**Teacher calls for early sex education**

By JOY WANJA

A reproductive health researcher is pushing for early sex education to help curb transmission of sexually transmitted infections and HIV/Aids among adolescents.

The lead researcher in a study released at a Kenya Medical Training College (KMTC) conference, Ms Mary Nyambok, on Tuesday said unprotected sex places a many adolescents at risk of contracting these infections.

In view of this, she said sex talk should be introduced to this vulnerable group early. “We cannot deny that youngsters are having sex,” Ms Nyambok told the Daily Nation on the sidelines of the three-day conference in Nairobi.

In the study, 19 per cent of adolescents reported never having used condoms, 15 per cent rarely used them and 32 per cent always used them.

“Being open about the physical and biological changes in their body and answering their questions honestly will cultivate a culture of trust and openness,” Ms Nyambok who is a biology and maths teacher at Nairobi school said.

In her study, she discovered that adolescents found it difficult to purchase condoms due to embarrassment. “We get embarrassed buying condoms from the shops as the owners can report us to our parents or they just look at us curiously,” one of the adolescents from a mixed day school said.

“The ones (condoms) from the shopping centre are expensive to obtain and even some shopkeepers are so harsh that you cannot approach them to give you on credit,” one of the young people interviewed told the researchers.

Another study released at the conference showed that sexual exposure among adolescent girls in Mosocho, Kisii Central District, was found to be at 68 per cent.

According to Ms Alice Ongera, the lead researcher in the study, adolescent sexuality is a public health concern as more than half of the new infections occur among young people aged 15 to 24 years.

“In Kenya, 44 per cent of adolescents aged 15 to 19 years have had sex,” said Ms Ongera, a lecturer at KMTC.