Sexual Health

Sexual health is essential to an individual's physical, emotional and mental well-being and spans a wide range of issues related to sex and sexuality.

According to the World Health Organization, sexual health supports overall health and is integral to the social and economic development of communities and countries. The achievement of sexual health is contingent on the availability of factual and comprehensive information and resources about sexuality that support healthy behaviors, access to comprehensive sexual health and reproductive care, and living environments that support and promote positive and respectful approaches to sexuality and sexual relationships.

In addition, sexual health requires that people have the right to engage in sexual experiences that are free of coercion, discrimination, abuse and violence as well as the freedom to express their sexual orientation and gender identity without fear of negative consequences. Some issues that can hinder sexual health include conditions such as sexually transmitted infections and sexual dysfunction, unintended pregnancy, abortion, violence and harmful practices, such as sex trafficking and female genital mutilation.

Practicing safer sex is key to sexual health. Safer sex techniques include the use of condoms, contraceptive devices or medications, the use of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) for the prevention of HIV and if HIV-positive, maintaining an undetectable viral load in order to avoid passing on the virus to others. The best way for people to decide what best works for them is by communicating openly with their partners and health care providers based on their circumstances, lifestyle and goals.

For those experiencing conditions such as erectile dysfunction or hormonal issues that decrease libido, cause painful sex or disrupt sexual activities in other ways, treatments to restore sexual health are available. Although these issues may be difficult to discuss with a doctor, an honest conversation is necessary to arrive at the appropriate solution to the problem in question.

Sexual health differs from person to person, as it is inextricably linked with identity and behavior. However, to become sexually healthy, individuals must take control of their physical and reproductive wellness and prioritize their safety, happiness, satisfaction and emotional well-being in intimate relationships.

How people perceive their bodies plays an important role in sexual health. A positive body image and self-acceptance are key to achieving sexual wellness and overall good health. But it's also

important to note that sexual health may be affected by circumstances we encounter as we age, such as changes the body undergoes. Taking care of ourselves by eating healthfully, staying active, getting quality rest and engaging in positive and supportive sexual encounters and relationships with others can help support sexual health.

Sexuality is an essential part of being human, and maintaining sexual health contributes to individual well-being and healthy relationships between partners. However, sexual health isn’t just about preventing diseases and unplanned pregnancies. Good sexual health means valuing ourselves and others, building positive relationships and taking care of our bodies.

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