

## GENDER AND HEALTH – REPRODUCTIVE, MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL WELL BEING



### Notes

By now, you must have understood that the male and female sex is biological, and for sexual reproduction, both are required. Both sexes differ from each other in the structure of their reproductive organ systems, which are aptly adapted to their specific roles in reproduction. Gender is a social construct, and sexuality is dependent on several factors, many of which are yet unknown. However, health is vital for all human beings in all its aspects – reproductive, mental and emotional and the contents of this chapter attempts to address these aspects. These include issues and concerns of adolescent health, prevention of the use of intoxicant substances and anti-health behaviours.

Generating awareness about the ill consequences on society of desire for male children and skewed sex ratio has been attempted. Behaviours promoting patriarchy, desire for a male child and the consequent skewed sex ratio are to be addressed for a positive change for more gender just society. The importance of maternal health and the necessity of dispelling myths and misconceptions related to reproduction are discussed. An awareness of life in conflict zones is also included in this lesson.



### OUTCOMES

After studying this lesson, learner:

- appreciates and shares the charms and challenges of growing up.
- discusses the issues and concerns of health during adolescence.
- links consumption of enough food and rest with pregnancy and childbirth outcomes.
- explains cultural practices related to maternal health and reproduction.
- expresses concerns about declining sex ratio and sex-selective abortions.

**Notes**

- dispels myths and misconceptions related to gender.
- becomes aware of the consequences of substance abuse and insist on refraining from habit-forming substances.
- emphasises the unhealthy impact of RTI, STI and sexual abuse.

### 13.1 CHARMS AND CHALLENGES OF GROWING UP

Read the extract written below-

When we brought Tanvi home as a six-month-old infant, we wondered why she did not cry as she changed hands from the nanny of the orphanage to my welcoming outstretched arms. Since that day, Tanvi has passed childhood and, from a dark, beautiful snub-nosed child, has grown into an attractive young lady. She is beginning to have an attitude and has a visibly large appetite. She is making friends, mostly girls but is selective about whom she mixes up with. Today, at 17, she has large dusky eyes and shiny dark skin. She is eloquent, self-confident, hardworking and helpful. However, for certain decisions, she depends on her parents. She is generally happy, but sometimes, we have to tolerate her changing moods. Her hormones, I know, are responsible for all these changes, which are now noticeable.

The above paragraph is part of a conversation between a mother and her friends which covers the description of her 17-year-old daughter. You may consider it as a case study for adolescence.

#### 13.1.1 Puberty and Adolescence: Physical, Mental and Emotional Changes

World Health Organisation (WHO) defines individuals aged 10 to 19 as adolescents. Puberty is the beginning of adolescence when girls and boys begin to undergo physical changes, such as growing of axial and pubic hair. Girls begin to develop breasts, and boys grow a moustache. Puberty merges into adolescence as individuals show a growth spurt with an increase in height and appearance of secondary sexual characters. However, physical changes add to the charm of growing into adulthood. It becomes necessary for elders to motivate adolescents to build up self-confidence.

Since adolescence is a period of transition between childhood and adulthood, it is marked by mental turmoil for the adolescent for whom the sudden noticeable physical changes may come as a surprise. The onset of menstruation in girls and occasional wet dreams in boys also worry them unless some guidance is provided beforehand, either through sex education or by teachers or parents.

New relationships with girls and boys of the same age group are enjoyable but may sometimes be worrisome. Relationships develop and assume great importance for adolescents. In addition,

adolescence is a period of high energy levels. If properly guided, the energies of adolescents can be channelled to express inherent creativity and talent and, at the same time, help them mature into balanced adults.



**ACTIVITY 13.1**

Make a table listing the physical, mental and emotional changes during adolescence using your experiences and knowledge gained from books or seers.



**ACTIVITY 13.2**

Use the case study given earlier in this lesson and underline the words, phrases or sentences used to describe adolescent characteristics.



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**13.1.2 Socio-cultural challenges faced by adolescents**

Apart from the challenges of undergoing changing body and mind, certain socio-cultural challenges faced by adolescents. These are as follows-

**Socio-cultural Challenges faced by adolescents**



Fig 13.1: Socio-cultural Challenges faced by adolescents

It is unfortunate that even in modern times, gender roles may be stereotyped, which also affects how girls and boys are brought up. For example, boys are given nutritious food,

**Notes**

whereas such nutrition to adolescent girls is denied in some families. Similarly, some girls are made to undertake domestic work, whereas boys are asked to go out for family errands. Such stereotypes affect their self-esteem.

During adolescence, the need to be part of a peer group is high. Nevertheless, the timing for the appearance of adolescent characteristics may not be the same for all individuals of the same age group, which may cause anguish. Further, adolescence is the period when interpersonal relationships get established. As friendships develop, romantic relationships and heartbreaks also occur. Often adolescents stray into the path of wrongdoings such as substance abuse under peer pressure. Socio-economic disparities cause problems with parents. Therefore, it is desirable that adolescents establish positive and responsible relationships.

Parents, teachers, older siblings, or even friends can guide them regarding a safety net available when adolescents need it.

It becomes necessary for adolescents to be aware of hormonal changes that occur naturally and bring about physical changes and ultimately lead the body to gain sexual maturity. In addition, educational intervention from appropriate sources regarding these changes helps them become comfortable with the changes.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 13.1**

1. State the ages between which falls period of adolescence.
2. Mention two characteristic visible features that distinguish adolescent boys from adolescent girls.
3. Why should there be no gender discrimination during adolescence? Give two reasons.

**13.2 ISSUES AND CONCERNS OF GROWING UP HEALTH****13.2.1 Adequate Nutrition and Exercise during Adolescence.**

Adolescence is marked by rapid growth and development of the body and its parts. Individuals' genetic makeup, nutrition and exercise are determinants of growth in height, weight, healthy looks and energetic behaviour.

**Food:** Not only is the kind of food essential, but also eating it at appropriate intervals. A schedule needs to be maintained for nutritious breakfast, lunch and dinner. An erratic eating time for different meals may result in over or under-nutrition, which is detrimental to health. Adequate nutrition comes from a meal in which nutrients like protein, carbohydrates, fats, vitamins and minerals are in balanced proportion. A balanced diet benefits all in the following ways;

- proper physical growth;
- strong teeth;
- strong bones, well-developed muscles, and
- timely reproductive and sexual maturity

**Undernutrition** causes health problems in teenagers. As mentioned, in our predominantly patriarchal society, boys are served nutritious food in a relatively large quantity than girls in some families. This impacts the health of girls and women adversely. Undernourished girls not only lack proper physical growth but are also at risk of developing complications during pregnancy and childbirth.

**Overeating and an unbalanced diet** lead to obesity and nutritional disorders. Food items like noodles, pasta, chocolates, and sweets are delicious but rich in sugars and starch (Carbohydrates). Excess carbohydrates get converted into fat which accumulates in the body. That is why those people who regularly eat this so-called 'junk food' usually become fat and obese. Obesity leads to heart problems, and such people may experience difficulty in running and playing. Often obese people also may have low self-esteem.



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### ACTIVITY 13.3

#### Check if you are underweight, overweight or have a normal weight

Measure your height and weight and calculate your BMI or Body Mass Index

$$\text{BMI} = \frac{(\text{Weight in kilograms})}{(\text{Height in meters})^2}$$

Then check results from the table given below:

BMI	Category
<18.5	Underweight
18.5-24.9	Normal
25-29.9	Over weight
>30	Obese

The normal weight norm can be easily reached by having healthy habits of eating and exercise.

Common nutritional disorders that may affect some adolescents are:

**Notes**

**Anaemia:** Lack of intake of iron-rich food, e.g. green leafy vegetables

**Bulimia nervosa:** Periods of overeating and later vomiting due to fear of weight gain

**Anorexia:** Extreme dieting, fasting and over-exercising to prevent weight gain

**Obesity:** Excessively fat due to lack of protein and excess carbohydrates.

### 13.2.2 Importance of exercise and yoga

Exercise and yoga are important for good health, especially during adolescence. Exercise, whether through long and brisk walking or playing outdoor games or doing exercises regularly, is useful for:

- Stimulating the growth of muscles
- Keeping a check on body weight and
- Managing stress in our daily lives.

### 13.2.3 Teenage pregnancy

During adolescence, boys and girls become biologically capable of sexual activity. Due to the action of sex hormones, they not only mature sexually but also develop secondary sexual characteristics. However, adolescents are not mentally or psychologically mature enough to



Fig. 13.2: Cases of Anemia among girls

Early pregnancy thus exposes a girl to health risks such as anaemia and prolonged labour may damage the reproductive tract and, in a few cases, may even lead to death. Moreover, newborn to young and undernourished mothers are also of low birth weight and are prone to death.

The legal marriageable age in India is 18 for girls and 21 for boys, according to the Child Marriage restraint Act 1978. But early marriage is still a norm in many parts of India due to factors like

- gender discrimination
- caste system and dowry; and
- young married women are coerced into becoming pregnant to prove their fertility by elders in the family.

Adolescent marriage and pregnancy are social problems and can be a trauma for young girls. Their education gets disrupted, and the future becomes bleak. Motherhood is too much of a responsibility and does not give any joy as is expected. This causes emotional problems and adversely impacts normal family life.



### Notes



### INTEXT QUESTIONS 13.2

1. Name the two factors necessary for good health during adolescence.
2. Why is teenage pregnancy not good?
3. Name any two nutritional disorders likely to affect adolescents.

## 13.3 SUBSTANCE ABUSE, REPRODUCTIVE TRACK INFECTIONS AND SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS AND SEXUAL ABUSE

### 13.3.1 What is substance abuse?

Drugs are of common use as medicines for curing diseases and disorders. However, when drugs or substances are put to non-medical use, the practice becomes drug abuse or substance abuse.

Adolescents are more vulnerable to substance misuse as they are likely to experiment and are amenable to peer pressure. Substance abuse begins as a trial and then leads to phases of drug tolerance, then dependence and ultimately drug addiction, which is a threatening consequence.

The commonly abused substances are alcohol, tobacco, marijuana or Ganja, cough syrups, caffeine, cocaine, opiates, cannabis, inhalants and even solvents such as petrol, glue and correction ink which are not meant for oral consumption. In addition, hallucinogens such as





**Notes**

LSD (Lysergic Acid Diethylamide), PCP (Phencyclidine) etc., are also addictive.

An individual resorts to experiencing the effects of drug abuse either under peer pressure or for experimentation. However, once begin, they slowly become drug-tolerant and then drug dependent as their craving for the drug increases and ultimately become a victim of drug addiction, which affects their physical, mental and emotional health and social relationships of the addict. As a result, withdrawal from drugs becomes difficult. Certain drugs can be procured easily. They are legitimately manufactured and distributed through ethical chemists and druggists. Others are prohibited drugs whose manufacturing and distribution are prohibited except for approved or medical purposes.

Substance abuse harms pregnant women as both mother and foetus are harmed since the abused substance reaches the foetus through the mother’s blood.

You can see the general effects of drugs in the following figures

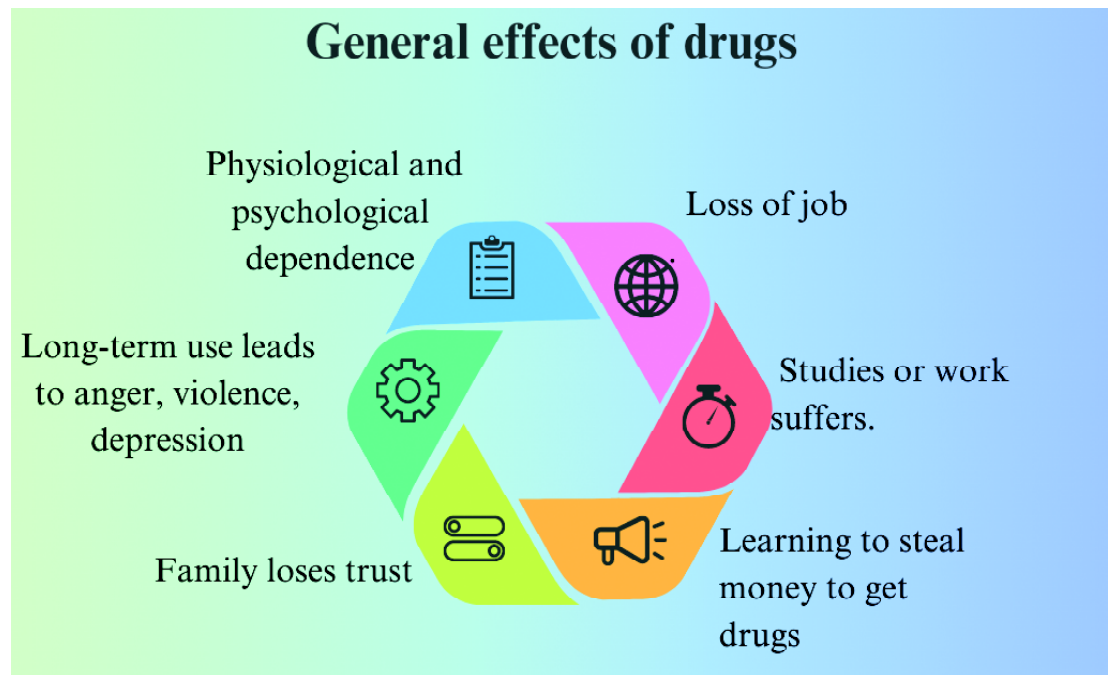


Fig. 13.3 General effects of drugs

**Prevention**

Drug abuse can be prevented by generating awareness about the consequences of drug abuse. Adolescents must be made aware of the need to keep themselves safe and away from substance abuse. They have to be prepared to Say No (to Drugs and to smoking tobacco)

To be aware and empowered to understand the harm done to the body



Engage in (socially) productive work so that there is no time inclination for drug abuse.

Have a safety net comprised of teachers, parents, relatives, counsellors, health professionals or other persons to whom they have access.

### 13.3.2 Unhealthy Impact of RTIs and STIs

RTI and STI are two abbreviations for Reproductive Tract Infections and Sexually Transmitted Infections such as Syphilis and Gonorrhoea.

#### Signs and Symptoms

The reproductive tract of women includes the fallopian tube, uterus, cervix and vagina. However, it is the vas deferens, testes, penis and urinogenital opening in men.

Initially, reproductive tract infection causes no symptoms, but as infection increases, symptoms appear, and medical advice to contain it becomes necessary.



#### Notes

Symptoms in Women	Symptoms in Men
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Pain in the lower abdomen</li> <li>● Pain and burning sensation during urination</li> <li>● Foul-smelling vaginal discharge</li> <li>● Irregular and painful periods</li> <li>● Painful intercourse</li> <li>● Inflammation and ulcers, and swelling in the vagina area</li> <li>● Fever in chronic cases</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Burning sensation and pain during urination</li> <li>● Tenderness in the groin</li> <li>● Lesions on penis</li> <li>● Itching in the genital area</li> <li>● Pus discharge from the urethra</li> <li>● Ulcers, rash and swelling around the genitals</li> <li>● Fever in acute cases</li> </ul>

Fig. 13.4 Symptoms of women and men

#### Transmission

Infections are due to microbes like certain fungi, bacteria, viruses, etc. The infective agents pass

1. from the infected partner to the uninfected partner during intercourse.
2. from an infected mother to her child before or after birth.
3. through blood transfusion, as in the case of the bacteria causing syphilis.
4. during unsafe abortion

**Notes**

5. due to a lack of menstrual hygiene.

**Prevention of infection can be ensured through -**

- No unprotected intercourse with an infected partner or a person of unknown credentials.
- Avoid multiple partners.
- No continuation of unprotected sex during treatment.
- Seeking specialist doctor's advice upon observation of the symptoms.
- Becoming aware of such infections and insisting on the use of condoms

Common STI  
Gonorrhea and Syphilis

STIs and RTIs increase  
the risk of getting HIV-  
AIDS by 8 to 10 times.

Early diagnosis and  
treatment are necessary

**Vulnerability**

- Young females with multiple sex partners
- Commercial sex workers and clients
- Sexually active adolescents
- Lack of awareness and ignorance about protected sex.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 13.3**

1. What are RTIs and STIs?
2. Name two symptoms each of infections in the reproductive tract in men and women which warrant a visit to a doctor.
3. State two ways of transmission of these infections and two methods of preventing them.

**13.4 ACCESS TO FOOD AND TIME TO REST DURING PREGNANCY AND AFTER CHILDBIRTH**

Pregnancy is a normal phenomenon in the life of a woman who wishes to have children. However, during pregnancy and soon after childbirth, it becomes necessary to pay attention to a nutritious diet, exercise and adequate rest.

Pregnancy is the time between conception and childbirth when a foetus grows and matures for approximately nine months and ten days in the mother's womb before birth. During this

period nutrition of the mother becomes more important as the foetus's growth depends on the mother's nutrition.

### 13.4.1 Access to Healthy Food

Access to healthy food and adequate rest is essential for all. Women are generally concerned about the health of their children and their husband and often neglect their health. However, now women are becoming more aware of the need for rest for their own and their baby's health and well-being and that being fit requires a proper diet.

#### Diet during pregnancy

There are no special diets and no food to be avoided during pregnancy, in general. The best is to eat a balanced diet both during the antenatal and postnatal periods. Listed below are certain 'do's and don'ts. A pregnant mother is required to consume

- i) a little more than her regular diet
- (ii) light meals in small quantities about 5 or 6 times a day
- (iii) fruits and green vegetables in adequate amounts. Green vegetables provide iron and folic acid. They also provide the fibre needed for easy bowel movement.
- (iv) a diet that includes carbohydrates (chapatis, rice etc.) and proteins (lentils, egg, meat, etc.), vitamins, minerals and roughage.
- (v) Milk or milk products as they provide protein, vitamin D, carbohydrates, fat and mineral such as calcium.

#### It is advisable to avoid

- (i) fried foods frequently and in large quantities
- (ii) too much-processed food, canned food and aerated drinks.
- (iii) too much salt and sugar
- (iv) too many beverages like tea and coffee.
- (v) too much spicy food.
- (vi) eating outside food too frequently because a light homemade meal is most easily digested, absorbed and assimilated.

It is crucial to seek the help of a physician to recommend a diet if the pregnant woman is underweight, ailing, or a teenager. It is important to seek the help of a physician to recommend a diet if the pregnant woman is underweight, ailing or a teenager.



#### Notes



**ACTIVITY 13.4**

Given below is a table showing the daily dietary requirement (balanced common Indian meal) for pregnant women. Fill in the columns.

Item	Nutrients	Effect on the body



*Notes*

**13.4.2 Important ingredients in the diet of pregnant women to avoid common problems**

Common complaints in pregnant women are bleeding gums, constipation and flatulence (gas formation in the digestive tract). Increasing levels of Estrogen hormone cause gums to swell and become softer. A diet with sufficient calcium and high-quality proteins prevents problems with gums and teeth.

Constipation happens as hormonal changes relax muscles, including the digestive tract. Consequently, bowel movement becomes less efficient. Fresh vegetables, salads, fresh and dried fruits like raisins, figs, and fruit juice without added sugar are important. Whole grains bread, and cereals increase the amount of fibre in the diet and ease bowel movement. Above all, a lot of water (6+8 glasses daily) and regular walks are helpful for digestion and egestion (elimination of solid waste).

Flatulence can be avoided by eating four to five small meals daily. Food should be chewed well. Spicy or greasy food and intake of coffee should be avoided.

Leg cramps often result from nutritional deficiencies or electrolyte imbalance and strain placed on the legs due to extra weight. Calcium and potassium intake becomes important and is taken care of by eating foods like bananas, cottage cheese (paneer), oranges, almonds, soya products and yoghurt (dahi).

**13.4.3 Nutritional health in pregnancy**

During pregnancy, more than ever, the mother-to-be needs to have a balanced diet. Our Indian thali is a balanced meal with chapatis or rice providing the carbohydrates, vegetables (sabzi) providing the vitamins and minerals and lentils providing protein and yoghurt (dahi) providing nutrients like calcium and other constituents of food.

The following table gives the important nutrients during pregnancy .

**Diet during Pregnancy**

No special diets, no food to avoid in general. The best is to eat a balanced diet which includes

**Protein:** These build and repair body tissues and form amino acids, enzymes and antibodies. Take at least 50 g of proteins in a day.

**Carbohydrates:** These are the major source of energy for the growth and maintenance of the body and everyday physical and mental work.

**Fats:** These provide energy; some fat is essential for protecting the body's vital organs, assisting them in regulating temperature and for good skin. But high-fat diets cause heart disease and obesity.

**Vitamins and minerals:** These help to regulate metabolism. Vitamins A, D, E and K are fat-soluble vitamins that can be stored in the body, but vitamins B-complex, and C are water-soluble and must be consumed daily.

**Minerals** are necessary for water balance, glandular secretions, and nerve and muscle responses. In addition, foods containing iron and calcium are essential during pregnancy as iron is needed for building Hb and Ca for bones and teeth.

Nutrients	Benefits	Sources
1. Vitamins B complex and Folic Acids	Prevents deficiencies and chances of congenital disabilities Folic acid keeps skin clear	Green leafy vegetables, peas, chickpeas, and kidney beans
2. Iron	Builds Blood: Important ingredient of Hemoglobin, helps to reduce tiredness and fatigue	Red Meats, fish, poultry, eggs, chickpeas, ground nut, nuts, green leafy vegetables, lentils,
3. Vitamin C	Good for gums – prevents bleeding	Cabbage, lemons, oranges
4. Zinc	Helps in the growth of cells and is important for building proteins, healing damaged tissues and support immune system	Meats, poultry, plant sources like legumes and whole grains
5. Calcium	Necessary for the formation of bones and teeth of a foetus; otherwise, it draws calcium from the mother's bones	Almonds, bananas, cottage Cheese (Paneer), soya products, curds

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6. Magnesium	Needed in a small amount to balance calcium	Pumpkin seeds, almonds, spinach, banana, whole milk
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**13.4.4 Moderate exercise, a nutrition-laden diet and plenty of rest are necessary for a healthy pregnancy. In addition, a pregnant woman should remain active and sleep well.**

After the baby is born, liquid diets like juices, milk with Sabudana cooked in it or watery khichdi help form and easily release milk during infant feeding.



### Notes



### INTEXT QUESTIONS 13.4

1. Why is access to proper nutrition and adequate rest important for pregnant women?
2. Name the nutrients required to build (i) bones and (ii) blood in the foetus. Mention one source of each.
3. How can you remove myths related to gender?

## 13.5 CULTURAL PRACTICES RELATED TO MATERNAL HEALTH AND REPRODUCTION

In some families in India, a pregnant woman receives a lot of care soon after conception. She is provided with adequate diet and rest and is not allowed to undertake heavy work like lifting, carrying heavy vessels or taking down heavy articles from a height. However, it is necessary for a woman to continue with daily household work that gives enough exercise.

In nuclear families, the women need to be aware of the requirements of pregnancy and take an adequate and nutritious diet, rest and exercise. Moreover, after childbirth, the diet stimulates mammary glands to produce enough milk.

**After Childbirth:** It is essential to feed the newborn infant the first exudation from the mother's nipples, called COLOSTRUM. Many ignorant elders do not allow this as they think that since it does not look like milk, it has to be discarded by the mother. Colostrum develops immunity in the newborn and should always be given to newborn babies.

In many households, the newborn and the mother are kept in a separate room or place to be away from the main house for 40 days to (a) avoid infections, (b) healing of mother's tender body parts (c) give her adequate rest and (d) time to bond with her baby. However, even if it is impossible to arrange a separate place, it is important to provide a safe, well-lit place for the mother and newborn babies.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 13.5**

1. What is Colostrum?
2. What is the cultural practice of 40 days of separation?

**13.6 MYTHS AND MISCONCEPTIONS RELATED TO GENDER**

Except for the reproductive organ system and reproductive physiology, the anatomy and physiology of a male and female are more or less the same, with minor differences. And yet there are many misconceptions related to the behaviour traits of the two genders. Some of them are given below:

**Misconceptions about traits which define Men**

1. Brave
2. Naturally dominant
3. More intelligent
4. Impatient
5. Clever and practical
6. More mature
7. Independent in thoughts and action

**Misconceptions about traits which define Women**

1. Always scared
2. Naturally submissive
3. Less intelligent
4. Patient
5. Foolish and sentimental
6. Less mature
7. Dependent

Both genders can be equally sensitive, caring, and courageous. Parents have to give daughters and sons an equal and enabling environment to grow up healthy.

**ACTIVITY 13.5**

Tick statements you think are right because of your experience. Then think of instances which disprove these. Record them

Men ought to be wage earners for the family

Women need to be homemakers only and stay home and look after the family

**Notes**





**Notes**

Men dictate terms	Women submit and obey
Men are aggressive by nature, so boys should be raised to be aggressive	Women are loving and forgiving by nature, so do not empower them
Men are more intelligent and logical	Women are less intelligent and more sentimental, so illogical
Real men never cry	Women cry at the slightest pretext
Men should marry less qualified women	Women should marry more qualified men

These stereotypes can be addressed by creating and promoting alternate views. For example, men can be soft and caring, or they can cry. Many women today take up successful careers and are leaders. Yet, they are emotional and take up challenging jobs.

**13.7 THE DECLINING SEX RATIO AND FEMALE FOETICIDE**

Performance for a male child affects several girls. In the past, female infanticide was practiced by a few communities. However, in the past few decades, sex-selective abortions have been carried out illegally. This may be due to desire to keep their family size small but ensure that they have sons.

**13.7.1 The Sliding Sex ratio continues**

For many years the sex ratio (the ratio between men and women) in India has been sliding down in favour of men.

**13.7.2 What is Sex ratio?**

The sex ratio refers to the number of females per 1000 males. As per the last available census data, the sex ratio in India is 943 females per 1,000 males (2011 Census Report)

The following table shows that the sex ratio has been declining since 1901.

**13.7.2 Reasons for ‘missing millions’**

By now, you know that in our patriarchal society, daughters are deemed a burden on the family. The constitution of India confers equal rights upon women and men. But women are killed even before they are born! This is called ‘Female Foeticide’ or sex-selective abortion.



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**Notes****Female Foeticide**

Foetus is the 'embryo', or the developing young one in a mother's womb. Technology such as Amniocentesis and Chorionic villi testing permits the foetus to be recognised as male or female. Though tests for determining the sex of an unborn child are banned in India, such detections are carried on secretly, and a female foetus is aborted. Again, the abortion or medical termination of pregnancy Act was introduced in 1971, but only under medically approved conditions. And still, illegally female foetuses are aborted in India.

**Female infanticide**

It is strange that even after so many decades of independence, data shows that female infanticide is a reality even today in several states. The highest rate of under-5 mortality rate (U5MR) has been recorded for Northern India. The factor seen as responsible for the death of 0-4-year-old girls are:

- (i) gender bias and inequality
- (ii) low economic development
- (iii) high fertility
- (iv) preference for sons

Rural areas are worst affected due to low levels of education, high population densities, high fertility, and low socio-economic development. Apart from these factors, many deaths of females under five years of age (U5MR) (55 males and 66 females in rural and 51 males and 59 females in urban India in 2011) are due to unwanted childbearing and neglect thereafter.

Prevention of skewed sex ratio due to female foeticide and infanticide is possible if

- (a) Practitioners of surreptitious prenatal sex selection are severely punished
- (b) Gender discrimination is reduced by imparting awareness.
- (c) Girls and women are encouraged to be economically independent
- (d) All girls are educated so that preference for sons is diminished
- (e) Various acts favouring women are strictly implemented.
- (f) Cases against assaulters are disposed of speedily, and the guilty is adequately punished.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 13.7**

1. What is sex ratio?
2. Give any two reasons for lesser number of girls than boys in India.
3. Suggest two ways of preventing the decline in the sex ratio.

**Notes****13.8 IMPORTANCE OF VISIBLE SOCIAL CHANGE****Women empowerment**

Society, by and large, dictates the roles of two genders, and many succumb to the societal norm though these norms vary from society to society. But these role stereotypes are often discriminatory, and that is why gender studies has become a discipline in itself. Education, employment, and freedom to take decisions indicate women's empowerment.

However, we find today an erosion of stereotypes not only in attire or dresses but also in household work and even vocations and professions. In earlier times, girls/women were not allowed to study much and were married off early. Such was the situation in India's early few decades of the twentieth century. But since then, most parents have been eager to send their daughters to school and college. As a result, many women today are educated and empowered. We have had women leaders as Prime Ministers of the century. As heads of corporate business houses and banks, aircraft flying domains are visible in fields such as wildlife photography. These domains are not untouched by women any longer.

However, since women have been coming out to study or work now, there are many violations of socially accepted norms. The problematic issues of violence occur in many forms, sexual assaults such as sexual abuse and rape; violent assaults like throwing acid, burning or blinding; traumatic experiences of incest and even dowry deaths and murder. Men usually carry out these heinous acts as revenge for refusal to sexually advance or under the influence of alcohol or as an outburst of general frustration. In our country, because of the caste system, there is a horrendous act of honour killing of couples marrying out of the caste. Such acts either kill or cause physical and psychological damage, requiring strict legislation and awareness towards existing laws permitting inter-caste and interreligious marriage in India.

**13.9 IMPACT ON MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH OF MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN LIVING AS UNEQUAL**

For thousands of years, the society has been structured so that women remain conventionally bound to fulfil certain roles and obligations. Women's roles are perceived as less important

than those of men. Men thus dominate over women. When the dominant group maltreats the subordinate group, social problems arise. A need arises to advocate a 'Power Balance' between the two genders. The conflict between men and women still exists though the Constitution of India provides equality for men and women, including voting rights since independence.

The gender conflict is considerable because men, as bread earners, have control over wealth and finances and consequently control over resources, and women are dependent on men. This hold on finances by men in households often causes gender conflict among couples. But conflict, for the same reason, exists between employer and employee, the rich and the poor. In addition, there can be a conflict between generations which though not of much consequence in the west, has relevance in Asian societies where the 'joint family' system still exists.



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### Notes

#### 13.9.1 The Gender Conflict

The conflict between man and woman has many underlying reasons. Though both partners together need to raise a family, more often than not, the task of looking after daily household tasks and taking care of infants is delegated to the woman. Men are supposed to go out and earn money to run the household. However, in modern times when many women are educated, they go out to work and earn and do cooking, cleaning, washing and bringing up children. Certainly, however, in some households, men lend a helping hand to the women in domestic chores and child care.

#### 13.9.2 Factors leading to gender conflict

There are various reasons why women are still subjugated by men. This leads to tensions and conflict in the family and society. The reasons for gender conflict where it exists are as follows:

- Gender discrimination and gender stereotypes.
- Patrilineal society and Patriarchy
- Poverty and discrimination
- Dowry system
- Domestic violence
- Literacy and lack of women's rights

**Gender discrimination and poverty:** In many families, especially in rural areas, a girl suffers discrimination right from birth. The birth of a girl is not celebrated, but there is a lot of jubilation when a boy is born. As she grows up, the brother is given better food, much more love and much less family responsibility. He is also sent to a better, more expensive school than his sister.




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**Notes**

Girls are married off early in age, even before completing their education. In low-income families, girls are married to widowers or older men so that no dowry is needed. The wife often has no say in the spacing of childbirths. Infertile women are cursed and polarised, and even if the husband has a problem, she is blamed as a ‘barren woman’ and not welcome to participate in wedding rituals. The enlightened families, however, get medical done for both men and women. But even reproductive technologies like intrafallopian transfer of zygote or GIFT and ZIFT primarily need to be done on women because they bear the developing embryo.

In rural areas, woman take food for the men working in fields and fetch water and fuel like dry sticks and wood from the forest. As a result, they suffer not only the drudgery but also bear the weight of water or fuel as they carry them on their heads or in arms and walk long distances.

### Patrilineal society and Patriarchy

- Except in some communities in Kerala and Nagaland and among certain tribes, Indian society is patriarchal, i.e. authority is with the males. Children take the father’s surname, and sons continue the family line. A woman changes her maiden name upon getting married and bears the name of her spouse’s family.
- Even though the law provides for an equal share in the parental property and assets, daughters are often not given their due. They are also exploited by not being given the right to hold or dispose the property. Brothers often deprive the sisters of ancestral property, leaving them to fight for their rights at the cost of losing the brother-sister bond.
- In agriculture and labor-intensive construction-related jobs, wages of men and women vary, and women may be paid even less than the minimum wages prescribed by the Government. Poverty and illiteracy force women to refrain from fighting for their rights.

**Dowry:** In a patriarchal society, a girl leaves her parental house to live with the in-laws. The parental family gives her gifts as she leaves her parental home. But when the husband and his family demand money and expensive gifts from the girl’s family, it becomes ‘dowry’. The temptation does not stop after the wedding, and the demand for dowry may even lead to domestic violence on the girl and even her death. The Dowry Prohibition Act is to prevent such violence against women.

### 13.9.3 Impact of gender inequality on men, women and children

We have read in the earlier section about gender dynamics and family conflicts partially. Such conflict ruins the entire family. Men, if confronted by their wives, resort to domestic violence. Often an everyday altercation with the wife affects work at the workplace. On the other hand, the wife may go into depression and even vent her concealed anger on the children. As a

result, the children grow up unhappy. The atmosphere in the home keeps away adolescent children who may even resort to the use of drugs or other misdoings.

Since independence, the Government made arrangements for girls to go to school. Recently the Government has made it mandatory for all schools to have separate toilets for girls, both in schools situated in urban and rural areas. With education, girls are becoming increasingly aware and shall make better mothers and take informed decisions. Many laws on gender equality exist in India. The provision to improve women's status started even before India became free, and new laws are enacted as per the emerging needs of the society to empower women and enhance gender equality.

1829: Prohibition of Sati (Raja Ram Mohan Roy)

The Hindu widow Remarriage Act, 1856

The child marriage Act, 1929

The Hindu marriage Act, 1955

The Hindu Succession Act, 1956

- Protection of women from domestic violence Act, 2005
- Sexual harassment of women at workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redrenal) Act, 2013 Dowry prohibition Act, 1961



### INTEXT QUESTIONS 13.9

1. Explain in a sentence or two the following terms.
  - (i) Female Foeticide
  - (ii) Gender Conflict
2. Mention any three acts/laws in our country favouring women.
3. What is dowry? Why has it been banned through an act?



### WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT

- Physical, mental and emotional changes during puberty and adolescence.
- Puberty is the stage in life which begins at age ten and merges with the stage termed



### Notes



### Notes

adolescence. In girls, puberty begins with breast development and the onset of menstruation at adolescence. Boys of the same age begin to grow a moustache and have cracked voices. Both show growth spurt with increased height, muscle strength and brain size. Apart from physical changes, adolescents build up friendships and exceptional bonds.

- All the above changes that occur are due to hormonal changes.
- During adolescence impact of a peer group is high, and important for adolescents to make informed choices about friends and acquaintances.
- Adolescents may fall prey to temptations like substance abuse, and curiosity about sexual changes may lead to sexual abuse due to ignorance. Adolescents have to learn to say No to undue advances and distinguish between a good and a bad touch.
- Substance abuse over consumption of intoxicating substances for feeling good and not as a medicine and then becoming tolerant to it and ultimately addicted to it. Commonly abused substances are Amphetamines, Barbiturates, Codein, Cough syrup etc. The effects of continuous drug abuse lead to a total breakdown of normal life.
- A woman requires normal health and fitness for herself and the growing foetus during pregnancy and childbirth. The diet should include food items which provide protein, carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals to prevent commonly occurring problems.
- The sex ratio is the number of girls per 1000 boys. In our country, the sex ratio has been in favour of males, but the scenario is changing now.
- There is, however, a social change now in attire, diet, better transport and communication facilities, and above all, more and more women are getting educated and employed. Many women are in professions not taken up by women 20-30 years ago.
- Gender conflict is still there and impacts men, women and children.



### TERMINAL EXERCISE

1. Define puberty and adolescence and list three changes in adolescence which are different in boys and girls. Add a note on challenges faced by girls during adolescence.
2. Explain these terms: (i) substance abuse (ii) Sexual abuse (iii) RTI and STI
3. List the detrimental effects of drug abuse.



4. Give an account of the diet necessary during pregnancy and after childbirth.
5. What is the sex ratio? State reasons for a declined sex ratio in our country and how it may be rectified.
6. What is meant by social change in society? Mention five changes you have noticed.



### ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS



#### Notes

#### 13.1

1. World Health Organization (WHO) defines adolescence as ages between 10-19 years.
2. Physical differences such as facial hair in adolescent boys and development of breasts in girls are distinguishing features between adolescent boys and girls.
3. Gender discrimination puts the girls at a disadvantage and may hinder their physical and mental development. Gender stereotypes also adversely impact the self-esteem of adolescents.

#### 13.2

1. Proper and adequate nutrition along with physical exercise are the two factors necessary for good health during adolescence
2. Teenagers are not mentally or psychologically mature enough to shoulder the responsibilities of parenthood. Also teenage girl's uterus is still developing and a pregnancy may expose them to health risks like anemia and prolonged labor which may damage the reproductive tract.
3. Bulimia nervosa: Periods of overeating and later vomiting due to fear of weight gain and Anorexia: Extreme dieting, fasting and over-exercising to prevent weight gain

#### 13.3

1. RTI and STI are two abbreviations for Reproductive Tract Infection and Sexually Transmitted Infections such as Syphilis and Gonorrhoea.
2. For women, symptoms like pain and burning sensation during urination and foul-smelling vaginal discharge warrant a visit to the doctor. For men also, burning

**Notes**

sensation and pain during urination along with tenderness in the groin should be checked with doctor.

3. Infections can be transferred through from the infected partner to the uninfected partner during intercourse and from an infected mother to her child before or after birth. Using proper protection and avoiding multiple partners are two ways of preventing them.

**13.4**

1. Proper nutrition and rest are important for pregnant women to safe and healthy development of foetus because the growth of foetus depends on mother's nutritional status and physical condition.
2.
  - i) Nutrient to build bones in calcium. It is found in milk and milk products like cottage cheese (paneer)
  - ii) Iron is important for hemoglobin (blood) and is found in green leafy vegetables.
3. Myths related to gender are not easy to remove and require that we work on them continuously by avoiding gender discrimination and eliminating ill-practices like female foeticide, child marriage, dowry etc. Another way to remove myths related to gender is to encourage parents to educate their girls while giving a loving, nurturing and safe environment to their children to explore their personalities.

**13.5**

1. Colostrum is the first exudation from mother's nipples which is extremely important for newborns as it gives them immunity.
2. Many cultures practice 40days of separation where the mother and her newborn are kept in a separate room to avoid infections, and give adequate rest to the mother for healing and time to bond with her child.

**13.6**

1. There are several behavioral misconceptions related to the two genders some of which prescribe that men are brave while women are always scared, men are naturally dominant while women are naturally submissive, men are practical while

women are sentimental. However, these misconceptions need to be corrected as both genders can be sensitive and courageous.

### 13.7

1. Sex ratio refers to the number of females per 1000 males in a given population.
2. Preference for son and associated female foeticide lead to lesser number of girls than boys in India.
3. Strict punishment for those who practice in female foeticide and improving the status of women through education and employment can prevent decline in sex ratio.



### Notes

### 13.8

1. The three things that indicate women empowerment are education, empowerment and agency to take independent decisions.
2. Gender bias and inequality, low economic development, high fertility and preference for sons are some of the factors that contribute to female infanticide
3. Skewed sex-ratio can be improved by reducing gender discrimination against women and girls, improving girls education so that preference for son is diminished and strictly punishing those engaged in female foeticide and infanticide.

### 13.9

1.
  - i. Female Foeticide is the practice of terminating unborn female foetus due to preference for a male child
  - ii. Gender Conflict occurs due to culturally defined roles of men and women, where men due to being chief wage earners control the finances and women become dependent on them. Patriarchy, gender discrimination and stereotypes are some of the reasons for gender conflict in family and society.
2. Three laws/ acts in our country favouring women are:
  - a) The Hindu widow remmarriage Act, 1856 The Hindu succession Act, 1956



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*Notes*

- b) Hindu Succession Act on inheritance right to sons and daughters (1956), and
  - c) Anti-dowry prohibition Act, 1961
3. When the groom and his family demand money and gifts from the bride's family as a part of marriage it is called dowry. This temptation is one of the ills of patriarchy and has often lead to violence against women. Hence, dowry has been banned in India through the Anti-dowry Act of 1976.