

## KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE OF REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AMONG SCHOOL GOING ADOLESCENT GIRLS

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### **Abstract**

The WHO believes that education for health is a fundamental right of every child. Education can help to increase self-esteem, develop effective communication skills, and encourage each person to respect his or her own body as well as understand their responsibilities to others. The adolescent experiences not only physical growth and change but also emotional, psychological, social, and mental change and growth. Physiological changes lead to sexual maturity and usually occur during the first several years of this period. Adolescents in worldwide and more so in developing countries are at greater risk of reproductive health's adverse consequences, amounting to over a billion young people 85% of whom live in developing countries. Reproductive health covers all aspects of adolescent health and it is an umbrella concept consisting of several distinct, yet related issues such as abortion, child birth, sexuality, contraception and maternal mortality. Biological, social, cultural, economical and behavioural factors play an important role in determination of reproductive health. Reproductive health addresses the reproductive processes, functions and system at all the stages of life. So reproductive health means people have the capacity to reproduce and the freedom to decide if, when and how often to do so. **Objective:** To study the reproductive health knowledge and issues among adolescents school going girls. **Methodology:** Government and Private high schools in three revenue divisions of Chittoor district were selected randomly and Multistage simple random technique was adopted for this study. **Results:** Majority 88.8 per cent of the respondents were having knowledge on menstruation. 36.7 per cent of the respondents were not discussing with their mother about menstruation. More than one-half (54.6 per cent) of the respondents were not heard about reproductive health. 87.9 per cent of the respondents were agreed that lack of personal hygiene is one of the reasons for Reproductive Tract Infection (RTI).

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## Introduction

The WHO believes that education for health is a fundamental right of every child. Education can help to increase self-esteem, develop effective communication skills, and encourage each person to respect his or her own body as well as understand their responsibilities to others. World Health Organization (WHO) defines adolescence as the period of life between 10 and 19 years of age. The adolescent experiences not only physical growth and change but also emotional, psychological, social, and mental change and growth. Physiological changes lead to sexual maturity and usually occur during the first several years of this period. Adolescents worldwide and more so in developing countries are at greater risk of reproductive health's adverse consequences, amounting to over a billion young people 85% of whom live in developing countries.

Unfortunately, in our country, one of the most neglected age group is the adolescent age group, even though we are aware that 10-15% of our population is of growing adolescents. It is only recently that we have acknowledged the need for a separate specialty for adolescents to manage their medical, social, psychological, sexual problems, or ailments, whether they are about menstrual disorders, contraceptive advice, pregnancy/abortion counseling, or the more serious matter of malignancy. They need to be heard and understood patiently and given friendly practical advices.

Reproductive health is an important component of adolescent girl's health. It is a "state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (WHO). Reproductive health covers all aspects of adolescent health it is an umbrella concept consisting of several distinct, yet related issues such as abortion, child birth, sexuality, contraception and maternal mortality. Biological, social, cultural, economical and behavioural factors play an important role in determination of reproductive health. Reproductive health addresses the reproductive processes, functions and system at all the stages of life. So reproductive health means people have the capacity to reproduce and the freedom to decide if, when and how often to do so. The knowledge regarding reproductive health especially among adolescent girls is very essential to reduce the maternal morbidity, mortality and infant mortality. Adolescent girls need to have adequate knowledge about puberty, causes of pubertal changes and

its effects, marriage and conception which would equip them for their multiple roles as housewives, mothers of the new society (Anon, 2002). A study on awareness regarding sex knowledge of adolescent girls (16-20 years) revealed that awareness regarding HIV/AIDS among adolescent girls is very low.

In order to lead healthy, responsible and fulfilling lives and protect themselves from reproductive health problems, young people need to be knowledgeable about themselves and the people they relate to, need sound information about the physical, psychological and social changes that take place through childhood and adolescence. Now a day the importance of reproductive health education and counseling was improved, it was appreciated but most of the communities have not improving the accessibility, because of their socioeconomic conditions, socioeconomic factor effects on awareness and source of information on adolescent physical changes and reproduction among school going girls.

### **Objective**

To study the reproductive health knowledge and issues among adolescents school going girls.

### **Material and methodology**

**Study design:** Multistage simple random technique

**Study area:** Government and Private high schools in three revenue divisions of Chittoor district were selected randomly for this study.

**Study population and sample:** 480 girls (of age group 12 to 15 years) studying 8th, 9th, 10th classes were selected (30 from each class).

**Sampling method:** Simple random sampling by lottery method.

**Duration of study:** 1 academic year (July 2012 to March 2013).

### **Result**

Table-1 presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents. It reveals that most of (28.5 per cent) respondents mothers education level was higher secondary followed by Illiterates (26.7 per cent), Primary 916 per cent), and secondary and college level was (14.4 per cent). It is also one of the reasons for lack of information between mother and adolescent. Majority 59.8 per cent of the respondents were the first girl child of the family.

**Table-1 Demographic characteristics**

Demographic characteristics	Frequency	Percent
<b>Mother Education</b>		
Illiterate	128	26.7
Primary	77	16
Secondary	69	14.4
Higher Secondary	137	28.5
College	69	14.4
<b>Birth Order</b>		
First	287	59.8
Second	145	30.2
Third	48	10

Majority 88.8 per cent of the respondents were having knowledge on menstruation. The higher proportion of the (91.7 per cent) of the respondents were agreed that the knowledge on menstrual hygiene is necessary for maintaining good reproductive health practices. 62.6 percent of the respondents were experiencing the pre-menstrual syndrome during each menstruation. 97.9 per cent of the respondents were using soap/water while washing their secret parts. 36.7 per cent of the respondents were not discussing with their mother about menstruation (Table-2).

**Table 2: Knowledge on menstruation (N=480)**

Knowledge on menstruation	Frequency	Percent
<b>Knowledge on menstruation</b>		
No	54	11.2
Yes	426	88.8
<b>Knowledge on menstrual hygiene</b>		
No idea	40	8.3

Yes, it is necessary	440	91.7
<b>Experienced PMS</b>		
Yes	302	62.9
No	178	37.1
<b>Wash genitals often with soap/water</b>		
No	10	2.1
Yes	470	97.9
<b>Discussion with mother about menstruation</b>		
No	177	36.9
Yes	303	63.1

More than one-half (54.6 per cent) of the respondents were not heard about reproductive health. 87.9 per cent of the respondents were agreed that lack of personal hygiene is one of the reasons for Reproductive Tract Infection (RTI). 10.6 per cent of the respondents were suffered with RTI and 42.1 per cent of the respondents were heard about Sexually Transmitted Infections. Majority (64.6 per cent) of the respondents expressed that sex with multi partners can cause the STI (Table-3).

**Table-3: Knowledge on Reproductive Health**

Knowledge on Reproductive Health	Frequency	percentage
<b>Ever heard about reproductive health</b>		
No	262	54.6
Yes	218	45.4
<b>Lack of personal hygiene is the reason for RTI</b>		
No	58	12.1
Yes	422	87.9
<b>Ever suffered with RTI</b>		
No	429	89.4
Yes	51	10.6

<b>Seek treatment for RTI</b>		
No	462	96.2
Yes	18	3.8
<b>Heard about STI</b>		
No	278	57.9
Yes	202	42.1
<b>Sex with multiple partners can cause STI</b>		
No	170	35.4
Yes	310	64.6

A larger proportion (92.5 per cent) of the girls has stated that they heard about HIV/AIDS. 43.1 per cent of the respondents were expressed that unsafe sex is the reason for HIV followed by contaminated blood transfusion (22.5 per cent), infected mother to child (8.8 per cent), injected drug users (6.5 per cent). 69.2 per cent of the respondents have viewed that AIDS is not a curable disease (Table-4).

**Table-4: Knowledge on HIV/AIDS**

Knowledge on HIV/AIDS	Frequency	percentage
<b>Ever heard about HIV</b>		
No	36	7.5
Yes	444	92.5
<b>Causes for HIV transfusion</b>		
Don't know	92	19.2
Infected mother to child	42	8.8
Injected drug users	31	6.5
Contaminated blood transfusion	108	22.5
Unsafe sex	207	43.1
Total	480	100
<b>Aids is a curable disease</b>		
Yes	148	30.8
No	332	69.2

### Conclusion

Inadequate knowledge about understanding of reproductive system and reproductive health was found among the girls. Most of them expressed a desire to know more about reproductive health as part of the school curriculum. Boys and girls felt attraction towards the opposite sex. Relatively less social support was provided to boys as compared to girls, in terms of reproductive changes occurring in body. Majority of the adolescents expressed their willingness to avail the services of an Adolescent Friendly Care. Study pointed toward the need for information on reproductive system, human reproduction, and reproductive health matters for the students and teachers. Teachers' orientation to "adolescent health care" is needed.

### Recommendation

In societies such as ours, parents hesitate from discussing reproductive health issue with their children and are considered a taboo. Safe reproductive health can be achieved by incorporating family education which focuses on learning about living, family and social relationship and personal development in school curriculum. An integrated menstrual education programme should emphasize the physiological basis of menstruation. A scientific understanding of menarche is vital to prepare teenage girls to be physically and spiritually healthy, leading to a flamboyant, proactive and a well-knit society and nation.

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