

### 3. Reproductive Tract Infections (RTIs) and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)

#### Objective of the session

By the end of the session, the ASHA will learn about:

- Understand RTI/STI and HIV/AIDS<sup>3</sup>; prevention, management and treatment.
- Be able to counsel women on protection from RTI/STI and HIV/AIDS.
- Be able to guide women to appropriate facilities for testing and treatment.

#### Is white discharge normal?

- Some amount of white discharge is normal. It is the vagina's way of cleansing itself.
- The amount of discharge varies during different phases of the menstrual cycle. During the fertile period it is wet and slippery, and clear.
- During pregnancy, the discharge increases in amount.
- Discharge that is bad smelling (smell of menstrual blood, fishy odour), white lumpy discharge (curd, coloured greenish, yellowish, reddish, bloody), accompanied by itching, a rash, sores, burning urination, and lower abdominal pain, pain during intercourse is indicative of RTI or STI.
- A change in colour and odour is an alert to the women of a possible infection. In addition, if there is itching or burning, there is high possibility of an infection.
- Discharge is also indicative of certain hormonal problems or even cancer.

#### What are STIs?

STIs are infections that are passed from an infected person to another during sexual intercourse. Mothers can pass on STIs to babies during the delivery process.

Most STIs are RTIs. However a few like Hepatitis-B and HIV are STIs but not RTIs. Many Reproductive Tract Infections are Sexually Transmitted Infections. However many other Reproductive Tract Infections are contracted by other means e.g. post childbirth or abortion or from GI infections.

#### Why are STIs serious problem for women?

- Because the infected semen stays longer inside a women's body.
- The entire genital tract in women is hidden, therefore, the infection stays inside for a longer time and is silent for longer.

<sup>3</sup>This section has also been covered in Book 3. Thus, this session is expected to serve as a refresher course.

