

Family Planning- The choices

Unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections (STI's) are major contributors to poverty and mortality in Kenya, and both can be prevented.

Many STI's can be cured through medical treatment. Some however, such as HIV, cannot be, but can be prevented through safer sex practices.

Symptoms that may point to the presence of an STI include:

- painful urination
- yellow or white discharge from the genitals
- sores or ulcers on the genitals
- pain during sex

If you have any of these symptoms then you should contact your nearest health officer.

1) Contraception

a) The pill

The pill is 98% effective in preventing pregnancy if taken properly. It must be taken at the same time every day.

It can be stopped at any time if you wish to become pregnant.

The pill will not prevent any STI's.

b) Condoms

Consistent condom use has been shown to reduce HIV incidence by 80%. They are also very effective in preventing other STI's such as Gonorrhoea, Chlamydia and Syphilis.

- Use a new condom for each act of intercourse
- Put on the condom as soon as erection occurs, before any sexual activity (vaginal or oral)
- Hold the tip of the condom and unroll it onto the erect penis
- Withdraw from the partner immediately after ejaculation

Not only are condoms very effective in preventing STI's but they can also *stop unwanted pregnancies*. Only 15% of couples will become pregnant with condom use, over a year of regular sexual intercourse.

c) The female diaphragm

A diaphragm is inserted into the vagina before sex and can be used for 2-3 years to provide effective contraception. 94% of unintended pregnancies are avoided in the first year of use.

The diaphragm is also effective in preventing some STI's including HIV.

d) Contraceptive Injections

The contraceptive injection is more than 99% effective in preventing pregnancy. It provides contraception for several months with a single injection, but has no effect on preventing HIV or other STI's.

2) Abstinence

Abstinence is the only way to ensure that there is no chance of becoming pregnant or catching HIV or any other STI.

3) Abortion

When pregnancy prevention measures are not taken, or they fail, there are other approaches that could be considered. For example, the termination of the pregnancy, also known as abortion. Deciding to have an abortion is a big decision to make. Before making your decision you should speak to someone that you can trust. Abortions should be performed in a hospital under proper medical supervision.

4) Sterilisation

Sterilisation is a permanent form of contraception. It is a surgical procedure and must be done at a hospital.

The Shikunga Health-care clinic offers a range of family planning services. For more information, please feel free to speak to the nurse or clinical officer at Shikunga Health-care clinic.

Any questions asked will be kept confidential and you will be treated with respect and dignity.