HIV, as well as sperm. Research studies have been done all over the world to test how well condoms work and have found that latex condoms work very well to protect against HIV infection when used properly for every act of intercourse.

Wearing two condoms is better than wearing one.

Using two condoms at the same time - either two male condoms or a male and female condom - is not a good idea. The friction of the two rubbing together may cause one or both of the condoms to tear. To take extra precautions, it is better to make sure that condoms are stored properly and used correctly for every sexual act.

Condoms decrease a man's pleasure during sex.

Although some men feel that condoms decrease the stimulation and friction of sexual intercourse, condoms do not completely rob men of pleasure during the sexual act. Sex between two people can involve many different ways to pleasure the other person beyond penetration. Couples should tell each other what makes them feel good.

10. **Ask:** Are there any other myths about condoms in our community? Allow participants to share other myths and ask them whether or not they think it is true and why. Refer to the background notes as needed.
11. **Ask:** What are some of the reasons people give for not using a condom? Write down participants' responses on a flip chart, if available, or note them to yourself. Allow several participants to give possible reasons. Encourage them to make a long list.
12. **Explain** that you will read one of the reasons listed and you would like for a volunteer to say how he or she would respond to someone who gave that reason for not using condoms.
13. **Read** one reason off the list at a time. After each reason, ask for someone to respond and then ask if the group thinks that was a good response or if they could suggest other responses. Do this for each reason on the list.
14. **Ask:** What are a woman's options for protecting herself when a male partner refuses to use a male condom? Allow participants to share their views. [If the idea of using a female condom does not come from the participants, introduce it.]

15. **Facilitate** a discussion with participants about female condoms. Use the following questions as a guide:

- How are female condoms different from male condoms? [Answer: The female condom is put inside the vagina instead of being put on the penis.]
- Are female condoms available in Kenya? Where can you get them? How much do they cost? [Answer: Female condoms are available in Kenya, but they are not as available as male condoms and are more expensive.]
- How are female condoms supposed to be used? [Answer: The female condom is a pouch made of a soft plastic that is inserted into the vagina. Female condoms have two flexible rings, one attached to each end. One ring, at the closed end of the pouch, is placed inside the woman's vagina similar to the way a diaphragm would be inserted, and serves to keep the condom in place. The other ring at the open end of the pouch stays outside the vagina and partially covers the lips of the vagina.]
- When might people use a female condom instead of a male condom? [Possible answers: Female condoms are made of plastic so they are good for people with latex allergies, also men who do not like male condoms may like using female condoms.]
- Is a female condom preferable to a male condom as protection? [Answer: Both male condoms and female condoms are very effective at preventing HIV infection and pregnancy if they are used correctly every time a couple has sexual intercourse.]
- What are the disadvantages of a female condom? [Answer: Female condoms are more expensive and it usually takes a little practice for couples to get used to using them.]
- Can male and female condoms be used together for added protection? [Answer: The male and the female condom should never be used at the same time; it will increase the risk of tearing.]
- Can female condoms be used more than once? [Answer: Female condoms are used once and then thrown away.]

16. **Share** the female condom illustrations and instructions on the following pages with the group.



Main messages

- Abstaining from sexual activity is the most effective HIV prevention strategy. However, for individuals who choose to be sexually active, condoms are effective in preventing pregnancy, HIV transmission and some STIs.
- Condoms – male or female – must be used correctly and each and every time you have sex to prevent pregnancy, HIV, and some STIs.
- There are proper ways to use male and female condoms.
- There are some myths about condoms which are not true. If you have the correct information, you can speak to your friends and families about the facts on condoms.



Activities

Activity: Male condom demonstration

Ask for 15 volunteers to come forward and give each one a piece of cardboard or paper onto which you have written the following points (mix up the order first).

- Check expiry date
- Discuss condom use with partner
- Have condoms with you
- Have an erection
- Open the condom wrapper carefully
- Squeeze out air from tip of condom
- Roll condom on erect penis all the way down to the base of the penis
- Have sexual intercourse
- Ejaculate
- Withdraw penis from partner, holding on to condom at base of penis so it stays on
- Be careful not to spill semen
- Remove condom from penis
- Penis gets soft
- Throw condom away in a place where children won't find it or touch it, like a pit latrine or dust bin. Used condoms can also be burned.
- Open another condom (if you have sex again).

Ask each participant holding a card to read and display it to the group. Ask the volunteers to form a line so that their cardboard words or phrases describe the step-by-step use of a condom. Let them discuss and move about. Ask the rest of the group to comment on the finally agreed order. Make any changes necessary. Be sure the final line up is correct.

Demonstrate proper condom use with a penis model (such as a banana). Follow these steps, explaining what you are doing as you go along:

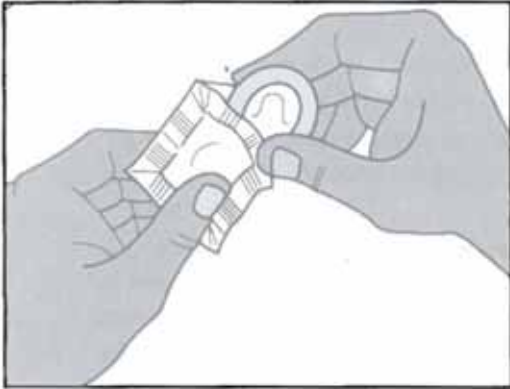
- Open the package carefully. Be careful of long fingernails tearing the latex.
- Hold tip of condom as you roll it down over penis model.
- Roll the condom down to the base of the penis on the model. Be sure you leave a space at the tip, so that the ejaculated semen can be captured there (otherwise it can break from the extra fluid forced into the tight end of the condom).
- After ejaculation, withdraw the penis from your partner. Be sure to hold the base of the penis model (explain that to prevent spilling the semen, the condom must be held at the base while withdrawing from the partner's body). The condom should be removed before the penis gets soft.
- Never try to wash or re-use a condom. You must use a new condom each time you re-enter your partner (if you come out for a while), or have sex once again.

Divide the group into pairs and give each pair a condom and a penis model. If you do not have a penis model, use a banana, plantain, cucumber or an ear of maize. Ask the pairs to take turns demonstrating—and explaining as they go along—how to use the condom correctly.

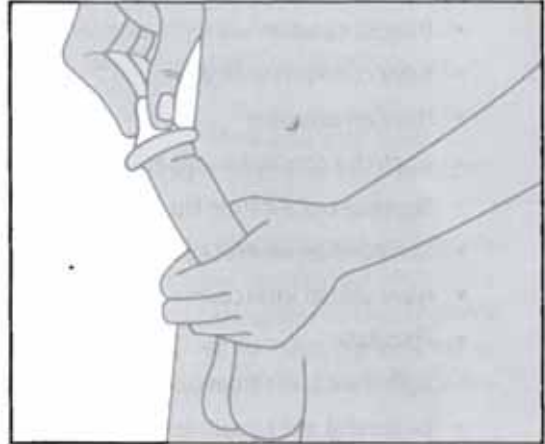
Facilitate a discussion with the following questions:

- How easy or difficult was it to demonstrate condom use?
- How do men feel when they get or buy condoms? What about women?
- What would you say to a friend who said condoms have holes and do not even protect against HIV?

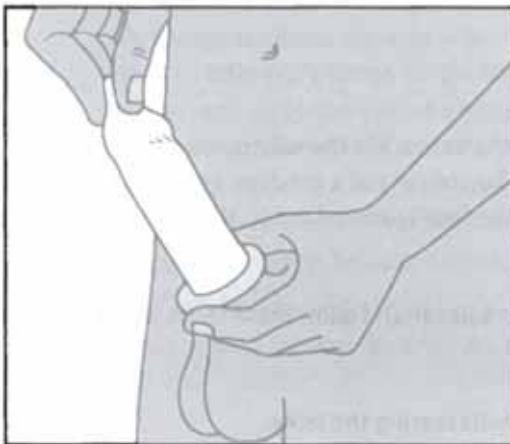
How to use a male condom



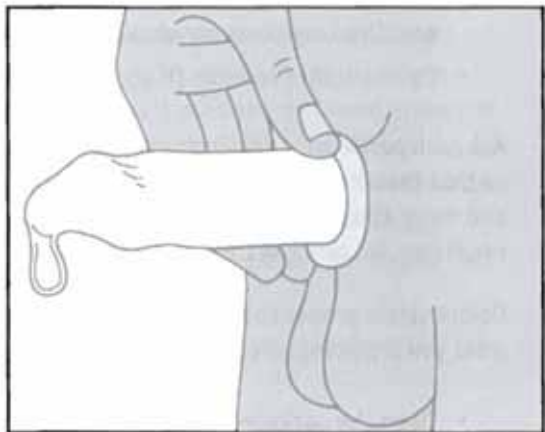
1. Open the packet carefully. Do not use anything sharp like a knife or nails. Ensure that the part to be unrolled is on the outside.



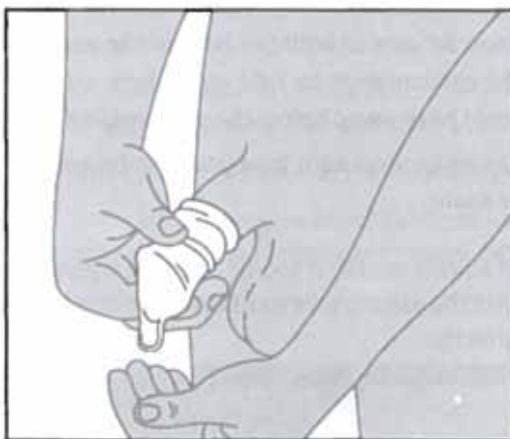
2. Pinch the tip of the condom. Place it on the hard penis.



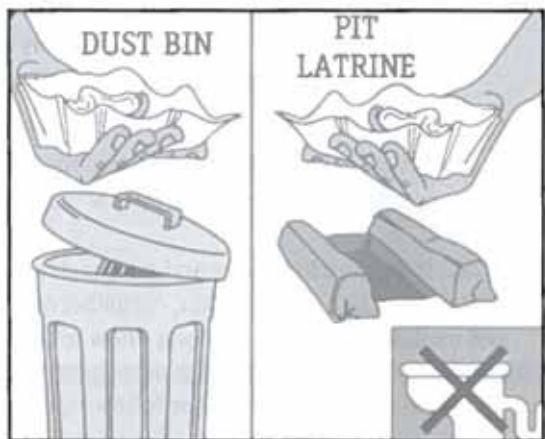
3. Unroll the condom all the way to the base of the penis.



4. After ejaculation, hold the condom at the base of the penis so it does not slip off.



5. While still holding the base, pull off the condom gently so as not to spill the contents.



6. Wrap condom in tissue paper and throw it away in a latrine or somewhere out of reach of children. Never flush a condom down the toilet.

Activity: Using a female condom

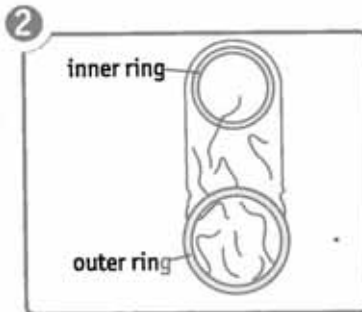
Explain how to use a female condom properly by showing participants the illustrations on the following page. Read each of the steps as you show the illustrations:

- First check the expiry date then open the package carefully. Do not use sharp objects like fingernails, scissors, or teeth.
- Remove the female condom from the package. Rub the female condom to spread the jelly.
- Squeeze the inner ring so it is long and narrow.
- Choose a comfortable position and insert the closed end of the female condom into the vagina.
- Put your index finger inside the female condom and push the inner ring up into your vagina as far as it will go. Take care not to twist the female condom.
- Hold the outer ring outside the vagina and guide the penis into the female condom. Let go of the outer ring after penetration.
- Immediately after intercourse, twist the outer ring to avoid spillage, and gently pull out the condom.
- Do not re-use the female condom. Wrap it in tissue and throw it in a dustbin or pit latrine. Do not throw it in a flush toilet.

How to use a female condom



1 Check expiry date then open packet. Do not use sharp objects or teeth.



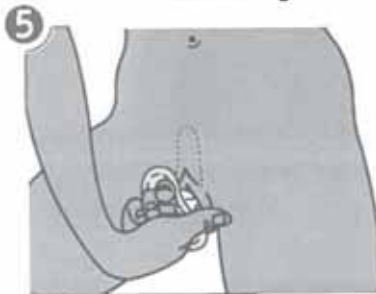
2 Remove the female condom from the packet. Rub the condom to spread the jelly.



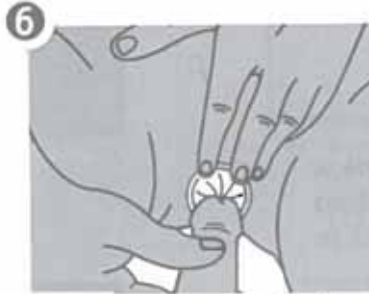
3 Hold the female condom as shown above, making the inner ring long and narrow.



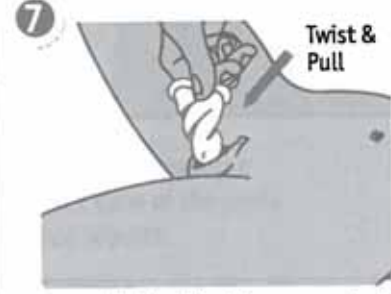
4 Choose a comfortable position and insert the closed end of the female condom into the vagina.



5 Push the inner ring up into the vagina as far as it will go. Do not twist it.



6 Hold the outer ring outside the vagina and guide penis into female condom.



7 Immediately after intercourse, twist the outer ring to avoid spillage and gently pull condom. **Twist & Pull**



8 Do not re-use the female condom. Wrap it in tissue and throw it in a Dust bin or pit latrine. Never throw it in a flush toilet.



Background notes

Sexually transmitted infections

What are STIs and how are they transmitted?

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are mainly transmitted through sexual contact with an infected partner. STIs are one of the most common diseases in Kenya and particularly affect young people aged 15–29 years. STIs occur when infection-causing germs pass from one person to another. STIs can cause serious health problems, including pelvic inflammatory disease, infertility, chronic abdominal pain, cervical cancer, and, in some cases, death. Some STIs can be transmitted to infants during pregnancy or birth.

In addition to HIV, which is transmitted sexually (see the Chapter on HIV and AIDS for more information), there are more than 20 other infections that can be transmitted sexually, including chancroid, Chlamydia, gonorrhoea, genital herpes, the human papilloma virus (HPV), syphilis, and trichomoniasis, among others. It is possible to catch an STI even during one act of sexual intercourse with an infected person.

STI and gender

The differences between men and women's bodies, as well as social and economic status, cause women to suffer more from STIs than men. Although both men and women can get infected with STIs, women and girls can get infected more easily. Differences in their bodies make detection harder in women, and infection has much more serious results for women than for men. The risk of transmission is also greater from man to woman, and many women have little power to protect themselves in sexual situations.

1. In a sexual act, the man's penis goes inside the female and his sexual fluids, which may carry infection, stay inside her body. This increases her chances of getting an infection in the uterus, fallopian tubes or ovaries.
2. Girls are especially at risk of STIs because the cervix and the vagina of an adolescent girl are more delicate than those of an older woman. The vagina can tear during sexual penetration, which can increase the risk of getting HIV infection.
3. Many girls and women are socialized to be submissive to men making it very difficult for a woman to refuse sex with her husband or to insist that he use a condom, even when she thinks he may have other partners or an STI.
4. Women and girls are at more risk for unwanted sex (pressured sex and rape) than men and boys. In these difficult circumstances, it can be very hard to negotiate to not have sex or to have protected sex.

Signs and symptoms of STIs

Most men can tell when they have an STI because there are usually clear signs. Women, however, often have an STI without knowing it, because there are often no signs that they have the disease. Sometimes only a trained health worker can find signs of an STI in a woman. This is especially true during pregnancy, when many STI symptoms (for example, an increase in the amount of fluid produced by the vagina) are mistaken for side-effects of pregnancy itself. Sometimes it is necessary to examine samples of a woman's blood or vaginal discharge to find out if she has an STI, and which type of STI she has.

Signs of STIs in men include:

- A wound, sores, ulcer, rash or blisters on or around the penis.
- A discharge, like pus, from the penis.
- Pain or a burning feeling when passing urine.
- Pain during sexual intercourse.
- Pain and swelling of the testicles.
- Abnormal swelling or growths on the genitals.

Signs of STIs in women include:

- A discharge from the vagina that is thick, itchy or has a funny smell or colour.
- Pain in the lower abdomen.
- Pain or a burning feeling when passing urine.
- Pain during sexual intercourse.
- Abnormal, irregular bleeding from the vagina.
- Itching in the genital area.
- Abnormal swelling or growths in the genitals.

It is normal for women to have some wetness or a milky, colourless secretion from the vagina; this keeps the genitals clean and healthy. Do not worry unless these secretions:

- change colour
- begin to have a different or unpleasant smell
- become a lot thicker, or more watery
- cause irritation

Most STIs are relatively easy to contract. It is important to know what they are, what they look like, and what to do to get them treated. If a person experiences any one of the above symptoms, he or she should see a doctor or go to a health centre as soon as possible.

It is important to recognize and treat STIs quickly. This reduces the chances of complications for the individual but also prevents new infections in the community. The sooner an STI is treated, the less chance it will be transmitted to other people.

However, most people have few or no symptoms of an STI, so if someone thinks they are at risk for STIs, they should consult a health worker for advice, tests and treatment. You are at high risk for an STI when you have:

- Unprotected penetrative sex.
- Anal intercourse.
- Dry or rough sex.
- A partner with an STI.
- A partner who has other partners.
- More than one partner – the more partners someone has, the higher their risk.
- A new partner whose health status is unknown to you during the last three months.

Managing STIs

Treatment

If an STI is not treated early, the treatment cost may become very high. Other indirect costs from STIs can be lack of productivity and income and funeral expenses. Someone with an STI must finish all the medicines that the health worker gives and not have unprotected sex until the health worker says they are cured. People should never treat themselves with medicines for an STI. They need to get the right medicine or medicines from a trained health worker. Using the wrong medicine will make the STI-causing germ become resistant to medicines. A person should never share medicines with friends. The complete and correct dose must be taken. If someone only takes part of the dose, this will also make the STI resistant to medicines and harder to treat.

When people find out that they have an STI, they should make sure that their partner (or partners) goes for treatment as well. An untreated person will infect his or her partner again. Even if someone is no longer having sex with a particular partner, that person should still tell the partner to go for an exam and treatment. If people are not told and do not have any symptoms at all, they might not know that they have an STI until it has

already done permanent damage to their reproductive organs. It might be very hard to talk to an ex-girlfriend or ex-boyfriend, but an infected person needs to find courage to talk to that person and to tell her or him to go for an exam.

STI prevention

The only completely effective way to prevent STIs is to abstain from oral, anal and vaginal sexual intercourse. Contact with another person's body fluids can result in STI infection. To reduce the risk of STIs, people can: delay sexual activity (for adolescents), abstain from sexual activity, be in a mutually faithful relationship with an uninfected partner, use condoms correctly for each and every sexual act, or reduce the number of sexual partners

For minimal protection, inspect partners' genitals, wash genitals after sex, talk with your partners about their health and sexual habits, and have yourself and partner tested for STIs if you have worries or think something is wrong.

Information on the most common STIs

STIs	Symptoms	Consequences
HIV	<p>Symptoms begin several months to years after infection and may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling tired a lot • Loss of over 10% of body weight • Having diarrhoea often • Having a fever often 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HIV becomes AIDS and people become very ill. When people have AIDS, they may become less productive and they can die. • Can infect sexual partners. • Can be passed from a pregnant woman to her child during pregnancy, birth, or breastfeeding.
Gonorrhoea	<p>Symptoms begin 2-21 days after infection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discharge from penis or vagina • Pain/burning sensation during urination or bowel movement • Difficulty urinating • Lower abdominal pain (pelvic area) • Most women and some men have no symptoms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Damage to reproductive organs • Sterility • Blindness in babies of infected mothers • You can give gonorrhoea to your sexual partner • Heart trouble, blindness, skin disease, arthritis
Syphilis	<p>1st Stage</p> <p>Symptoms begin 1-12 weeks after infection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Painless, open sore on the mouth or sex organ • Sore goes away after 1-5 weeks <p>2nd Stage</p> <p>Symptoms begin 1-6 months after sore appears:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-itchy rash on the body • Flu-like symptoms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased risk of entopic pregnancy • You can give syphilis to your sexual partner • Heart disease, brain damage, blindness, death • Can be passed from pregnant woman to her unborn child

STIs	Symptoms	Consequences
Herpes	<p>Symptoms begin 2-30 days after infection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Painful blister-like lesions on or around the genitals or in anus or mouth • Flu-like feelings • Itching and burning around the sex organs before the blisters appear • Blisters last 1-3 weeks • Blisters disappear but the individual still has herpes • Blisters may recur 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no cure for herpes • Recurring outbreaks of painful blisters occur in 50% of those who contract herpes • May be transmitted to sexual partner • May be transmitted to a baby during childbirth • May increase the risk of cervical cancer
Chlamydia	<p>Symptoms begin 7-21 days after infection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discharge from the sex organs • Burning or pain while urinating • Unusual bleeding from the vagina • Pain in the pelvic area • Most women and some men have no symptoms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Damage to reproductive organs • Sterility • Passed from mother to child during childbirth
Genital Warts	<p>Caused by the human papilloma virus (HPV)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small, painless, fleshy bumps on and inside the genitals and throat • Often no visible symptoms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some strains are associated with cervical cancer and some other genital cancers; these strains may not produce visible warts • Can be detected by Pap smear during gynaecologic exam • Can be removed by physical or chemical means but virus cannot be cured and warts often reappear • Can develop chronic liver disease
Hepatitis B	<p>Spread by sex, exposure to infected blood, and to child during pregnancy or delivery.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mild initial symptoms: headache and fatigue • Later symptoms: dark urine, abdominal pain, jaundice <p>Often no visible symptoms</p>	<p>Causes inflammation of liver and sometimes leads to liver failure and death</p> <p>No cure</p>

Male involvement

Men can play a particularly important role in preventing STIs by maintaining a monogamous relationship or using condoms to protect their partner and themselves. Maintaining a mutually monogamous relationship – one way of preventing STIs – requires the commitment of both partners. Men can show respect for their partners' health by limiting their sexual relations to one partner.

Condoms

The male condom is a soft tube made out of rubber (latex) that is put on a man's penis before sexual intercourse. When the man ejaculates, the sperm is caught in the tip of the condom. Because the sperm is collected in the condom, there is no contact between the man's and the woman's body fluids, which reduces the risk of HIV, other STIs, and unwanted pregnancy.

Condoms protect men by preventing direct contact between the penis and cervical, vaginal, or rectal secretions or sores. Condoms protect women from exposure to infected semen, urethral discharge, or penile sores. To be effective, condoms must be stored properly and used correctly for every act of sexual intercourse. Condoms are most effective in preventing STIs that are transmitted through body fluids (like HIV, gonorrhoea, and Chlamydia). They do not work as well against STIs that are transmitted through skin-to-skin contact (like genital herpes and warts), because the condom may not cover the entire affected areas.

Most condoms in the market are latex. Condoms made of natural products such as sheep skin can prevent pregnancy but they do not protect against HIV or other STIs. Other than abstinence, condoms provide the best protection against HIV and other STIs.

A female condom is a plastic pouch that covers the cervix, the vagina, and part of the external genitals. A woman uses the female condom during intercourse to prevent HIV, STIs, and unwanted pregnancy. The female condom is a relatively new form of contraception, which is still not available in many areas. It is a thin polyurethane (a kind of plastic) pouch with two flexible rings, one attached to each end. One ring, at the closed end of the pouch, is placed inside the woman's vagina and serves as an anchor. The other ring at the open end stays outside the vagina and partially covers the lips of the vagina. It is used once and then thrown away. The condom catches the man's sperm so that it does not enter the vagina.

Condom facts

- No penis is too big or too small for a condom. Condoms can be stretched to fit over a forearm. (Note to facilitator: You can do an experiment, by having one person hold the condom and you pour a bottle of water into it. Tie it up and put it aside. Tell the participants to check it later and see that it has the same amount.)
- Asking a partner to use a condom does not mean you do not trust the partner. You are making a responsible statement about both of your futures by using condoms.
- HIV cannot pass through LATEX OR RUBBER condoms.
- Most condoms are lubricated. However, if extra lubrication is desired, use a water-based lubricant such as K-Y Jelly. Water and saliva are good substitutes. Never use any lubricant that is an oil or petroleum based product like Vaseline or other petroleum jellies. This will immediately start to rot the rubber, and the condom will weaken and break.
- Condoms are tested in the factory. They work very well when stored properly and used correctly. Keep them away from heat or sunlight. Never leave condoms on a windowsill or in a wallet in your back pocket that you sit on continuously. All these places will cause the condom to rot.
- There is a correct way to use condoms. Emphasize that even when condoms are used, they can be used incorrectly, allowing a pregnancy or an infection to occur.



Gender and STIs

Women and girls are more susceptible to infection, because of biology, the belief that women must be submissive, their inability to negotiate for condom use during sex, and their vulnerability to forced, unsafe sex. Women and girls have less access to information and to treatment for STIs because of gender norms. They may also delay getting treatment because many of the symptoms are difficult to detect in women.

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