

Adolescent Health

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ABSTRACT

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Adolescent has been defined by WHO as the period of life spanning between 10-19 years and the youth as between 15-24 years. Young people, when referred to as such, are those between 10-24 years of age. They are no longer children, but not yet adults. They constitute more than 22% of the population of the India which amounts to 207 million adolescents. Adolescence is the period of rapid physical growth, sexual and psychological changes. It is a stressful developmental period filled with major changes in physical maturity, sexuality, cognitive process, emotional changes and behavioral gaps.

Adolescence is a period when lots of health needs are expected. It is important to understand the needs of these adolescents and provide them with best possible adolescent friendly services that can provide strong foundation for the future motherhood.

A comprehensive approach from us can shape positive attitude towards self care and personal responsibility for health that can last a lifetime. The adolescent girl today is the mother of all humankind tomorrow.

Keywords: Adolescence, Adolescent health needs, Awareness and sensitivity.

*See End Note for complete author details

Adolescent has been defined by WHO as the period of life spanning between 10-19 years and the youth as between 15-24 years.^{1,2} Young people, when referred to as such, are those between 10-24 years of age. They are no longer children, but not yet adults. They constitute more than 22% of the population of the India which amounts to 207 million adolescents. Adolescence is the period of rapid physical growth, sexual and psychological changes. It is a stressful developmental period filled with major changes in physical maturity, sexuality, cognitive process, emotional changes and behavioral gaps. During puberty, physiological changes leading to adult reproductive capacity take place. Psychological, social and cognitive changes leading to the development of an adult identity, individualization and maturation of cognitive reasoning skills leading to personal independence takes place. The early adolescent period (11-14years) is the time of rapid growth; mid-adolescence (15-17years) pubertal growth is completed in most girls. By late adolescence (18-21years) abstract reasoning develops and girls can realize the consequences of her action

- Major significance of adolescent period is that
- Habits and behaviour picked up during adolescence (risk taking behaviour, substance abuse, eating habits, and conflict resolution) have lifelong impact.
- Adolescence is the last chance to correct the growth

lag and malnutrition.

- Many adolescent boys and girls are sexually active but lack information and skill for self- protection (low level of information on Family Planning, low contraception use)
- They have simple but wide pervading crucial reproductive health needs- menstrual hygiene, contraception (including emergency contraception) safety from STI and HIV and
- Communication gap exists with parents and other adults (lack of family “Connectedness”)

Priority health problems of adolescents can be categorized into:

- Sexual and reproductive health problems,
- Nutritional problems,
- Mental health problems,
- Substance abuse,
- Accidental and intentional violence.

The early adolescent period (11-14 years) is the time for rapid growth of the girl when menarche sets in. This hallmark event in the life of the girl can have much physical and psychological effect on the girl. Menstrual disturbances are common in adolescent girls 10-15 years often presenting to pediatrician as anaemia. By late adolescence, 70% girls face problems related to

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menstruation. A few patterns of bleeding are more serious and need investigation and treatment. Common menstrual problems in this age group are dysmenorrhea, dysfunctional uterine bleeding, and premenstrual syndrome. Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), a multisystem disorder characterized by long term consequences like metabolic syndrome and genital malignancies, first appear during puberty as menstrual problems.

Hence it is important to understand the needs of these adolescents and provide them with best possible adolescent friendly services that can provide strong foundation for the future motherhood.^{3,4,5} The article on “*A Study of menstrual problems of adolescent girls*” is a first step in shedding light on this important, but often neglected aspect of female adolescent health. It is important for practicing primary care physicians and gynecologists’ to equip themselves with practical tools for screening, interviewing and examining adolescent patients. The interview and physical examination of this population requires sensitivity to the cognitive and developmental state of the girl. A comprehensive approach from us can shape positive attitude towards self care and personal responsibility for health that can

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END NOTE

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