

Teenage Pregnancy: 21st Century's Social Concern

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Abstract

The practices of early marriages continue to be prevalent in the rural India, where teenaged or under aged girl (usually within the ages of 13-19) becoming pregnant. Nearly 40-50% girls in south Asia are married and become pregnant before they are 20. Main factors which forced to have the scenario are numerous; as social, economical, ignorance, illiteracy, familial so on. There are numerous ill effects on mother, baby, family and society as well. It is at most important to prevent early marriages and teenage pregnancies.

Keywords: Teenage Pregnancy; Adolescence; Under Aged; Sexually Transmitted Diseases; Counseling, Youth Friendly.

Introduction

The changing social environment increasing nuclear families, more opportunity of social interaction among adolescent, less supervision, influence of media have resulted in increase in sexual activity among youngsters and a rising incidence of pregnancies in adolescent and teenagers. Also the practices of early marriages continue to be prevalent in the rural India. Teenage pregnancy in developed countries is usually outside of marriage, and carries a social stigma in many communities and cultures.

Definition

A teenaged or under aged girl (usually within the ages of 13-19) becoming pregnant. The term in everyday speech usually refers to women who have not reached legal adulthood, which varies across the world, who become pregnant.

Facts File

Pregnancy and child birth

1. Nearly 40-50% girls in south Asia are married and become pregnant before they are 20.
2. A pregnant adolescent below the age of 18 years is 2-5 times more likely to die than pregnant women between 18-25 years because of hemorrhage and anemia.
3. Low birth weight is more common among babies born to adolescents than to adult.
4. Lack of knowledge, lack of access to contraception and vulnerability to abuse puts adolescents at highest risk of unwanted pregnancy.
5. Maternal mortality is estimated to be 3-4 times higher in adolescent women than adults.
6. Unprotected sexual relations increase the risk of unwanted pregnancy, induced abortion and

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sexually transmitted diseases.

Risks of Pregnancy in Adolescence

Pregnancy within marriage

- The tradition of early marriage and childbearing among girls still prevails in much country, especially in rural part of south East Asia region.
- The chances of developing anemia developing during pregnancy and of retarded fetal growth, premature birth and complication during labour are all significantly higher for adolescent mother.
- Failure to meet the increased nutritional demand imposed by pregnancy may result in stunted growth and damage the girl's future health.

Pregnancy outside Marriage

- The growing trends toward late marriages in urban communities bring its own problems.
- Maternal mortality is 3 -4 times is higher in adolescent than in adults.

Risk Includes

Risk from Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Common STD

A major consequence of unprotected sex in adolescence is the likelihood of infection from a sexually transmitted diseases e.g. gonorrhoea, chlamydial infection, syphilis, herpes, HIV/ AIDS.

High Risk Group for STD

Among the groups most vulnerable to STDs are young adolescents of both sexes who engage in unprotected sexual activities. As the receptive partner, females naturally run a greater biomedical risk to begin with. This risk is magnified in teenage girls because their bodies are still immature.

Complications and Sequelae of STD

Acquiring a STD during adolescence often causes infertility in future. It also contributes to high proportion of pelvic inflammatory diseases, Ectopic pregnancy affecting mostly those in 15-24 year age group. Genital herpes and AIDS are presently incurable and can cause severe psychosocial effects. Other complication can be cancers, premature birth etc.

Risk of Abortion

Because of lack of knowledge, access and ability to use contraception, adolescent are more prone to unwanted pregnancy than adult women. Termination of unwanted pregnancy through induced abortion generally presents a greater risk to health and life of an adolescent girl. Abortion mortality is estimated to about 70000 women globally /year.

Preventing Adolescent Reproductive Health Problems

How to Prevent Adolescent Pregnancy

Some common measures are out lined below

Counseling

Motherhood in adolescence usually means an education, training and economic opportunities for the development of female adolescent outside the home.

Delaying Age at Marriage

Delaying the age at marriage beyond 20 years through the effective advocacy and social and legal action can prevent adolescent pregnancy with associated risks.

Contraceptiv

Postponing the 1st birth or preventing unwanted pregnancy can be done through the use of contraceptives.

How to Prevent STDs

The younger girl, the more the risk, especially if she forced into her 1st sexual intercourse. The methods recommended are as easy as ABC.

Abstain from Sexual Activity

the young people should avoid any penetrating sex.

Be Faithful

if abstinent is not possible, then the young people should try to have a monogamous sexual partnership in which both partner are completely healthy.

C: Condoms: use without fail in situation of risk: Condom must be used consistently and correctly

throughout the sexual act.

Impact of Teenage Pregnancy

Impact on the mother

- *Teenage pregnancy affects the education of under fourteens.*
- *Teenage pregnancy causes psychological and physical trauma.*
- *Pelvis being not grown up enough to sustain the baby leads to a variety of complications.*
- *Cause obstetric fistula, Eclampsia, infant mortality and maternal death*

Impact on the Child

- *Affects the psychosocial development of the infant.*
- *The occurrence of developmental disabilities and behavioral issues is increased.*
- *Poor academic performance in the children of teenage mothers has also been noted. Daughters born to adolescent parents are more likely to become teen mothers themselves.*

Impact on other Family Members

Teen pregnancy and motherhood can influence younger siblings. One study found that the younger sisters of teen mothers were less likely to emphasize the importance of education and employment.

Parents Feel Ashamed of their Daughter.

Preventive Programs: Teenage Pregnancy

1. *Abstinence education programs* encourage young people to postpone sexual activity until marriage, or until they are mature enough to handle sexual activity.
2. *Knowledge-based programs* focus on teaching adolescents about their bodies, their normal functions, as well as provide detailed information about contraceptives and preventing STDs.
3. *Clinic-focused programs* provide easier access to information, counseling by health care providers, and contraceptive services.
4. *Peer counseling programs* typically involve older teens, who encourage other adolescents to resist peer and social pressures to become sexually involved. For teens that are already sexually

active, peer counseling programs also provide negotiation skills for relationships and the information about contraceptives.

5. *"Growing Up" program*, Initiated through the Federation of Obstetric & Gynecological Societies of India (FOGSI) in partnership with Johnson & Johnson the program educates schoolgirls on menstruation, its myths and hygiene, the anatomy and functioning of the reproductive system, the value of good nutrition and exercise, problems of drug, alcohol and tobacco abuse, and sexual abuse.
6. *The Postgraduate College program titled "Let's Talk"* On the lines of "Growing Up" program, FOGSI initiated a program for women in the age group of 20-25 years in 2004. Started in association with Organon educates women about the various forms of contraception.
7. *Adolescent clinic*: The adolescent clinic is run by the department of Obstetrics & Gynecology. The clinic provides free consultation for adolescent girls aged 10-19 years. It covers every aspect of adolescent health including growth & development, common menstrual problems, immunization, nutritional deficiencies like anemia, mental health issues including anxiety, depression & suicidal tendencies, adolescent reproductive & sexual health with special focus on HIV, AIDS & other STD's & contraception, teenage pregnancy & benefits of regular exercise & meditation.

Health Services for Adolescents

Youth friendly services: Youth friendly services are those that meet the basic needs of accessibility, confidentiality and low cost. They also need to be linked with each other. For example : a family planning service which accommodate adolescence need to be accessibility two both sexes and it needs to be closely to be linked if not integrated, with and STD services as well as maternal health care. This is generally not so in many countries.

Goals

1. To avoid pregnancy before complete maturity.
2. To lower rates of exposure to and contraction of STD.
3. To ensure greater availability and accessibility of services to promote adolescent reproductive health.
4. Improvement in status of women.

Interventions

- Create a safe and supportive environment
- Provide information
- Build skills
- Provide counseling
- Improve health services

The Challenges

Some of the key challenges are:

- How to promote a greater understanding of young people's needs among adults and a recognition that they are people, not problems, with an exceptional capacity to respond well when those needs are met.
- How to provide the knowledge, skills and education for young person, and how to overcome cultural resistance to education of women
- How to identify the measures needed to achieve good nutrition, especially for the adolescent girl.
- How to effectively reduce the spread of substance abuse, including tobacco, alcohol and other drugs among adolescents
- How to improve the status of women and their social and economic power
- How to prevent problems of violence and sexual abuse and how to provide young people with advice and help when in need.

*Role of Different Agency**Role of Ministries of Health*

The health ministries in every country have to take a leading role. They must seek out and encourage multisectoral partnerships, and ensure that they design specific need based programs to address the problems of youth. Some of the major contributions are:

- a. The health ministry must make concerted efforts to remove obstacle and barriers, and must provide information to young people and to adults about health, behavior, development and services.
- b. Create linkages with other sectors such as education, employment, social welfare and criminal justice as well as NGOs
- c. Must strive to provide youth friendly services

that are accessible, confidential and flexible.

- d. Co-ordinate with school systems and provides counseling services for healthy development, gender equality, healthy sexuality, desired reproductive behavior and healthy relationship.
- e. Strongly advocate coherent policies and legislation supportive of health and development of young people and undertake research on the status and impact of such polices and legislations.

Critical Role of the Family: Family Support

1. Parent must ensure a safe and secure environment for growth in the formative years.
2. Young people need to be taught basic values to live.
3. Providing information, education, counseling and clinical services helps young people to be more responsible.
4. Information and skills will help them live up to their parent's expectations and values; ignorance, fear and mistrust are the greatest enemies of health and development.

Role of Other Sectors

The Following sectors can make positive contribution in determining the health of the adolescent population.

The School Authorities

- Impact sex education
- Provide a healthy school environment with trained counselors
- Promote healthy social interaction
- Advocate equal and expanded education for both sexes.

The Employers

- Provide vocation skills and training for both sexes
- Ensure safe working condition
- Liaise with school and health services

The Community

- Recognize equal rights and responsibility

- Encourage positive adult attitudes behaviors
- Promote a safe and supportive environment for growth and development.

The Mass Media

- Provide media focus on adolescent health and development
- Create programming for and with young people
- Ensure diminished violence and abuse on entertainment programmes
- End advertising of harmful substances.

The Social Welfare Sector

- Promotes rights and responsibilities
- Ensure training of staff for work with adolescents
- Reach the unreached adolescents

The Religious Sector

- Provide spiritual and moral guidance
- Provide opportunities for constructive activities.

The Criminal Justice Sector

- Ensure appropriate laws and their implementation.

The Youth Sector

- Participate in planning, implementation and

evaluation of programmes

- Provide peer education and peer counseling
- Conduct research into the youth's special needs and problems

A Vision for the Future of Young People

Young people of today are the adults of tomorrow. Today's world offers remarkable opportunities for adolescents but also threatens their health. Therefore, we must strive to create an environment where the young can enjoy trusting relationships with their families as well as adults in their community. A world where no young person will grow up neglected, abused or uncared for. Where the young can grow up strong & physically and mentally healthy as confident and balanced individuals working together to promote harmony between people and nations.

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