

COVID-19 and gender

A guide for adolescents and young people

During this uncertain time, we should be aware of how COVID-19 affects us differently because of our gender.



What is gender?



All of us – women, men, girls and boys – are influenced by gender roles and expectations. They shape how we think and behave, what sort of jobs we do, what we wear and how much power we have to make decisions. Women are expected to do unpaid domestic work and childcare, while men are seen as the breadwinners, earning money for the household. But these roles can change.

Why do we need to know about gender and COVID-19?

1. Women and girls are doing more unpaid care work

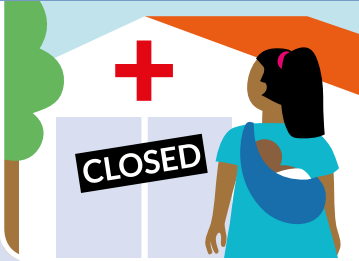


Many young women and girls are doing more unpaid care work during the lockdown. This includes caring for sick people, doing extra childcare, cooking, washing dishes and clothes on top of schoolwork and taking care of themselves.



We need to pay attention to how we are feeling and how others are too. We need to take care of ourselves and one another and connect with others.

2. Access to sexual and reproductive health services is limited



During this time, it might be difficult to access essential contraception, condoms and maternal healthcare. This could result in more unplanned pregnancies, unsafe abortions, complications in pregnancy and childbirth, and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV.

3. Gender-based violence is rising



Home isn't a safe place for everyone. In some countries, we are seeing an increase in gender-based violence, including domestic violence. Anybody can experience violence, but women, children, and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people are more at risk.

4. More men are getting seriously ill



Evidence shows that men are more severely affected by COVID-19 than women. We also know that men and boys generally take more risks in their lives as a way of proving their manhood. They tend to seek healthcare less than women and girls, like only going to the hospital when they're already very sick or not taking their medication.



For more information visit:

WHO - www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019

UNAIDS - www.unaids.org/en/covid19



Actions we can all take that will help everyone

Unpaid care



Young men and boys can and should do more **cooking, cleaning and shopping.**



Young men and boys can and should **look after younger siblings, elderly relatives or sick members of the family.**



Remember!

Young women and girls usually do most of this work. But this affects their education and means they have less free time.



Sexual and reproductive health and rights



Always get consent from your partner to have sex, even if you're in a relationship. If your partner doesn't want to have sex, or agrees to have sex and then changes their mind (for example, because you don't have a condom), you must respect their decision.



Discuss and make joint decisions about having safer sex using a condom and/or contraception. Avoid unprotected sex as it may be hard to access HIV/STI treatment, maternal healthcare or safe abortion services.



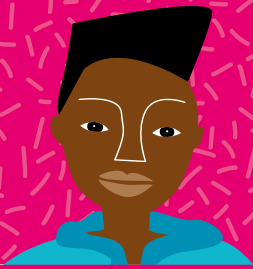
Remember!

Sex without consent is sexual violence.



Learn more about consent at <https://frontlineaids.org/resources/sexual-and-reproductive-health-information-for-young-people/>

Get information from trusted peers, health workers and reliable sources. Visit: UNFPA - www.unfpa.org/covid19



Remember! If you're feeling anxious, depressed or confused, talk to someone or call your nearest psychosocial support provider.

Responding to violence



If you or anyone in your house is in **immediate danger**, call the police or emergency services.



Stay in contact with **friends, families and neighbours**. Get support from someone you trust.



If you're worried about **domestic violence**, contact a helpline or advice network.



Stay calm, talk things over and step away from conflict that can turn into aggression. Drinking too much alcohol can make the situation worse.

Types of violence



Physical violence
e.g. hitting, beating, slapping, threatening behaviour



Emotional violence
e.g. shouting, bullying, criticising, controlling, unpredictable mood swings



Sexual violence
e.g. rape, sexual assault, inappropriate touching or harassment.



Remember!

Emotional violence is also a kind of domestic violence.

