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bwisehealth.com Booklet





Is masturbation addictive?

Are you ready for sex?

Unwanted pregnancy – what are my options?

Bwisehealth.com:

What B-Wise all about?

We created B-Wise for YOU, the youth of South Africa!

- B-Wise was created by the National Department of Health as a two-way communication between the youth of South Africa and the Department of Health.

This is your space to:

- Get health information and ask questions that will be answered quickly by an expert.
- Share your health needs and concerns with the National Department of Health.
- Connect to health services in your community.
- Make suggestions to improve health services for young people in South Africa.

B-Wise Unique Feature:

- Adaptive design meaning you can access B-Wise on feature & smart phone enabled – as long as the device can get online
- Multi-language platform – all articles in English & IsiZulu
- No data charges on Vodacom, Cell C & MTN (once you're on B-Wise)

Puberty

What's happening to my body?

From around 10 years old your body will start to go through lots of changes as you are changing from a girl into a woman. This time is called puberty or adolescence. People sometimes say it is when you are “becoming a teenager”.



In girls, you may first see your breasts are growing. You may see hair between your legs and under your arms or you may suddenly get taller (a growth spurt).

No two girls are the same. If you develop earlier or later than other girls, it does not mean that something is wrong. Your body will develop when it's ready.

Other changes you may notice:

- Your hair is oilier now and needs washing more often.
- You may start to get pimples on your skin.
- Your body smell can change and you may sweat more.
- Your breasts may feel sensitive or sore and begin to grow.
- Your hips may get wider.
- The hairs on your legs and arms may get thicker and darker.
- You may notice a creamy coloured liquid (called discharge) from your vagina that leaves a stain on your panties.
- You may even get your first period (this is when you start bleeding from your vagina once a month).

The boys will start to change too! They may start later than girls. Boys' voices may 'crack' or become deeper. Their muscles will get thicker and their shoulders wider. You may see hair start to appear on their faces.

“Your body will develop when it's ready.”

Sex on your mind

■ Are you ready?

Thinking about having sex?

There is a lot of pressure to have sex when you are young. You might see it happening on TV or your friends may tell you that they're having sex (sometimes even if they're not). Your boyfriend/girlfriend may even be asking you to have it.

Sexual feelings are the feelings of wanting to have sex, and usually our bodies are ready for sex long before our minds and emotions.

There are a few important things to think about to check if you are really ready to have sex:

How does your boyfriend/girlfriend feel about having sex?

How honest is your relationship - have you talked about it openly and honestly? Have you asked them?

Are you feeling pressured to have sex?

Do you feel that you can say no or change your mind at any time?

Are you pressuring someone else to have sex?

Are you old enough, emotionally and according to the law?

In South Africa, the law states that you can only consent (agree) to sex if you are 16 years or older.

Are you prepared?

Do you know how to protect yourself from sexually transmitted infections or unwanted pregnancy?

Have you thought about contraception?

Do you have condoms?

Whatever you decide, remember— it's your decision so think about it!

If you decide to have sex, speak to your doctor, nurse or counsellor about what contraception and protection you are going to use make sex safe. You need to protect yourself and your partner from HIV and sexually transmitted infections and an unwanted pregnancy.



“There is a lot of pressure to have sex when you are young”

LGBTQIA+

What does it mean?

You might have heard people talk about being gay or lesbian before, or mentioning groups like LGBTQIA+. These words are about sexuality (who you are attracted to) and identity (who you are). So when we use these words, we are talking about something very personal and important to someone.



LGBTQIA+ stands for...

Lesbian: This is a female who is attracted to females.

Gay: This is a male who is attracted to males.

Bisexual: This is when someone can be attracted to both males and females.

Transgender: This is when someone's gender identity (feeling like a male or a female inside) does not match their physical body's sex (their male or female body parts).

Queer or Questioning: "Queer" is a word sometimes used by people who don't fit into society's ideas of sex and attraction, so it can mean many different things. Some people don't like the word, since it has often been used to hurt people. "Questioning" means that someone is still figuring out their sexuality.

Intersex: This is when someone has some male and some female body parts or hormones.

Asexual: This is when someone doesn't feel sexually attracted to others.

The + is a way to include all identities and sexualities who don't fit into these labels.

A person's sexuality and identity is their own business, and we're allowed to talk about our own sexuality as much or as little as we want to. It's important to respect other people's sexuality and identity – the South African Constitution says we should not treat people differently because of their sexuality.

"A person's sexuality and identity is their own business"

Masturbation and Orgasm

Touch & play

Masturbation (or playing with yourself) is when you touch or rub your own sex parts in a way that feels good. This may lead to a nice feeling called orgasm. Both boys and girls masturbate and can have an orgasm.

Masturbation is safe, fun and natural. It is how you learn to make these good feelings for yourself. Most people masturbate in private. Some do so more than others. The amount of time spent masturbating is different for everybody.

Thinking about things that are exciting when masturbating is completely normal. These are called fantasies.

If you masturbate, you can teach your body how to have an orgasm. This is also called 'coming'. It is usually a feeling of pleasure (like gentle waves of muscles squeezing) at the peak of sexual excitement. The feeling starts in the sex organs and moves outwards through the whole body. People usually have orgasms during sex or masturbation.

Masturbate safely

Aweee gent! Let's talk about masturbation, also known as "playing dice". This could possibly be a hard thing for guys to talk about... but, many boys and men around the world enjoy doing it. Bruh, did you know, masturbation even has health benefits? Research shows that it can reduce stress, help you sleep better, put you in a good mood, and even help you to fight off illness.

Can a guy masturbate "too much"?

Some people do it every day, some once a week, and some people don't do it at all – and that's also cool. However, it's only "too much" once it starts messing with your school work or your social life (e.g. you would rather masturbate than have chilled vibes with your friends). This is when it may be time to see a therapist and get help.

5 Tips on how to masturbate safely:

- Don't SQUEEZE TOO HARD – you could hurt or even break your penis (this is known as penile fracture).
- Wash your hands before and after.
- Wash your sex toys and don't share them.
- Don't do it in public – get a room! Find a private place where no one will walk in on you.
- Use lubricants (like lotion, gel or Vaseline) – this will help you prevent your skin from tearing. Remember, you should only use water-based lubricants during sex with someone else – this will help to prevent condoms from breaking.

Not everyone enjoys masturbating – it's your body, your choice. Don't let anyone pressurise you into doing it, or not doing it.

Don't SQUEEZE TOO HARD – you could hurt or even break your penis (this is known as penile fracture).

HIV

Should I get tested?



Are you trying to decide if you should get tested? Maybe you haven't gone to test because...

- You're worried about what will happen if you're HIV positive
- You don't know where to get tested
- You only go to the hospital or clinic when you feel very sick
- Going to the doctor stresses you out
- You think you can find out your status from your partner's status
- You don't want anyone to find out if you've been unfaithful
- You think people will find out your status

Even if you've had reasons for not testing, it's a good idea for everyone to test regularly, no matter who you are. It can seem scary to find out your status, but if you are HIV positive, the virus is in your body whether you test or not! And if you are HIV positive, getting treatment sooner can help you to live a longer, healthier life. Also, your health-care worker HAS to keep your status a secret – if they tell anyone outside of the clinic, they are breaking the law.

Myths and Truths about HIV

Knowledge is power! So having the correct information is the important to understanding and preventing HIV/AIDS. Here are some common myths about HIV/AIDS that are not true:

MYTH: I can get HIV by being around people who are HIV-positive.

TRUTH: You cannot catch HIV by breathing the same air as someone who is HIV-positive, hugging, kissing, touching or sharing food with someone who is HIV-positive.

MYTH: Male circumcision prevents HIV.

TRUTH: Male circumcision does not prevent HIV; it only cuts down the risk of getting HIV infection.

MYTH: Traditional Medicines can cure HIV.

TRUTH: There is no cure for HIV even with traditional medicines.

MYTH: I can be cured from HIV if I have sex with a virgin.

TRUTH: Sex with a virgin does not cure HIV. Unprotected sex will only give HIV to a virgin who was HIV negative.

MYTH: If you are HIV positive, you cannot have children.

TRUTH: It is very possible for an HIV-positive woman to have an HIV-negative baby, if she takes her ARVs.

MYTH: Women can't give men HIV.

TRUTH: It's much more difficult for men to get HIV from women, but men can definitely get HIV from women

STIs

What are STIs?



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An STI (sexually transmitted infection) is any kind of infection that you can get from sexual contact.

OK, but what counts as sexual contact?

This includes penetrative sex like vaginal or anal sex, but also oral sex, masturbation or using sex toys. Some STIs (like herpes and HPV) just need skin-on-skin contact for them to be transmitted (passed on).

WAIT... I can have an STI without having any symptoms?

Yes! Many STIs never show symptoms, but they can still lead to serious problems like pain, infertility or even cancer. Plus, you could be passing them on to sex partners without even knowing it.

That's why it's important to test regularly for STIs, even if you don't have any symptoms! If you pick up STIs early enough, it's more likely you can get treatment before something goes seriously wrong.

Remember to wear a condom every time you have sex. Condoms are your best protection against almost all STIs.

More questions?

B-Wise is here to answer all your health-related questions for you.

How can I protect myself?

Always use a condom

Having unprotected sex increases your chances of getting an STI, so always use a condom!

Stick with one partner

Having more than one sexual partner puts you at higher risk of getting an STI. So, stick to one partner and stay faithful to each other.

If you have any signs of an STI, get treated

Having an STI puts you at a higher risk of getting another one. If you have any signs of an STI (discharge, rash or sores on your vagina or penis) go to the clinic to get tested and treated as soon as possible.

If your partner has had an STI, make sure you get tested and treated, sometimes you don't know you have an STI, as you may not have any symptoms. If your partner has been diagnosed with an STI, or you think she/he may have an STI, get tested and treated yourself!

Remember it is also OK to say no if you don't want to have sex. This is a sure way to protect yourself from getting an STI!

Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision

What to expect

Voluntary medical male circumcision (VMMC) sounds complicated and scary but it doesn't have to be, if you know what to expect.

1. When you arrive at the clinic or hospital, you will receive group counselling. This will be followed by individual counselling after which you will be tested for HIV before undergoing the circumcision. You will also be examined for sexually transmitted infections and any foreskin abnormalities.
2. A nurse will prepare you for the operation and then your circumcision will be done by a doctor who is specially trained to perform this kind of operation. VMMC is done under local anaesthetic (an injection that numbs the area to ensure there is no pain during the operation). The VMMC operation takes about 20-30 minutes.
3. After the circumcision operation, you will be given instructions on how to keep the wound clean while it heals and painkillers to help manage any pain you may have when the anaesthetic wears off. Remember, no sex or masturbation for 6 weeks until the wound has fully healed!

If you have concerns, speak to your doctor at your clinic or hospital.



“The VMMC operation takes about 20-30 minutes”

Contraceptives

How do I choose the best for me

In South Africa, we now have a wider choice of contraceptive methods. This can be very confusing! Each of us wants to know - what is the best contraceptive method for me?? The truth is there is no perfect contraceptive method, each method offers something different. So, let's look at some of the things you need to think about when choosing a contraceptive method:

Which contraceptive methods are available in South Africa?

The following contraceptive methods are available free at all government clinics in South Africa - condoms (male and female), injectables, contraceptive pills, implants, IUDs, emergency contraception and male and female voluntary sterilisation. There are also other methods available but these need to be paid for at private clinics - such as the Mirena, the contraceptive patch and the vaginal ring (the Nuvaring).

There are so many contraceptive methods... which method should I choose? There are many things to think about:

- How well the contraceptive method works compared to other methods?
- How long will the contraceptive method work for?
- How often do you need to go back to the clinic?
- How you and your body react to the contraceptive method?
- Do you prefer hormonal or non-hormonal contraceptive methods?
- Does this contraceptive method protect you from HIV, STIs and pregnancy?
- How quickly do you wish to get pregnant when you stop the contraceptive method?

Can I change my method if I am not happy?

Yes, this is your choice. It is important to stay on a method long enough for you and your body to get used to it. If you have problems discuss them with a doctor or nurse at your local clinic; there are often ways to help with the side effects. The longer you use a method, the more you and your body will get used to it. But if you are not happy, you can look at other options. But make sure you choose another contraceptive method and protect yourself in between! It takes only one mistake to get pregnant!



Image by Freepik

Your period

The difference between pads, tampons, menstrual cups and panty liners

Have you just started your period and you are not sure which sanitary product is better for you? Here are some of your options:

Pads

The pad is rectangular in shape and made mostly out of cotton and other material. You stick it onto your panties. It absorbs the menstrual blood on the outside of the body.

Some pads have wings which are on the sides of the pad. They will go under the bottom of your panty, to hold the pad securely on the panty. Pads can also be scented (they smell nice). These are good for hot days when a pad can smell.

Tampons

A tampon is tube-shaped and made out of cotton and rayon. You put it inside your vagina and it absorbs blood. It's a good option if you are going swimming.

The menstrual cup

The menstrual cup is a silicone cup that you put inside your vagina, and it collects the menstrual blood inside the vagina. It does not absorb it like a tampon, so when it gets full, you'll have to take it out and empty it. They are reusable, meaning you can use them over and over again.

The panty liner

A panty liner looks like a pad but it is thinner and lighter. It doesn't absorb as much as the pad, so it's better to use it on the last day of your period when the period is light.

The best way to know what works for you is to give each one a try. Everyone is different, so choose the product (or products) you are comfortable with.



Image by Freepik

Pads can also be scented (they smell nice). These are good for hot days when a pad can smell.

Vagina

How to keep it clean

It's important to take good care of your vagina for two big reasons. One: an unhealthy vagina can be embarrassing because it can have a bad smell and discharge. Two: keeping a healthy vagina will help you to avoid infections, which can be uncomfortable or painful.



This is how you can keep your vagina clean and healthy:

- Wash your vagina at least once a day with warm water only. Don't use harsh soaps as they could cause an infection.
- Wear cotton panties: they allow air to flow, and absorb moisture.
- Change your panties every day – this helps to keep your vagina fresh and clean.
- Don't use douches or perfumed gels. The vagina has a natural smell, and you don't have to change it. If you notice a strange smell or discharge, go and visit a clinic or doctor as soon as possible.
- Always use condoms if you have sex. This can help to protect you from STIs, HIV and unwanted pregnancy.
- Change condoms every time you have sex – especially when you are changing between different kinds of sex (e.g. oral, anal, and vaginal). This avoids the spread of germs from one area of your body to another.
- Eat healthy food like fruits, vegetables and yoghurt.

Follow these simple steps and help your vagina stay healthy.

“Change your panties every day – this helps to keep your vagina fresh and clean”

Termination of pregnancy

How far along can you be and still get an abortion?

Stage of pregnancy

An abortion is available if:

Who can perform the procedure

12 weeks
or less

You want to have it done
A woman can request an
abortion for any reason

A doctor
A trained registered nurse
A midwife

13 to 20
weeks

The pregnancy is a danger to
the mother's physical or
mental health.

The pregnancy is as a result
of rape or incest

The fetus is likely to die

The birth will affect the women's
socio-economic status

A doctor

More than
20 weeks

In limited circumstances -
and only if there is a severe threat
to the life of the woman or
if there are serious problems
with the baby

A doctor

Smoking

How to quit!

Maybe you've been told that people who smoke look cool. But mngani, what's cool about living an unhealthy lifestyle? Smoking increases your chances of getting TB, or dying from cancer, stroke or heart disease.

So if you've decided to quit, well done! Quitting smoking is a great choice to make, not just for your health, but for the people around you too.



Image by www.pexels.com/royalty-free-images

Here are a few tips that can help you to stop smoking:

Always keep active: By keeping active you keep your mind busy, and this will help you forget about smoking or the craving. You can try activities like taking walks, chewing sugar-free gum, drinking a lot of water and playing sports.

Ask for help: Support groups can be helpful when you are trying to stop smoking because quitting could be stressful at times. Call the National Council Against Smoking QUIT Line on 011 720 3145 and ask for a support group near you.

Take it easy: It's important to take breaks and avoid stressful situations. You can do this by chilling with friends, focusing on your hobbies, listening to music... your options are endless!

Avoid triggers: Stay away from things that make you want to smoke. These could be:

- Places that allow smoking
- Spending time with smokers
- Drinking alcohol – which is also bad for you!

Speak to a doctor, social worker or nurse if you think you need more help quitting.

“Mngani, what's cool about living an unhealthy lifestyle?”

Scared of somebody?

Are you being bullied?

Are you scared of somebody?

The biggest sign that you are being bullied is that you are scared of somebody. It could be a boy or girl at school, a teacher, an uncle or an older kid living in your area. It could even be your brother or sister.

Another sign is that bullying doesn't happen just once. It usually happens again and again. This can make you feel scared and worried about where and when the bully will get you next, and what they will do to you.

Bullies can be any age, but are mostly older than you. Bullies often pick on people they see as 'different' to them. It could be because of your religion, the colour of your skin or your hair, how you act or even the clothes you wear. It could just be that you're new to the school or area and haven't made friends yet. Many children get bullied, you're not alone!

Bullies can hurt your body with fists or feet

Physical (body) bullying is when a bully may hit, kick or hurt you – or just say they are going to. They may steal from you, break your things or just hide your stuff. Or they may embarrass you and make you do something you don't want to do. Boys use this way of bullying more than girls.

Bullies can hurt your feelings with words

Verbal (with words) bullying is when somebody calls you unkind names, says mean things to embarrass you or spreads bad stories about you or people that you care about. They may say that you can't play with them – or they could just ignore you. Girls use this way of bullying more than boys.

A teacher can also bully

If the bully is a teacher, the teacher may call you out and shame you in front of others. The teacher may call you a horrible name, make fun of you, or make you do something embarrassing like 'sit in the corner' for one hour.

If the bully is your parent or caregiver, it is a serious problem. This is called child abuse because it's the job of parents to protect their children. If you are being bullied, get help by telling an adult who cares about you and can help you.

“bullying is when somebody calls you unkind names, says mean things to embarrass you or spreads bad stories about you or people that you care about.”

What should I do if someone

■ Is threatening me or hurting me?

Do you feel unsafe and need protection?

Well, as long as you're under 18, you're officially a child according to the government. That means that there are laws like the Children's Act that protect you. You have the right to be protected from harm, and to be looked after by your parents or guardians.

Sometimes, people in our lives hurt us, or make us feel scared. Whether it's a friend, schoolmate, boyfriend or girlfriend, or a family member, it's never okay for someone else to hurt you physically or emotionally, or make you feel scared that they will hurt you. Sometimes it is really hard to tell someone about it. But if you don't do something or tell someone, it may never stop. It might even get worse.

Sometimes you can talk to the person hurting you and ask them to stop. Maybe they listen. But if they don't, it might be time to tell someone you trust.

If there is an adult in your life that you trust, tell them about the situation and see what they can do to help. If there is no one you feel comfortable with, talk to a social worker, counsellor or psychologist at a hospital, clinic, or school. They will be able to help you.

You can also call Childline on **08000 55 555**.

“It's never okay for someone else to hurt you physically or emotionally”

Feeling sad all the time?

You could be depressed

Feeling sad, down or hopeless is actually normal and we all feel this way at times. An argument with a parent, a breakup, a best friend moving away, being bullied or failing a test can cause these feelings. The death of someone close can lead to a specific, longer kind of sadness called grief. Most of the time, we manage to deal with these feelings and move past them with a little time and care, but sometimes it is too difficult and it is as if we feel sad all the time. This could mean that you are depressed.

Not everyone who is depressed (very sad) shows it in exactly the same way.

Signs of depression:

Negative feelings (like hopelessness, loneliness, guilt, rejection) and sadness (which sometimes shows up as irritability or anger) for weeks or more.

Negative thinking that doesn't go away.

Feeling tired, having low energy and no motivation to do or care about anything.

Poor concentration and focus on schoolwork, in class or on what others say.

Physical symptoms like not wanting to eat or eating too much, headaches, sleep problems, getting fat or losing too much weight.

Pulling away from friends and family or from activities that you once enjoyed; making you feel more lonely.

Remember, you are not alone and there are people ready to help. You can talk to a friend or an adult that you trust. They can help you to get professional help.

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If you are being bullied, get help by telling an adult who cares about you and can help you.



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For anyone thinking about

■ Suicide...

If you are thinking about killing yourself, it means you are in a huge amount of pain. It probably feels unbearable. Maybe you are angry. Maybe you just want the pain to end. You feel like you can't take it anymore.

When we feel really desperate, we don't see the all options we have. At this point, suicide might feel like the best, or even the only, option.

But suicide is never the only option.

If you're reading this, it means there is a part of you that wants to live. There's a part of you that has hope for yourself and your future.

The truth is, suicide is only one way to solve the problem. And if you take that option, you won't get to try any other option in the future. You won't be able to change your mind later. Suicide is permanent. And even though your pain right now might feel like it will never end, it can.

If you're thinking about suicide and the thoughts and feelings won't go away, get help. You are valuable and important. You have a future ahead of you and people who care about you (even if it doesn't feel like it).

Tell someone.

It often feels better when you talk about it. And telling someone can help you to see other options and possibilities. Tell a friend or a trusted adult, or call Lifeline on 0861 322 322 or the Suicide Crisis Line on 0800 567 567 (or SMS 31393).

“If you're reading this, it means there is a part of you that wants to live.”

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1

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Service Finder

The Service Finder helps you health, safety and opportunities and then rate them.

You can rate them on:
Privacy - Friendliness - Waiting time
and leave a comment about your experience

2

3

Your Words

Are you a writer or a story teller? The Your Words section is a place where you can share your experiences and stories. If your story is approved, it will be published on bwisehealth.com

Health Articles

With over 400 short articles everything from bullying to HIV- In english and isiZulu- we've got you covered

4

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B-WiSE!
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Wanna ask a health QUESTION?

Need **FACTS** about your health?
Get information and advice you can trust at B-Wise.
You can ask our experts **ANYTHING** about your health anonymously,
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