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**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Definition Adolescent pregnancy is pregnancy in girls age 19 years or younger. **Fact points** Pregnancy in adolescents is not uncommon. Pregnancy occurs when a sperm meets an egg. Signs and symptoms of pregnancy are history of recent sexual intercourse, a missed period, tenderness of breasts, a feeling of wanting to vomit, feeling very tired and more frequent need to urinate. Many factors contribute to adolescent pregnancy. These are biological, social, cultural, changing circumstances of young people, economic and service delivery factors. Many adolescents get pregnant by mistake.

One (1) in eight (8) pregnancies is to an adolescent and 13% of all births are to adolescents) Adolescents suffer more medical problems than adult women because of their age, emotional state, economic status and the social environment. Many of the complications delivery have worse outcomes in adolescents. Adolescents below the age of 15 years are more likely to experience spontaneous abortion and still birth. Seeking skilled attendance when pregnancy occurs is the best step to take for safe maternity care for mother and baby.

If a girl becomes pregnant, she must accept the situation and cope with it. She should seek counseling from an appropriate source. She must apologize for the mistake to parents/guardians through respectable people including relations. She must seek for support. She must seek medical attention throughout the period of pregnancy, labor and delivery. Note that children give pleasure, love and status and help a family to prosper. Having children is an important part of our lives. However, it is important to wait and have

children by choice so that mothers, fathers and children are healthy and live good lives.

Babies born to adolescents have higher chances of illnesses and deaths associated with pregnancy, labor and delivery and post part periods.

Pregnancy is especially risky for adolescent girls because their bodies have not fully matured and so may. It is important for the adolescent girl to get proper care during pregnancy. It is advisable to deliver in a hospital where it is better equipped to manage complications. The adolescent needs a lot of social and economic support for positive pregnancy outcomes.

Sometimes adolescents want to end the pregnancy because of the shame attached to it, want to continue with school or learn trade, for lack of financial and social support and not ready to be a parent. Unsafe abortion has serious complications. The best way to avoid pregnancy is not to have sex. Abstinence is 100% safe. In case of unprotected sex, seek emergency contraception. Emergency contraception can prevent pregnancy if sought within 72 hours of unprotected sex. Emergency contraception can be procured at the health facility or pharmacy. Pregnancy takes two people thus a male and a female.

Boys and older men bear equal responsibility for preventing pregnancy. When pregnancy occurs, both the male and the female need to be involved in decision making as to keeping the pregnancy safe or seeking for safe termination if permitted under Shania's law on abortion. Remember every pregnancy carries some risk. Keeping the pregnancy with good care minimizes risks of the pregnancy for both mother and baby. Safe termination of pregnancy in

whatever form also carries some risks including death. Remember pregnancy can happen the first time a female has unprotected sex.

Take Home Messages Adolescent pregnancy occurs when an adolescent girl has unprotected sex. The younger an adolescent is, the greater the health risks and other consequences. Adolescent pregnancy carries risks for both mother and baby. The Ghanaian society frowns on adolescent pregnancy especially when it is outside marriage (pre marital). For some girls, pregnancy means the end of formal education and training. A girl's choice of career and opportunities for future marriage may change. Early marriage may result so that no stigma of illegitimacy is faced by mother and baby.

Child rearing problems may lead to child neglect and abuse. Girls may resort to commercial sex work which has a higher risk for STIs including HIV, genital herpes, gonorrhea, syphilis, and substance use. May lead to a loss of certain opportunities if parents/guardians over react. Premature marriages when arranged are usually unstable and end in divorce. A boy is often ill prepared to raise a child which may lead to childbearing problems such as neglect and abuse. Adolescent pregnancy is highly avoidable for both boys and girls. Few boys imagine the possibility of becoming fathers when they are having sex.

Sexually active boys should be extremely responsible and careful. Do not rely on the calendar method for adolescent girls for there are no safe days for them. If a boy becomes a father by chance or unexpectedly, he must accept the responsibility for his actions. He must think like a responsible father. The boy must discuss how the two can help each other to cope with the situation. The boy must be open with his parents/guardians, apologize for the mistake

and ask for help from them and other relations. The boy must take steps not to repeat a pregnancy either with the same girl or others. The boy must not run away.