

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

Lesson 1

GRADE

CALM

LEARNER OUTCOME¹ P-12:

Examine aspects of healthy sexuality 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- HPV What You Need To Know And Do**
6. **ONLINE PAMPHLET (*optional): Are You a Male 15 Or Older? Don't Risk Life: Take Testicular Cancer Seriously**
7. **CARDS: Reproductive Health Question Cards**
8. **CARDS: Reproductive Health Answer Cards**
9. **ANSWER KEY: Reproductive Health Question & 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:

A. GROUND RULES (5-10 min)

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.

B. JOHN’S STORY – CASE STUDY² (5-10 min)

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

1. Distribute a copy of **John’s Story** handout 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.

C. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (10-15 min)

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
 - Worried that their doctor’s visit will be reported to their parents / guardians
 - Lack of doctors taking new patients
 - Uncomfortable with male / female doctors



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



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

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



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.

D. DISCUSSION MALE REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH CONCERNS (10 min)

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

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

Circumcision

The cutting away of the *foreskin*, the skin that covers the head of the penis. The surgery is usually performed



Refer to **Male Reproductive System** slide.

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 gently 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 problems⁴.

Testicular Cancer

- Refer back to **John's Story** and ask students if they know of anyone in the media who has had testicular cancer.
- 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/en/cancer-information/cancer-type/testicular/testicular-cancer/?region=ab>

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 see [STI Information Sheets](#).

E. DISCUSSION FEMALE REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH CONCERNS (10 min)

Students explore female reproductive health and cervical screening.

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

Breast Cancer

- Women should know what looks and feels



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.



You may wish to refer students to the following link which provides links to [sexual health programs and services](#) throughout the province of Alberta.

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.



Refer to slide of **Female Reproductive System**.

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).



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.

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; colour 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 the [Bacterial Vaginosis](#) for more information.

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 starting at age 21, or 3 years after becoming sexually active, whichever is later.
- 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

- Some types of HPV can spread easily by skin-to-skin contact in the genital area and can lead to certain kinds of cancer in both men and women.
- 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 MATCH₃
(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.



QUESTION BOX (10 min)

Answer questions from last class. Have students fill out questions and address them next class.



SELF REFLECTION

During the lesson, were:

- Ground rules being followed?
- Good practices established regarding group work and 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?

1. Alberta Education. (2002). Career and Life Management. From <http://education.gov.ab.ca/k%5F12/curriculum/bySubject/healthpls/calm.pdf>
2. Anonymous (2002). *John's story: A personal testimony of an Alberta teenager*.
3. Canadian Federation for Sexual Health. (2005). *Beyond the basics: A sourcebook on sexuality and reproductive health education*. Ottawa: Author.
4. Healthwise Inc. (2015). *Anabolic Steroids*. Retrieved from <https://myhealth.alberta.ca/health/pages/conditions.aspx?hwld=za1277>

JOHN'S STORY

This is the true story of an Alberta teen written in his words.

Cancer. The word itself means something evil or malignant that spreads destructively.

I was diagnosed with testicular cancer. I went to a walk-in clinic because I thought I had pulled my groin. Eight hours later I was in the hospital room, recovering from my operation of removing the giant tumour. They told me that they had gotten it just in time, and that I wouldn't have to go through chemotherapy. It was great news. Until one month later when I was diagnosed with lung cancer. The x-ray showed that my lungs were covered with dozens of tumours and it was one of the most frightening things I've ever seen. I started that night on chemotherapy.

Later they wanted me to take a CT scan of my upper body to see exactly where the cancer had spread. I was told the cancer had spread to my brain. I felt so alone and accepted the fact I was going to die. I had to begin radiation therapy, 15 minutes of radiation every day, bolted to a table with my head in a mask. Because of the radiation my hair is irreversibly changed now. I see it and am reminded of it every day I look in the mirror. This has been one of the hardest things to accept throughout my experiences.

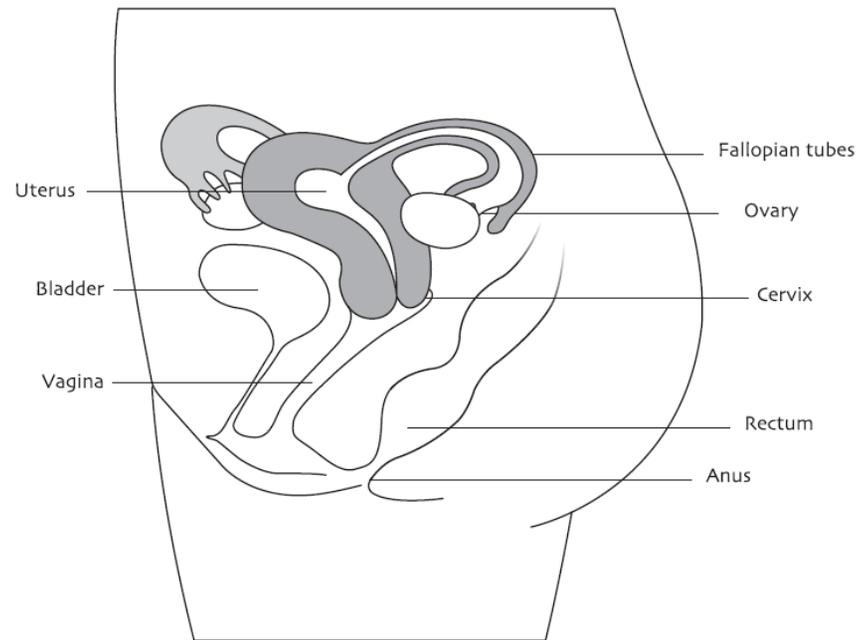
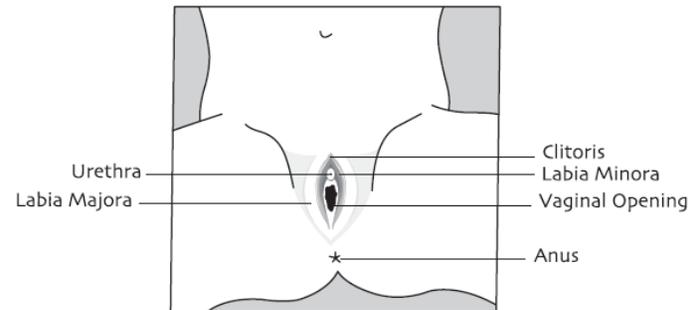
The happiness I felt when a few months later I was told that both the tumour on my brain and in my lungs were shrinking was the most incredible feeling I've ever felt. I was actually getting better! This was indeed a more positive feeling than accepting death a little over a month before. A few more needle pokes and feeling like crap and I'd be done.

It's been almost three years since I've been free of cancer, and I still have to go for the next two years for checkups, and I will voluntarily go once a year after that too. People still tell me they cannot believe how well I handled the whole ordeal. You gotta have faith is all I can say. People should be aware of things they can do to prevent cancer. One thing is to just live a healthy lifestyle, filled with regular exercise and balanced eating. You must be aware of some certain signs of cancer as well. Women should regularly check their breasts for unusual lumps that seem out of the ordinary, and men should check their testicles for lumps or anything that seems out of the ordinary. Never be afraid to ask a doctor for advice. Cancer is usually quite treatable if discovered in its early stages and you want it treated immediately; otherwise you'll be facing a long and frightening road to health.

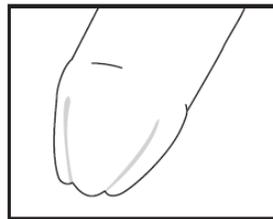
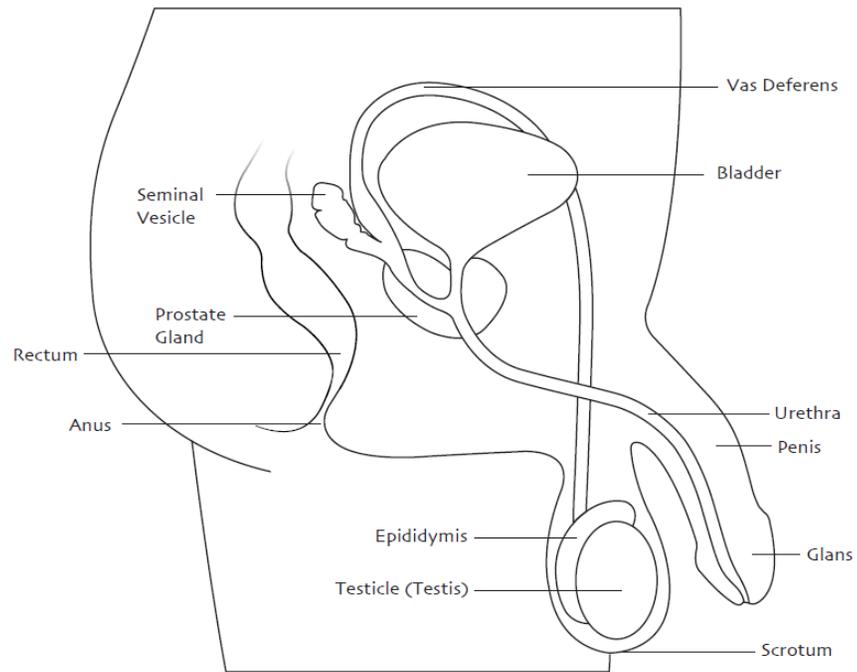
I'm a very different person now. I've never felt better, or so alive. Please everyone take a moment to enjoy all the good things in your life. Today is a great day to be alive.

CALM TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF LESSON 1 SLIDE: FEMALE REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM

Female Reproductive System



Male Reproductive System



Uncircumcised Penis

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH QUESTION CARDS

What are some reasons a woman may get a pelvic exam?

Who must give permission for someone under the age of 18 to have a sexual health exam or a test for a sexually transmitted infection?

How often should a man examine his testicles?

What are some ways that a health professional checks to find if a person has a sexually transmitted infection?

What is the name of the special instrument health care providers' use for a female pelvic exam?

What factors increase a female's chances of getting pelvic inflammatory disease, which may limit her ability to become pregnant in the future?

What percent of infected males know they have gonorrhea because they have symptoms?

What factors increase a female's risk of getting cervical cancer?

What are some signs or symptoms people might have if they have a sexually transmitted infection?

What health benefits, besides pregnancy prevention, can condoms provide?

What percent of infected females know they have Chlamydia because they have symptoms?

Why is prenatal care important?

CALM TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF LESSON 1 CARDS QUESTIONS

What are some early signs of pregnancy?

What behaviours put a pregnant female and/or her fetus at risk?

What choices does a person have for dealing with an unintended pregnancy?

When might a health care provider be forced to contact a minor's parent or guardian?

Why is it risky for people to take care of sexual health problems by themselves?

What does it mean when medical information is "confidential"?

What are some reasons why some teens don't go to a health care provider?

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH ANSWER CARDS

She has a change in usual vaginal discharge
She's 21+ and hasn't had one before
It's been a year since she's had one

Nobody

Once a month

Visual exam of genital area
Swab/culture lab test
Exam of cells under microscope
Blood test
Urine test

A speculum

Leaving a sexually transmitted infection untreated
Having been infected with Gonorrhea or Chlamydia
Having many different partners
Beginning intercourse before age 18

Most infected males do not have any symptoms

Smoking
Beginning intercourse before age 18
Infection with HPV (Human Papilloma Virus)
Infection with HIV

Most infected females do not have any symptoms

Reduces risk of cervical cancer
Reduces risk of acquiring a sexually transmitted infection

To protect the mother's health
To increase the chance of having a healthy baby

CALM TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF LESSON 1 CARDS ANSWER KEY

Discharge from penis/vagina
Painful sore
Pain or burning with urination

Smoking
Drinking alcohol
Using drugs
Poor diet
Not seeking early prenatal care

Missing a menstrual period (or having a period much lighter than usual)
Sore breasts
Nausea or upset stomach

Adoption
Abortion
Single parenthood
Married or common-law parenthood

Only in the event of a medical emergency when the patient needs additional specialized care

They may do an at-home test incorrectly
They may make diagnosis difficult by using the wrong medication
Home remedies may not work

No one else will see the file without the person's permission.

Embarrassed
Partner doesn't want them to go
Afraid family will find out

Adapted from: Canadian Federation of Sexual Health. (2005). *Beyond the Basics: A Sourcebook on Sexual and Reproductive Health*.

1. Question

What are some reasons a woman may get a pelvic exam?

Answer

She has a change in usual vaginal discharge
She's 21+ and hasn't had one before
It's been a year since she's had one

2. Question

How often should a man examine his testicles?

Answer:

Once a month

3. Question

What is the name of the special instrument health care providers' use for a female pelvic exam?

Answer

A speculum

4. Question

What percent of infected males know they have gonorrhea because they have symptoms?

Answer

Most infected males do not have any symptoms

5. Question

What percent of infected females know they have Chlamydia because they have symptoms?

Answer

Most infected females do not have any symptoms

6. Question

What are some signs or symptoms people might have if they have a sexually transmitted infection?

Answer

Discharge from penis/vagina
Painful sore
Pain or burning with urination

7. Question

What are some early signs of pregnancy?

Answer

Missing a menstrual period (or having a period much lighter than usual)
Sore breasts
Nausea or upset stomach

8. Question

When might a health care provider be forced to contact a minor's parent or guardian?

Answer

Only in the event of a medical emergency when the patient needs additional specialized care

9. Question

What does it mean when medical information is "confidential"?

Answer

No one else will see the file without the person's permission

10. Question

Who must give permission for someone under the age of 18 to have a sexual health exam or a test for a sexually transmitted infection?

Answer Nobody

11. Question

What are some ways that a health professional checks to find if a person has a sexually transmitted infection?

Answer

Visual exam of genital area Blood test
Swab/culture lab test Urine test
Exam of cells under microscope

12. Question

What factors increase a female's chances of getting pelvic inflammatory disease, which may limit her ability to become pregnant in the future?

Answer:

Leaving a sexually transmitted infection untreated Having many different partners
Having been infected with Gonorrhea or Chlamydia Beginning intercourse before age 18

13. Question

What factors increase a female's risk of getting cervical cancer?

Answer:

Smoking
Beginning intercourse before age 18
Infection with HPV (Human Papilloma Virus)
Infection with HIV

14. Question

What health benefits, besides pregnancy prevention, can condoms provide?

Answer

Reduced risk of cervical cancer
Reduced risk of acquiring a sexually transmitted infection

15. Question

Why is prenatal care important?

Answer

To protect the mother's health

To increase the chance of having a healthy baby

17. Question

What behaviours put a pregnant female and/or her fetus at risk?

Answer

Smoking

Poor diet

Drinking alcohol

Not seeking early prenatal care

Using drugs

18. Question

What choices does a person have for dealing with an unintended pregnancy?

Answer

Adoption

Abortion

Single parenthood

Married or common-law parenthood

19. Question

Why is it risky for people to take care of sexual health problems by themselves?

Answer

They may do an at-home test incorrectly

They may make diagnosis difficult by using the wrong medication

Home remedies may not work

20. Question

What are some reasons why some teens don't go to a health care provider?

Answer

Embarrassed

Partner doesn't want them to go / Afraid family will find out

IT'S THE TRUTH...REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH FOR FEMALES

It is **COMMON** for **ADOLESCENT FEMALES** to:

- be at a different stage of physical development from peers of the same age.
- have breasts of slightly different sizes and shapes.
- have occasional lumps in their breasts.
- have breast swelling and tenderness just before their menstrual periods.
- have nipples that turn in instead of sticking out, or hair around the nipples.
- have occasional clear or milky discharge from nipples.
- have some natural, healthy genital odour.
- have genital hair of different colour from hair on other parts of their bodies.
- have cramps before and/or during their periods.
- have a “regular” menstrual cycle length between 21 and 35 days.
- have a total menstrual discharge equal to approximately ½ cup (4 to 6 tablespoons of blood plus other fluids and some tissue).
- have irregular menstrual periods.
- have wetness in the vaginal area when sexually aroused.
- masturbate occasionally, frequently, or not at all (with no resulting physical harm).
- have varying amounts of clear to cloudy discharge from the vagina, as part of their monthly cycle, or with antibiotics, birth control pills or pregnancy.
- have hymens of different thicknesses, with different natural openings (rarely completely covering the opening).

CALM TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF LESSON 1 HANDOUT IT'S THE TRUTH...FEMALE

- have their hymens stretched during routine physical activities like gymnastics (therefore not a clue to virginity).
- have labia, breast, nipples of various sizes, shapes, skin tone.

Adapted from: Montfort, S. & O'Leary, J. (n.d.). *It's Your Body: Understanding Reproductive Health*.

IT'S THE TRUTH...REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH FOR MALES

It is **COMMON** for **ADOLESCENT MALES** to:

- be at a different stage of physical development from peers of the same age.
- have a temporary swelling or enlargement of the breasts during puberty (gynecomastia), or a sore spot under one or both nipples.
- have a penis that varies in length and width when flaccid (limp) or erect (hard) when compared with peers.
- have a penis that becomes erect at any angle, or which curves to the right or left.
- believe, incorrectly, that penis size is crucial to proper sexual functioning.
- have an ache in the testicles (“blue balls”) after prolonged sexual arousal (which will go away by itself).
- have one testicle larger and lower-hanging than the other.
- have their testicles hang closer to, or further from the body, depending upon temperature changes, stress or sexual arousal.
- be “normal” with either a circumcised or uncircumcised penis.
- have genital hair of a different colour from hair on other parts of their bodies.
- have some natural, healthy genital odour.
- have frequent erections, sometimes due to sexual arousal, stress or general excitement, and sometimes for no apparent reason.
- wake up in the morning with an erection.
- sometimes lose an erection during intercourse.
- masturbate occasionally, frequently, or not at all (with no resulting physical harm).

CALM TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF LESSON 1 HANDOUT IT'S THE TRUTH...MALE

- have approximately one teaspoon of milky, “globby” fluid come out of the penis when sexually aroused, or while sleeping (ejaculate, “cum”, wet dream).
- have erections without ejaculating.
- be unable to urinate at the same time they ejaculate.
- have occasional, short-lived itching around testicles and/ or inside thighs.
- feel a thickening or ridge (epididymis) in the top back portion of the testicle.