

# A guide to sex, safety for teen-age girls

By **New York Daily News**

THE BALTIMORE SUN

JUNE 14, 1993

**Y**our Skin Reflects What You Eat. After an Abortion. What a Day for a Daydream. The Best Kind of Condom to Use. How to Have Healthy, Shiny Hair. How to Protect Yourself From **AIDS** and HIV.

Blurbs from a glossy woman's magazine? Actually, these are chapter headings from an ambitious 345-page paperback aimed at 13- to 17-year-old girls who have questions about their changing bodies in these sexually precarious times.

Priced at an allowance-friendly \$8.50, "You're in Charge: A Teenage Girl's Guide to Sex and Her Body" (Fawcett Columbine) is a singularly comprehensive book on the concerns of teen girls, say the authors, who began their research by distributing 200 questionnaires to New York City adolescents in private schools and inner-city youth programs. The responses they received convinced them that the book was desperately needed.

"There's so much ignorance out there," explains Dr. Niels H. Lauersen, an obstetrician-gynecologist at Lenox Hill Hospital, who penned the book with health writer Eileen Stukane.

Among the misconceptions shared by an alarming number of adolescent girls: You can't get pregnant while menstruating. (You can.) And menstrual cramps are punishment for having sex. (They're not.)

Each year, one out of 10 girls between 15 and 19 years old gets pregnant, and one of four sexually active teens becomes infected with a **sexually transmitted disease** before graduating from high school, according to Ms. Stukane.

Adds Dr. Lauersen: "The Centers for Disease Control says that teens are contracting AIDS faster than any other population segment."

Part of the reason, explains Dr. Lauersen, is that "It's easier for teen-agers to get certain sexually transmitted diseases (AIDS and chlamydia, among them) because the mouth of their cervix is not completely closed, (in contrast to) adult women."

Of course, no one wants her kid to get an STD, but how do parents react to their 13-year-olds reading graphic information about orgasms, oral sex and abortions?

"This book is an encyclopedia," explains Dr. Lauersen, 25 percent of whose practice is made up of teen-agers. "It's important that everything is covered. Of course, there is some controversy. But it's nothing they don't hear in rap music or see on television. One mother gave the book to her teen-age daughter and the next day her daughter bought her a flower."

No flowers are expected, but here we share some of Dr. Lauersen and Ms. Stukane's advice for your blossoming daughter:

## Beauty Tips:

\* The best health and beauty aid for your skin is water. Beer, wine coolers and other drinks that contain alcohol can dry out the skin. This early aging effect is one more reason to avoid alcohol.

\* Instead of buying an over-the-counter anti-dandruff shampoo, which many young women find harsh, consider washing with a mild shampoo and conditioner, then apply an astringent made of equal parts antiseptic mouthwash and witch hazel.

## Breast Care:

\* Girls with painful, but benign, fibrocystic breast disease can reduce breast soreness by consuming fewer caffeine-rich foods, such as coffee, tea, cola and chocolate. Also, daily doses of Vitamin E (400 to 800IU) and Vitamin B complex (100mg) may ease breast tenderness.

\* Girls with inverted nipples can do a daily exercise to make their nipples protrude. (The book describes the exercise in detail.)

#### Menstruation:

\* Since it's suggested that tampons be worn no longer than six hours to diminish the risk of toxic shock syndrome, switch to a pad before going to bed.

\* It's common for girls to have headaches before their periods because of a hormonal imbalance. Some remedies: Cut back on salt before your period; drink plenty of water, and take Vitamin B (100 mg) and Vitamin B6 (50-200 mg).

#### Sex:

\* Should you or shouldn't you? No matter how old you are, if you are wondering whether you're ready to have sex, don't do it. When you are ready, you won't have any doubts.

\* Don't even ask yourself if you're ready if you're not in a trusting, committed relationship.

#### Condoms:

\* Use them, use them, use them. "When it comes to condoms, you have no choice," says the book. "Your choice is in the type of birth control you want to use with a condom."

\* The condom offering greatest protection against pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease is one made of thin latex, lubricated with the spermicide nonoxynol-9. Never apply oil-based lubricants such as baby oil, mineral oil, petroleum jelly, cold cream or body lotions to a condom. They can cause the condom to break.

#### Birth Control That Isn't:

\* Douching may be good hygiene, but it is not birth control. "Within 10 minutes, sperm can swim from the vagina through the cervix to the uterus and into the Fallopian tubes, where they can run smack into an egg. By the time you get up and get your douche equipment organized, you could already be pregnant," according to the book.

\* Withdrawal, a k a coitus interruptus, with a boy who is not wearing a condom, says the book, "is birth control for girls who want to get pregnant." Although a young man may think he is pulling out before ejaculating, he can inadvertently leak a little sperm. And a little is all it takes.

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