

FOR CURIOUS TEEN GIRLS, THIS BOOK HAS ANSWERS

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SUN-SENTINEL

JUNE 22, 1993

Your 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 in 10 girls ages 15 to 19 gets pregnant, and one in four sexually active teens becomes infected with a **sexually transmitted disease** before graduating from high school, says Stukane.

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

Part of the reason, Lauersen says, 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 their 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," says Lauersen, whose practice is 25 percent teen-aged. "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."

A PRACTICAL SURVIVAL GUIDE FOR GIRLS

Here is some advice for your blossoming daughter from *You're in Charge*:

Breast Care:

-- Girls with painful yet benign fibrocystic breast disease can reduce breast soreness by consuming fewer caffeine-rich products, such as coffee, tea, cola and chocolate.

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

Menstruation:

-- 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 B-6 (50-200 mg).

Sex:

-- 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.

Birth Control That Isn't:

-- Douching 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.

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