

# SELF CARE

## Lesson 1

C  
A  
L  
M

### LEARNER OUTCOME<sup>1</sup> P12:

- Examine aspects of healthy sexuality, sexual wellness and responsible sexual behaviour.
- Explain the ongoing responsibility for being sexually healthy.



### MATERIALS:

1. HANDOUT: John's Story – A Case Study
2. SLIDE: Female Reproductive System
3. SLIDE: Male Reproductive System
4. ONLINE PAMPHLET (\*optional): Cervical Screening- Do I really Need a Pap Test?
5. ONLINE PAMPHLET (\*optional): Cervical Screening- Human Papillomavirus (HPV) What you Need to Know and Do'
6. ONLINE PAMPHLET (\*optional): “Are you a Male 15 or older? Don't Risk Your Life: Take Testicular Cancer Seriously
7. CARDS: Reproductive Health Question Cards
8. CARDS: Reproductive Health Answer Cards
9. ANSWER KEY: Reproductive Health Question and Answer Cards
10. HANDOUT : 'It's The Truth: The Facts About Personal Reproductive Health For Females (teacher copy)
11. HANDOUT: 'It's The Truth: The Facts About Personal Reproductive Health For Males (teacher copy)



### INTRODUCTION:

*Comprehensive Sexual Health Education* stresses the need for students to create a personal plan for achieving and maintaining their sexual health. This lesson teaches students to be advocates for their sexual health, outlining screening, self examination techniques and risk factors. Students will learn what to look out for to stay sexually healthy and learn about the services health care professionals can provide for them. The aim of the lesson is to increase teens' comfort when discussing reproductive/sexual health care.



## APPROACHES/STRATEGIES:

## NOTES:

### A. Ground Rules

Ensure ground rules are established before beginning this lesson. For classes that have already established ground rules, quickly reviewing them can promote a successful lesson. Some of the topics presented in this lesson may cause embarrassment for some students - Highlight the need for appropriate comments and questions.

(5 - 15 min)

### B. John's Story – Case Study<sup>2</sup>

*Students begin to explore the concept of self care and sexual and reproductive health.*

1. Distribute a copy of John's story to each student.
2. Ask students to read the story individually.
3. Ask for first reactions about the story.
  - What message is John trying to give?
  - How old do you think he is?
  - How does his story make you feel?
4. Explain that John (not his real name) was 15 when he discovered he had testicular cancer. He lives in a town in Alberta and was still attending high school when he wrote this testimony. This lesson will look at some of the issues John raises as he tries to encourage other teens to think about their health.

(5 - 10 min)



Explain to your students that they will have the opportunity in this lesson to learn skills that will enable them to look after their reproductive health. Emphasize the idea that we have one body for life and that reproductive health is part of looking after our overall health.

### C. Discussion Questions

*Students will explore concerns that many teens have regarding their reproductive organs. If you have completed the STI lesson you may wish to refer to it here.*

1. Ask the students to give some reasons for going to the doctor. List their reasons on the board.
2. Highlight the reasons that are related to reproductive and sexual health concerns.
3. What are some of the reasons why teenagers do not go to the doctor?
  - Feel uncomfortable about discussing their reproductive anatomy

(10 - 15 min)



Try to seek out the agencies in your area to list for your students. Review the [Community Resources](#) section of this website for assistance.

- Worried that their doctor's visit will be reported to their parents / guardians
  - Lack of doctors taking new patients
  - Uncomfortable with male / female doctors
4. Where can teens go for sexual and reproductive health concerns and check-ups?
- Family doctor
  - Walk-in clinic
  - Sexual and Reproductive Health Clinic
  - School public health nurse for general questions and accessing doctors
5. What are some things that would make it easier to go to the doctor or clinic?

*Before the visit:*

- Write down questions / concerns in advance
- Ask if a family member or friend can come with you

*During the visit:*

- Take notes
- Ask questions using notes you prepared
- If you don't understand what the doctor says, say so
- Tell the doctor your physical symptoms
- Tell the doctor your thoughts and feelings too
- Repeat what the doctor has said in your own words

*After the visit:*

- Review notes
- Get more information if you need it
- Get a second opinion if necessary
- Switch doctors if you and your doctor do not have a good rapport

## D. Discussion Male Reproductive Health Concerns

*Students explore male reproductive health and learn how to complete a testicular self examination.*

- A. What are some male reproductive health concerns that you have heard about?

### Circumcision



Many teens have not had a doctor's visit without a parent. Discuss the choices teens have. They may visit their family doctor on their own if they feel comfortable, make an appointment with a different doctor, or visit a medical walk-in clinic. Some doctors may choose not to see teens under the age of 16 without the consent of a parent. To be sure, they can call the doctors' office before their visit to ask about their policy. Most doctors keep information confidential and will not contact a parent unless withholding information is life threatening. It is best to ask about their policy with respect to confidentiality.



You may wish to refer students to the following link which provides links to sexual health programs and services throughout the province of Alberta :

[http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/search.asp?entgr=0&ud=1&sort=date%3AD%3AL%3Ad1&output=xml\\_no\\_dtd&oe=UTF-8&ie=UTF-8&filter=0&client=ahs\\_frontend&q=sexual+and+reproductive+health+](http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/search.asp?entgr=0&ud=1&sort=date%3AD%3AL%3Ad1&output=xml_no_dtd&oe=UTF-8&ie=UTF-8&filter=0&client=ahs_frontend&q=sexual+and+reproductive+health+)

(10 min)



Refer to slide of [Male Reproductive System](#).

- The cutting away of the *foreskin*, the skin that covers the head of the penis. The surgery is usually performed when a baby is only a few days old and is elective which means the parents have made a choice to have their baby circumcised. The choice is usually based upon religious, cultural or traditional reasons. There is some evidence that a circumcised penis is more hygienic. Uncircumcised males simply need to wash regularly making sure to pull back the foreskin to clean the head of the penis.

### Anabolic Steroids

- They temporarily add body weight and muscle, but they are dangerous. Use of steroids can cause *atrophy* (shrinking) of the male sex organs and can cause liver and heart problems<sup>5</sup>.

### Testicular Cancer

- Refer back to John’s story and ask students if they know of anyone in the media who has had testicular cancer. Lance Armstrong, the American cyclist, recovered from cancer to go on and win the Tour de France race several times.
- The pamphlet “Are you a Male 15 or older? Don’t Risk Your Life: Take Testicular Cancer Seriously” may be given to your students.  
<http://www.tctca.org/images/stories/downloads/tctca%20brochure.lo1.pdf>
- For more information about testicular cancer please visit:  
[http://www.cancer.ca/Alberta-NWT/About%20cancer/Types%20of%20cancer/What%20is%20testicular%20cancer.aspx?sc\\_lang=en&r=1](http://www.cancer.ca/Alberta-NWT/About%20cancer/Types%20of%20cancer/What%20is%20testicular%20cancer.aspx?sc_lang=en&r=1)

### Sexually Transmitted Infections

- Most infections can be tested for and treated easily by a doctor. Treatment of an infection early may prevent it from spreading and causing further health problems.
- For more information on STI see [STI Fact Sheets](#)

## E. Discussion Female Reproductive Health Concerns

*Students explore female reproductive health and cervical screening.*

- A. What are some female reproductive health concerns that you have heard about?



Students with differing abilities may require further discussion and reinforcement on how to perform a testicular or breast exam. It may be useful to go through each part of the exam with pictures so that students can ask questions. You may get pictures or pamphlets with pictures from Alberta Health Services. There are also videos available that deal with these exams from a “differing abilities” perspective. Contact your local public health unit for more information:  
<http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/services.asp?pid=service&rid=4811>

(5 min)



A male can do TSE regularly on his own. It is important for males to know what feels normal so that they will know when there is a potential problem. If something feels different or not right, see a doctor.

(10 min)



Refer to slide of [Female Reproductive System](#).

## Breast Cancer

- Women should know what looks and feels normal for her so she can notice any unusual changes in her breasts.
- Women should see their doctor regularly for a health check-up.
- Once a woman gets older she should have her breasts examined every year by a doctor and have a screening mammogram at least every two years, as decided by the women and her doctor.

## Ovarian Cancer

- During a pelvic exam, a doctor will check the ovaries for any abnormalities.

## Cervical Cancer

- The best way to detect abnormal changes in the cervix that may eventually change into cancer if left untreated is by having a pap test after the age of 21.
- Talk to your doctor about the human papilloma virus (HPV) vaccine.
- If you are sexually active, always use condoms (although they offer less protection against HPV than other STIs since HPV can be found on the skin that is not covered by condoms).

## Vaginal Infections such as Yeast Infections

- These are a common problem for women. Most are caused by an overgrowth of the natural bacteria in the vagina due to a number of reasons such as douching, using scented tampons, soap, and non-cotton underwear. It is sometimes spread through sexual activity with an infected partner.
- Some discharge from the vagina is normal but a change in amount, color or smell could indicate a problem. If this occurs, one should go to the doctor.
- Wearing cotton underwear, changing tampons every 4-6 hours, and avoiding highly perfumed cleansing products helps to reduce the risk of infection. Please see fact sheet [Vaginal Discharge and Vaginitis](#) for more information.



Young women from different cultures may have different views of “going to the doctor.” Many are not allowed to visit a doctor if they are not accompanied by a family member. This discussion may cause embarrassment or nervousness for some students, so you may have to facilitate discussion around this issue in a sensitive way.

## Sexually Transmitted Infections

- Most infections can be treated easily by a doctor. Treatment of an infection early may prevent it from spreading and causing such problems as pelvic inflammatory disease (P.I.D.).
- P.I.D. is an infection that causes damage to the reproductive organs and is one of the most common causes of infertility (the inability to get pregnant) in women.

## Breast Exam

- Explain that females must go to a physician for a clinical breast exam and Pap test. Breast cancer is more likely to be treated successfully if detected early.
- All breasts have a certain amount of normal “lumpiness.” A woman’s awareness of her body and what feels normal at different times during her menstrual cycle will help her to recognize early changes that can be followed up with a doctor.

## Pap Test

- A Pap test checks for changes in the cells of the cervix. If any cell changes are found, they should be followed closely. If needed, they can be treated so that cancer does not develop. This is why it is important to have Pap tests done regularly.
- It can be done by your doctor or at a Sexual and Reproductive Health Clinic and only takes a few minutes.
- A Pap test does not test for infections and is not an STI test. You should talk to your doctor or clinic if you would like to be tested for STI.
- The pamphlet ‘Cervical Screening- Do I Really Need a Pap Test?’ can be given to students.

## HPV

- Changes in the cells of the cervix are caused by certain types of HPV. This virus is spread through sexual contact.
- There are HPV vaccines available to both women and men that can be obtained from family doctors, public health clinics and sexual and reproductive health clinics.

- HPV is a common sexually transmitted infection that affects men and women. Over 70% of people will get HPV in their lifetime.
- The pamphlet 'Cervical Screening- Human Papillomavirus (HPV) What you Need to Know and Do' can be given to students as a review of information.

### F. Reproductive Health Issues Cards - Question/Answer Match<sup>3</sup>

(20 min)

*Students find answers to common questions about reproductive and sexual health problems. Students will review the topic with the opportunity to further discuss any outstanding issues.*

1. Distribute one question or answer card to each participant. (Store the cards in pairs and pick out the correct number for your group).
2. Explain that they have either a question or answer card. Their job is to find the person in the room holding the best match to their own card.
3. Demonstrate by doing an example with one participant.
4. Tell participants they will have five minutes to find their match, and they should remain with their match until the activity is completed.
5. After everyone has found their match, ask each pair to read their question to the group, one at a time.
6. If the group believes the match is accurate, the pair sits down and the entire group adds information or asks questions about the issue.
7. If someone questions the accuracy of the match, ask that pair to move to a specified section of the room until all of the pairs have reported.
8. When all the pairs have read their cards, have participants with the questionable matches reread their cards, and others suggest the correct match for any that were paired incorrectly.



You may find it helpful to read the teacher handouts '[It's the Truth: The Facts About Personal Reproductive Health Care For Females](#)'<sup>4</sup> and

['It's The Truth: The Facts About Personal Reproductive Health Care For Males](#)'<sup>4</sup> before carrying out this activity with your students.



**QUESTION BOX:**

(10 min)

Introduce the question box. You could have students fill out questions every lesson, or have students begin to think about questions that they might ask next lesson.



### SELF REFLECTION:

- During the lesson, were:
- Ground rules being followed?
  - Good practices established regarding discussion?

What will you change for future classes with this group?

What will you change for future use of this lesson?



### STUDENT ASSESSMENT:

During the lesson, did students:

- Knowledge:**
- Identify sexual and reproductive health concerns?
  - Outline the importance of learning about sexual and reproductive health concerns?
- Skills:**
- Identify ways to access sexual and reproductive health services for advice and check-ups?
  - Recognize physical changes that may need further examination?
- Attitudes:**
- Recognize the importance of regular self-examinations and routine check-ups?

---

<sup>1</sup> Alberta Education. (2002). Career and Life Management. From <http://education.gov.ab.ca/k%5F12/curriculum/bySubject/healthpls/calm.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Anonymous (2002). *John's story: A personal testimony of an Alberta teenager*.

<sup>3</sup> Canadian Federation for Sexual Health. (2005). *Beyond the basics: A sourcebook on sexuality and reproductive health education*. Ottawa: Author.

<sup>4</sup> Montfort, S. & O'Leary, J. (n.d.). *It's your body: Understanding reproductive health*.

<sup>5</sup> AADAC. (2007). *The ABC's of steroids*. From [http://www.aadac.com/documents/abcs\\_steroids.pdf](http://www.aadac.com/documents/abcs_steroids.pdf)