

**Ethics and Values**  
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**Lecture – 28**  
**Peer Pressure**

Hello friends. Welcome back to our lectures on ethics and values. I think this is the only course where we have topics of discussion ranging from philosophical debates to issues like harassment, addiction, cyber-crime, corruption, drug abuse etc. In the previous lecture, we discussed some of the social issues like corruption, white collar crimes, unfair trade practices and so on. So, now we are moving forward with topics which are related to addiction and health. Now, you might be thinking, is it required to discuss and include such topics in a course? Or is there anything at all to study over here? You know, educational institutions and family are important social units which anchor the health and well-being of all individuals. Educational institutions have the prime responsibility to promote and optimize the physical, social and also the mental health of students. The emerging challenges have necessitated that they too shift the focus to the psychosocial needs of students and take care of the overall wellbeing. Mental health and psychosocial wellbeing are one of the most neglected areas in our country. Our module 3 is titled as Addiction and health. So what is this health? Is it only the physical health? What do you think? The World Health Organisation definition of health includes physical, social, spiritual and mental health, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

The health of people in India is changing due to socio-demographic and epidemiological transition. Mental disorders affect everyone, irrespective of age, gender, residence and living standards, even though some groups are at a higher risk for certain illnesses; only the impact varies. For example, mental disorders among children, depression among pregnant mothers, and dementia among the elderly are well known. You might also be aware of the severe stress and trauma undergone by people during the pandemic period. How there was a complete panic situation in some of the states in the country? Whenever we open news channel or our mobile phones, we were receiving information about the pandemic. Some may be true whereas some were hoax. But sometimes so much exposure to information can also drag us into stress and affect our health. Growing evidence from research has demonstrated a close association of mental disorders as precursors or risk factors or consequences of a wide range of acute and chronic conditions. For example, depression and cancer are known to coexist, while anxiety disorders are linked to the occurrence of cardiovascular disorders. Non-recognition of associated mental health problems often leads to delayed recognition and recovery.

Mental disorders can also be caused by a complex interaction of biological, social, environmental, cultural and economic factors. In countries like India, the social determinants of health like employment, education, living standards, environment, access, equity and others contribute significantly to both cause and recovery.

Persons with mental disorders are also known to be associated with a wide range of social and societal problems if their illness is unrecognised or inappropriately managed. Some mental health conditions are implicated not only in lower productivity and earning potential, but also in a number of antisocial behaviours, crime, homelessness, domestic violence, alcohol and drug use .

Now, why is it required to discuss about mental health at this juncture of your life? What is the speciality of this age that you people are in? And what is this stage of your life known as? Yes, you got it right. Adolescence!!

Adolescence is a transitional stage of physical and mental human development that occurs between childhood and adulthood. As adolescents you may experience increased independence allowed by the parents or legal guardians with relatively lesser supervision. This transition period is a stage where people face frequent mood changes. They reflect feelings of anger, happiness, sadness, fear, guilt, shame, and love. During this age, social skills are required for having positive and healthy relationships with others, including people of the opposite sex. Adolescence is also a stage when you make certain decisions which may impact the rest of your lives. For example, adolescents have to decide about the typical courses or stream that they have to opt for in the high school, they have to decide about after school activities that they must participate in and which peer group to join and so on. They begin to make future educational and occupational plans with the help of their teachers and parents as well as with their peers and try to implement these plans through secondary school course work and out of school vocational and volunteer activities.

Now, who are these peers?

Peers are individuals with whom we identify ourselves. Our peers are our friends and those people close to us with whom we spend most of our time and share common interests and feelings. Peers are our like-minded friends and companions. As we grow older and become more independent, our peers play a greater role in our lives, even more than our parents and siblings. They are like our extended family. Among peers there can be friendship and acceptance. We can share anything with them which in turn, help us in building bonds. So, in very simple terms we can say that a peer group is a group of people of approximately the same age, social status and interest.

Peer relationships play an important and formative role in the development of social skills in children. Peer interactions as well as peer conflicts are necessary conditions in which a child learns to accept the point of view of another. Through this process, children begin to engage in social behaviour which involves team work, co-operation, discussion and planning with others. The greater the participation in a social group, the more developed are their social skills and through this social interaction, a child begins to understand his own behaviour from the point of view of others. Well, now how does peer relationship become peer pressure?

Do you remember the time when you were young? When you wanted to do exactly as your friends from the same age group did? You wanted the same toy, or bicycle, wanted the same

dress or may be join the same club and go to the same restaurant. To put it simply, this is peer influence.

Such influence can bring about changes in that individual's attitude or behaviour to fit into that group. And as you know it is very natural for all individuals to identify with, and compare themselves to the people with whom they interact. In the process they influence and get influenced by each other. Friends influence us in many ways - the way we dress, think, ' take decisions, buy things etc.

Now, my question to you is. What will happen to this peer influence when the child grows?

You have three options.

1. It will decrease with age.
2. It will not affect when they grow
3. It will increase until they truly form an adult identity

So, did you get the answer? Yes, the level of peer influence generally increases as children grow and as the need to conform grows - before they truly form an adult identity. The resistance to peer influence declines as children gain independence from the family. So option 3 is the right answer.

With more social interactions outside the home and more awareness of others, the influence of peer increases and sometimes the problem arises when this influence gets transformed into peer pressure. Peer Pressure occurs when an individual experiences implied or expressed persuasion to adopt similar values, beliefs and goals or to participate in the same activities as those in the peer group.

Peer Pressure exists for all ages - A six year old boy insists that his mother takes him to the - toy shop immediately, to buy him the latest toy or gadget or the sports bike because 'his friends' have it. When the mother says 'No' he might show a temper tantrum. A ten year old girl wears a dress once to a party and then refuses to wear it again because she thinks that 'her friends' might notice it and make fun of her. Teenage boys do work out in gyms to have a 'perfect body' like the school heroes and girls starve themselves to look like the most attractive girl at school. They do it to confirm.

Peer pressure peaks during adolescence, but it never entirely disappears. Even adults feel the pressure to conform in order to belong to a desired group and this can be in the place of work, neighbourhood or even in the family. As adults we can find a rational balance between accepting group beliefs and holding on to our own individuality.

But pre-teens and teenagers face many challenges related to conformity and peer pressure. They are pulled in two different directions - the desire to be seen as an individual and the desire to belong to a group where they feel secure and accepted.

The result is that often children, especially teens, ignore the views of family and society in general, and feel pressure to conform to the values of their peer group. Well this was about peer pressure. But our discussion on peer pressure is still not over as in the coming lectures we will understand the types of peer pressure. Until then, bye and take care.

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**Lecture – 29**  
**Types of Peer Pressure**

Hello everyone. Welcome back. I hope you might remember that we were discussing about peer pressure. Now, we know the meaning of peer pressure. What do you think could be the impact of peer pressure? Is it only negative or do we also have positive impacts of peer pressure.

There are basically four types of peer pressure. The first category of peer pressure occurs in a one-on-one environment and it is known as direct peer pressure. It is normally behaviour centric. Examples of these kinds of behaviour would be when a teenager hands another teen an alcoholic drink, or makes a sexual advance, or looks at another student's paper during a test. So, here the other person is put in a position of having to make an on-the-spot decision. This form of peer pressure can happen when a teenager asks, suggests, persuades or otherwise directs another to engage in a specific behaviour. Yes, in such a situation, there are chances that the recipient of the influence may adhere to his or her core values and beliefs or may even go along with the pressure of the group if the recipient lacks strong decision making skills.

Next, we have indirect peer pressure. This is a form of unspoken peer pressure where a person is exposed to the actions of one or more peers and is left to choose whether they want to follow along. This could take the form of fashion choices, personal interactions or 'joining' types of behaviour (clubs, cliques, teams, etc.). I won't say only teenagers but also sometimes adults find it difficult to control the impulse. You know, indirect peer pressure is subtle but can still exert a strong influence on an impressionable young person. We can have another example for this like if a teenager learns that the popular kids' birthday parties include alcohol or drugs, that indirect pressure may prompt him/her to experiment this as a way to gain acceptance.

Next, the next form of peer pressure is negative peer pressure. As the name clearly explains, this form of peer pressure has a negative impact on the recipient. Asking someone or may be a teenager to engage in behaviour that is against their moral code or family values is a type of negative peer pressure. Here, again people are put in a position where either they can follow the influencer or they can simply walk away. Sometimes people take part in such dreadful situation where they force themselves against their own morals only to gain acceptance in their peer group. Well, even adults of my age and much older can also fall into negative peer pressure, but mostly adults find some excuses and escape from such situation whereas young people often lack the skills to come up with an excuse or reason to say no to negative peer pressure.

Now before we understand the next form of peer pressure, let's have a quick reflection spot.

Read the case and identify the peer pressure exerted.

Suppose you and your friends are attending Ethics and values course. You have learned that it's a class where you need to learn diverse topics. There are a lot of topics to cover and the teacher gives tough quizzes every week. One day you hear your friends talking about an upcoming test. One of them groans, "What's the point of learning this course? And its not going to help us out and we are getting many quizzes as part of it. After all, we going to be engineers and not philosophers, then why bother to spend time on this?" "I think it's interesting," someone else says. "It is a lot of homework and lengthy exercises." "Why don't we just do it together while we're hanging out? It'll be easier to work together, and we can share notes and divide topics among ourselves to get extra details regarding the topics. In this way, we can help each other and prepare for the assessments."

Everyone agrees, this sounds like a great idea.

Now, do you see any form of pressure? Is it negative? Is it direct or indirect? Yes it is direct peer pressure but it's not negative in nature. As I said before, it is not necessary that peer pressure only has a negative impact whereas it also has a positive side to it. The dynamics within a group can become positive if the behaviours of its members are healthy, age-appropriate and socially acceptable. For instance, if a peer group wants to make good grades, a young teen can be positively influenced to study. If members of the football team of a college take a pledge to abstain from drinking alcohol to focus on staying healthy and having a winning season, other students may adopt the same behaviour. You might have heard about peer leader programme where some students are chosen as peer leaders and are trained to participate in counselling, support groups, drug or violence prevention programmes and other such community programmes where students act as positive role models for other students. You know, schools promote student participation in student groups like NSS, NCC, Scouts and Guides etc. You know, due to positive peer pressures students can be motivated to join sports club and youth organizations. So, what form of peer pressure would you like to exert or fall into?

In the next lecture, we will look into the impact of peer pressure. Bye and thank you.

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**Lecture – 30**  
**Impact of Peer Pressure**

In the previous lecture, we spoke on the types of peer pressure. Now, let's look into the impact of peer pressure. As you all know, peer groups exert a powerful influence on growing children especially adolescents. No matter how foolish it may seem to grownups, belonging to a group is something very important and significant to a child. Peer groups are a place where youngsters feel accepted, where they can act themselves, feel good about themselves and their self-esteem is enhanced. It is commonly seen that children feel happy when they conform to the values of their peer groups. Naturally, young people gravitate towards other young people feeling that they will be understood and accepted. There is a very strong need to satisfy that thirst - the need for acceptance. The feeling of 'belongingness' is a very powerful force that can outweigh ties to family, school, society or community.

Among the following options, identify the factor not provided by peer group? Identify from the list given.

1. A strong belief structure
2. A clear system of rules
3. Communication and discussion about taboo subjects such as drugs, sex, smoking, etc.
4. Security and safety

Yes, apart from the feeling of belongingness, the peer group provides us a strong belief structure, system of rules, communication and discussion about taboo subjects such as drugs, sex, smoking etc. but it is just a belief among youngsters that they can get security and safety from their peer group and yes there are friends who make us feel secure and safe but we should not fall into complete acceptance that they are above our family. You should clearly understand the difference between the concept of family and friends and approach both of them with due respect.

So, now let's look into some of the positive and negative impacts of peer pressure include;

- It can influence, direct and dominate a child's social behaviour
- It also influences emotional development
- Sometimes, it can even lead to self-doubt.
- It can stimulate mental disorders like anxiety and depression
- As I said, peers can be positive and supportive as well, they can help each other in developing new skills, or developing interest in books, music or extracurricular activities.
- Along with positive traits, peers can also push some negative habits in each other like skipping classes, steal, cheat, consume drugs, alcohol, etc.

Not just that, even most of the substance abuse cases have been found to be an outcome of peer pressure. During the teenage years it is not easy to say no, because it is the age where youngsters are in extreme need of acceptance and belongingness. Now, all of this can create a lot of pressure on youngsters and the impact of this may not lead to best of choices. So what should we do? We should learn to handle peer pressure. So, that will be our next lecture. Till then bye and take care



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**Lecture – 31**  
**Handling Peer Pressure**

Welcome back to the lecture. We were discussing about peer pressure, its impact and its types. So, now in this lecture we will understand some of the measures to handle it. First of all, we all must realize that it's not possible to completely avoid peer pressure. We can't live and survive in isolation. We need our peer groups and sometimes they are the ones who make us feel acceptable and important. Hence, it is essential to understand some of the measures to handle peer pressure. So how do you handle peer pressure? Given are some of the options. Among the options given, identify the option that cannot be included in the category of handling peer pressure.

1. Pay attention to how you feel
2. Have friends with same values
3. Plan ahead of the situation to give excuses
4. Go on with the demands of the peer group

I am sure you might have identified the answer which is option 4.

First of all, you need to pay attention to how you feel. If something doesn't feel right about a situation, it probably isn't. Even if your friends seem ok with what is going on, the situation may not be right for you. So in such a situation, what should you do? You need to plan ahead. Think about how you will respond in different situations. Plan what you can say or what you can do. You can even talk to the person who is pushing you to do something. You can be polite yet firm and assertive while making them realize about how you feel regarding the situation. You can even give an excuse. Right? You know some people find it very difficult to say "no" and then apologize or give an explanation. But giving an excuse makes it easier than saying a no. Perhaps you can come up with reasons like allergies that make it dangerous for you to take anything. Or you can say that your parents are coming home or they want you to reach home early or if you feel it would be best to leave the situation all together.

So to avoid such conflicting situations, it's always better to have friends with similar values and beliefs. It is easier to say "no" if someone else is also saying it. You should also develop self-esteem and confidence to say no even to your friends who might push you into doing something which can cause a formidable situation for you.

Moreover, you should get support from a trusted adult such as a parent, teacher, mentor or school counsellor. A reliable adult can listen to you and help you with strategies that might work in your situation. As a growing individual who has to survive on their own, make their own family, you should train yourself in critical and analytical thinking and also develop

good communicative skills that can be used in daily lives. Hence, before taking any decision, please weigh your decisions by considering the consequences.

Ok, so I hope that through this lecture you have gained some insights on how to handle peer pressure. In the coming lecture, we will be discussing certain addictive diseases and their preventions. Bye and thank you.

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**Lecture – 32**  
**Defining Addiction**

Hello everyone.

In the previous lecture, we spoke about peer pressure, its impact and how to handle them. We also spoke about some of the addictive habits which might be developed as a result of peer pressure. So what is addiction? You know, recent scientific advances have described addiction as a brain disease that develops over time as a result of initially, due to voluntary behaviour. Addiction is, thus, a disease in and of itself, characterized by compulsion, loss of control, and continued use in spite of adverse consequences. The primary elements of addictive disease are three Cs:

The first one is compulsive use. It is that irresistible impulse, thoughts that are repetitive and intrusive. For example, a person may not be able to start the day without a cigarette or may be coffee or tea. However, only compulsive use doesn't signify addiction.

The second characteristic is loss of control. As you all know, it is the inability to limit or resist inner urges. Once it starts, then it becomes quite impossible to stop it without external help. Well, this is the most important stage of addiction. The individual might swear to not repeat the addictive habit of may be drinking or smoking, instead the person drinks and might repeat the same response in the next day also. The individual may be able to stop it for some time, or may even control it but there are always chances that they might continue the same compulsion.

The last characteristic of addiction is continued use despite adversities which means that the use of the substance continues despite consequences which may include declining health, such as liver impairment in the alcohol addict; embarrassment, humiliation, shame; or increasing family, financial, and legal problems.

The term addiction was formally replaced by the term substance dependence in 1964 when the World Health Organizations Expert Committee on Drug Abuse proposed that the terms addiction and habituation be replaced with the term dependence and they distinguished the two types psychological dependence and physical dependence. According to UNIDCP (United Nations International Drug Control Programme), psychological dependence refers to “the experience of impaired control over drug use” while physical dependence involves “the development of tolerance and withdrawal symptoms upon cessation of use of the drug, as a consequence of the body's adaptation to the continued presence of a drug event”.

Earlier, the problem of addiction was not as widespread as it is now. Studies show that experimenting with drugs including alcohol is beginning at an earlier age than before. In India, the problem is steadily increasing, both among urban and rural populations, due to

several reasons which includes growing prosperity, stresses of modern life, expanding economic and social disparity and also exposure to such addictive substances at an early age.

Public awareness programmes are being taken up by governmental and nongovernmental agencies for prevention of addiction. We all know that addiction is a phenomenon which can alienate a person from society and deprive them of a healthy and respectful life. Now, why is that so? It is because of the number of issues caused as an impact of addiction. An addict won't be able to function physically and psychologically without the addictive substances, they consume these addictive substances beyond socially acceptable level and also sometimes at inappropriate places and times. In the advanced stages of addiction, they might face issues in their personal, professional and social life as well.

Now, before we look at the causes of addiction, let's have a reflection spot. Among the following identify the factor which is not the element of addiction. The options are:

1. Continued use despite adversities
2. Lack of control
3. Anxiety
4. Compulsive use

Did you get the answer? Amongst these 4 options one can be considered as an impact of addiction. Yes the right answer is option 3, anxiety which is one amongst the many impact or cause of addiction.

Ok, now coming back to the causes of addiction. As we have already discussed, addiction is a complex phenomenon which can be caused by a number of factors rather than a single factor. And there is no fixed type of personality which is addiction prone. But certainly there are certain factors that contribute and create a favourable environment for the development of addiction and there are also some factors which make it difficult for people to give up addiction.

Now, first let us look into the physiological factors. There are studies which say that if both parents of a child are addicts then there is a probability that the child would develop addiction. But I must say that there are exceptions also. We can't say that children of all addicts will become addicts. Yes! It suggests a greater possibility. For example, alcoholism, in particular, tends to run in the family, which suggests that the addiction might be inherited.

However, there are several other factors also which should not be undermined like; the quantity of consumption of any addictive substance, the process of intake like whether it's injected or swallowed or inhaled, the availability of the substance, and definitely its access and price, also there can be other influencing factors that might have an impact on the individual than familial reasons.

Even though we lack conclusive findings but there are certain studies which state that physiological factors like nutritional deficiency, dysfunction of body system etc. maybe also associated as reasons.

Now, let us look into the individual or psychological factors. There have been cases where many addicts have reported symptoms of mild to severe mental disturbances. However, it is still not clear whether mental disturbances cause addiction or addiction causes mental issues. Well, whatever be the relationship, there are many studies and cases which indicate that addicts suffer from deep personality problems like feeling of inadequacy, dependency, powerlessness, isolation and low self-esteem.

It can also be argued that the pleasurable feeling or the feeling of euphoria acts as a reward which motivates an individual to continue the usage of addictive substances. Apart from these two factors, we also have other factors like sociocultural or environmental factors. Several theories claim that addiction has sociocultural origins. People living in societies where consumption of drugs and alcohol are acceptable and where drugs are easily and cheaply available are likely to have high consumption of drugs/alcohol. In some tribal societies, the consumption of alcohol is a part of religious rituals and ceremonies. Such regular consumption may cause some people to become addicts.

The legal status of the addicting substance is also an important factor in determining the incidence of addiction. Among young people, growing up is like proving oneself to their peer group. And as you may already know, some individuals have a misunderstanding that alcohol toleration represents manhood which can again trigger consumption of alcohol or drugs among young people.

As in the case of age and cultural background, occupation too has been found to be related to addiction. Persons in jobs that create stress—physical or mental are known to become addicted. For example; people working as morgue workers, rag pickers whose job is associated with unpleasant activities, those performing excessively exhausting, monotonous, laborious work, example like load carriers and porters, drivers, etc. are prone to some form of addictions. Even family influence is also believed as another important environmental factor that can initiate addiction in an individual like the presence of an addict in a family, absence of parental control and supervision, or dysfunctional family. As mentioned earlier, peer group influence can also initiate and encourage the use of addictive substances.

I hope you might be very much clear about the definition and the causes of addiction. In the next lecture, we will be looking at the issue of alcoholism. Bye and thank you

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**Lecture – 33**  
**Alcoholism**

Hello dear friends. Let's continue our lectures.

In the previous lecture, we have already discussed addiction and in this lecture we are going to describe one form of addiction which is alcoholism. WHO Experts Committee on Mental Health has recognized alcohol as a special type of drug. In simple terms, alcoholism is a chronic disease or behavioural disorder, characterized by repetitive and uncontrolled consumption of alcoholic drinks.

This addiction causes functional and structural damages to our body. Now, let me ask you a question. Read the following options and identify which case shows the signs of alcoholism?

1. A 33-year-old male drinks six to eight beers per night, every night per week. He comes home and fights with his family, only to repeat the same the next day.
2. A 40 year old female consumes a small quantity of wine before sleeping occasionally.

So, which one amongst these options show the signs of alcoholism. You should understand that it is not repeated drinking which can be called as alcoholism but when the drinking exceeds customary use and social standards of a community and along with that starts to interfere with the drinker's health as well as social and economic functioning leading to continuous problems then we can name it as alcoholism. Drinking alcohol in controlled and limited quantity that doesn't harm and affect the mental and physical stability of an individual can be considered socially acceptable. But if you ask me, I would not suggest anyone to drink alcohol even occasionally. Because as an individual, I see the possibility of addiction hidden in those occasional drinking. Well that's my personal view and you can even argue against it or for it. We didn't say the correct option. So, option 1 shows a typical example of an alcoholic.

As you all now it is a treatable disease, as it can be checked and its progress stopped with proper treatment. It is a progressive disease and absence of treatment can lead to severe medical issues like cirrhosis.

Alcoholism basically develops through three phases which are early phase, middle phase and chronic phase. During early phase an individual might be preoccupied with the thought of how, when and where they could get another drink. Also, during this stage they need more alcohol to get the same effect as earlier. They might even avoid talking about alcoholic drinks sometimes, due to guilt and shame. In the middle phase, there will be a complete loss of control over the quantity, time and place of consumption. They might start finding excuses and reasons for drinking which sometimes might result in aggressive behavior. At times, the

alcoholic might seek help for alcoholism at this stage and might even stop consuming alcoholic drinks for a while. Next, in the chronic phase even a little quantity of alcohol is enough to get them drunk which shows decreased tolerance.

During this stage, if the consumption of alcohol is discontinued, they would face severe physical discomfort and pain. In some cases, alcoholics might resort to criminal behavior and ethical breakdown only to obtain alcohol. Some might even show lack of motor coordination like shivering, shakes which prevent them from performing simple tasks. Paranoia, suspicion, hallucinations all these issues might develop during this phase of alcoholism. Even death or mental illness may also result in this final stage. I hope, you have understood the meaning of alcoholism. Next we will discuss the causes of alcoholism. Bye and take care.

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**Lecture – 34**  
**Causes of Alcoholism**

Welcome back everyone. Now we know the meaning of alcoholism and in this lecture we will be discussing some of the causes of alcoholism. The causes of addiction which we have already discussed are also applicable here and along with those reasons we will also look into some of the other factors that can make someone vulnerable to alcoholism.

So, before look into the causes, let's have a reflection spot. Among the following, identify the causes of alcoholism?

1. Family history of alcoholism
2. Stressful life situations
3. Elderly undergoing mandatory retirement

Which one do you think is the right answer? Well, all of them can contribute to developing the habit of drinking in an individual or may even aid in initiating the habit of drinking.

As I already said before, there are studies which say that people with a family history of alcoholism may develop the habit of drinking. Those experiencing grave personal problems or stressful life situations such as desertion, divorce, separation, parental rejection, aging, role change, or role conflict can become causes that may result in the onset of drinking. Even the elderly are at risk because of mandatory retirement and the necessity for living on a fixed income, which may restrict choices, leading to stress and anxiety. Older people are often lonely and unhealthy and lack feelings of worth and purpose – and while they drink, it relaxes them and helps them to forget their problems, that too momentarily; they believe that drinking can fill the voids in their lives. Such people won't be able to accept and face the reality and as a result they resort to alcohol or other substances. Some people see drinking as an easy answer for the complexities of life. Even people with history of other addictions are more likely to develop an alcohol -related problem. Again I repeat there can be exceptions in all these cases.



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**Lecture – 35**  
**Impact of Alcoholism**

Hello everyone. We were looking at the issues associated with the habit of drinking excessive alcohol. In the previous lecture, we discussed some of the causes of alcoholism and in today's lecture we are going to understand the impact of alcoholism or alcohol abuse. There can be many physical complications of alcohol use.

There can be primary effects like withdrawal, toxicity and deficiency syndrome along with secondary effects like aggressive behaviour, domestic violence and in some cases injury caused by drunk driving offences. Health problems associated with alcohol abuse include higher rates of cancer of oral cavity, liver, and esophagus. It becomes much more dangerous when people combine heavy alcohol intake with heavy smoking. Even the risk of esophageal cancer is 44 times more for those who consume more than six drinks and one or more packs of cigarettes daily.

Therefore, we can say that excessive consumption of alcohol causes variety of problems like family issues, social, physical, occupational and even legal issues. As I already discussed, there can be problems in the family like quarrels over drinking, physical abuse, decreased socialization with friends, financial worries etc. issues in a family can also cause behavioral issues in children who are exposed to drinking.

It might even affect their studies. As you already know, alcohol withdrawal symptoms may occur during a variety of circumstances including lack of money to purchase alcohol, acute illness or injury, nausea and vomiting or a decision to stop drinking. The most severe reaction to alcohol withdrawal, are delirium tremors, which are characterized by disorientation, paranoia, and outbursts of irrational behavior, leading to threat of self-harm.

Sensitivity towards alcohol's effect is decreased when an individual consumes large doses of alcohol over an extended time and this phenomenon is called tolerance. It forces an individual to continually increase the dosage to achieve the desired result. It is common to all potentially addictive drugs.

Alcoholism also leads to maladaptive behavior in individuals and has negative impact on interpersonal relationships. It hampers an individual from fulfilling their personal, family and social responsibilities. It lowers self-esteem and confidence. Irritability, lack of motivation, depression, anxiety, and aggression are some of the other impacts caused by alcoholism on an individual's behavior.

So, amongst the following identify any one symptom of alcoholism.

1. Legal issues

2. Disorientation

3. Consuming alcohol in unsafe and unwanted circumstances such as when driving

Did you identify the answer? It's very easy. Yes the answer is option 3, consuming alcohol in unsafe and unwanted circumstances. Legal issues and disorientation are the impacts of alcoholism. There are some other symptoms of alcoholism which include:

1. Inability to control alcohol intake.
2. Inability to reduce intake despite severe physical and social consequences and several attempts.
3. Considerable time is spent for drinking causing reduced socializing with friends and family.
4. Inability to fulfill household and occupational responsibilities.
5. Reduced social activities.
6. Consuming alcohol in unsafe and unwanted circumstances such as when driving.
7. Requiring more quantity of alcohol to produce similar effect.
8. Experiencing withdrawal symptoms like nausea, sweating and shaking while making an attempt to stop or delay drinking.

And some of the health problems which can be caused due to alcoholism include: Liver disease, heart problems, diabetic problems, increased risk of cancer, weakened immunity and neurological complications. We don't have to go in-depth into these issues and if you are interested, you can do further reading on this. And my only request to you people would be to think many times before initiating the habit of drinking even for fun. Your friends might suggest, or challenge or gift an opportunity for you to try it and there are chances that you may. But as I said, it only requires a moment of courage to make a huge difference in your life.

Ok, so our next lecture will be on the laws and preventive measures for alcoholism.

Stay positive and stay healthy. Bye.

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**Lecture – 36**  
**Laws and Prevention of Alcoholism**

Hello everyone. Welcome back to the discussion on alcoholism.

In this lecture we are going to discuss the preventive measures which can be implied to cure alcohol abuse or addiction. Treatment of alcoholism occurs in multitude of forms. Yes it's true that psychological counseling and family support can help to better understand the problem and aid faster recovery. Even withdrawal symptoms can be prevented through detoxification and medications. There are certain oral medications prescribed by doctors which cause nausea, vomiting and other physical reactions if a person takes alcohol again. Actually, the intention here is to reduce the good feeling triggered by drinking alcohol which can help to reduce its cravings. Another very important thing is to engage oneself in activities that involve physical activity, eating well, good sleep and having a positive attitude. Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India has a scheme of assistance for the prevention of alcoholism and substance abuse implemented for identification, counseling, treatment and rehabilitation of addicts through voluntary and other eligible organizations. Under this scheme, financial assistance is provided to voluntary organizations and other eligible agencies.

In a developing country like India, alcohol consumption tends to be a major problem because of the various socio-cultural practices across the nation, different alcohol policies and practices across states, lack of awareness on alcohol-related problems among the community, false mass media propaganda about alcohol use, various alcohol drinking patterns among the alcohol consumers and the emergence of social drinking as a habit because of the widespread urbanisation across the country. Stringent alcohol policies are needed to reduce alcohol consumption, and alcohol consumers have to be educated about the various harmful effects of alcohol consumption and the effects it can have on their mind, body and soul.

Alcohol consumption becomes a serious problem when individuals start engaging in problematic drinking pattern that puts them at the risk of developing adverse health events. Though prohibition of alcohol use is encouraged in the constitution of India, but alcohol policy is a state policy. Hence, states have full control over alcohol related legislations, excise rates and the production, distribution and sale of alcohol. In India, alcohol prohibition was retained until mid-1960s.

Now we will have a reflection spot. Why is it not safe to drink and drive? You have the options on the screen;

1. You could go to jail
2. Your vision is lost

3. You feel sleepy
4. Increases the reaction time

Well, what could be the answer? Definitely, you might have heard about the reason. Yes, you could go to jail if you are caught driving after drinking alcohol. But the actual reason is option 4 that is, drinking increases your reaction time. When alcohol enters the blood-stream, it circulates all over the body. Its effects depend on the quantity taken. They vary depending on the speed at which a person drinks. His/her weight and the presence of food in the stomach also make a difference. Therefore, when a person consumes an alcoholic beverage, there will be a rise in their BAC (Blood alcoholic concentration) because of which there can be a gradual and progressive loss of driving ability due to increase in the reaction time, overconfidence, degraded muscle coordination, impaired concentration and decreased auditory and visual acuity. You would feel that you have stepped on the break, but in reality you wouldn't have. Alcohol affects the brain directly by slowing down its activities as well as those of the spinal cord. It acts as a depressant, i.e. it slows down responses. It gives the false impression of being a stimulant because it lowers inhibition and makes people lively.

Now, as per the Motor Vehicle Act, any person whose BAC values are found to be more than a particular limit are booked under the first offence and they may be fined about INR 2,000 to 10,000 or they may even face a maximum of 6 months to 4 years imprisonment.

Advertising alcoholic beverages has been banned in India as per the Cable Television Network (Regulation) Act 1995, and the code of conduct under Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI). Still, private channels are often permitting alcohol companies to advertise using surrogate means like using brand names for soda or water or music. However, as the target audience is moving from watching television to mobile phones, liquor companies have now begun to invest in online video marketing.

According to the National Crime Records Bureau of India, the crimes related to alcohol consumption fall under four major acts namely, the Prohibition Act, Gambling Act, Psychotropic Substance Act and Excise Act. If you are interested, you can do further research on these acts.

Well, the major reason because of which the public nuisance created by alcohol abuse goes unnoticed is that such crimes are classified under petty crime and they largely go unrecognized or they may get overlooked.

Ok friends, we will move on to the next topic which is ill effects of smoking in our next lecture.

Stay happy and stay healthy. Bye and thank you.

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**Lecture – 37**  
**III effects of smoking**

Hello friends, in the previous lecture, we discussed certain preventive measures and legal aspects related to alcohol abuse. In this lecture we will understand the dangerous impacts of smoking. As you all know, tobacco is one of the most common substances used in India and is also highly addictive. In India, it is both legally and socially sanctioned and is used in a variety of ways including smoking, chewing, applying to gums, sucking and gargling. It is considered as a significant risk factor in many health problems such as lung diseases, cancer and cardiovascular diseases. In case of smoking, the risk is also high for passive smokers and it can also cause serious health consequences.

There are nearly 3000 chemicals in tobacco smoke and 4000 in smokeless tobacco.

Now, let's look at this question. Nicotine is responsible for the addiction of

You have four options:

- (A) Tobacco
- (B) Cannabis
- (C) LSD
- (D) Smack.

Cigarette smoking is perhaps the most common form of nicotine use in the world and is the most lethal in the long run. And yes, nicotine is the main active chemical in tobacco that leads to addiction as it stimulates the pleasure centre of the brain and therefore the user feels a highly satisfying and rewarding experience which triggers repeated use. So the answer is option a, tobacco

The Global Adults Tobacco Survey of 2016-17 shows that in India around 42% of men and 14% of women and 28.6% all adults use tobacco which includes both smokeless and smoked tobacco. When we compare the findings of the survey conducted in 2010 where around 34% of the adults used tobacco in one form or the other, then, yes we can say that the number has come down but it is a fact that the problem of smoking is still prevalent in India.

In India, the most commonly used smokeless tobacco product is khaini or tobacco-lime mixture followed by gutkha and betel quid with tobacco, which is a variant of paan. Well, bidi is the most commonly used smoking product followed by cigarette and hukkah.

Now, what causes tobacco dependence? As we discussed in the previous lecture on addiction, there are various factors that cause addiction. There are some biological and environmental factors which mutually interact together to give rise to addiction. An individual initiates

smoking due to the factors which include environmental, behavioral, and even personal factors. Environmental reasons include factors like exposure to the habit of smoking at an early age, for example, parental smoking which increases the likelihood of the child to start smoking and smoking by siblings and friends. Even tobacco advertising and promotions also play an important role in targeting young people with images of celebrities in the advertisements. Young people from deprived backgrounds where smoking is a norm might also become smokers.

Moreover, the availability of the product, social sanction and peer pressure are also some of the major factors which promote initiation and continuation of smoking. Smoking in adolescents is frequently associated with poor academic performance, bunking class hours, and addiction towards other substances like alcohol and drug use, behavioral issues along with low self-esteem, anxiety, and depression.

Sometimes, stressful living conditions may also lead to high rates of smoking amongst unemployed, single parents, people who have faced divorce or desertion, homelessness, drug users and prisoners. Ok so, now let's look into the impact of smoking. As you all know, use of tobacco leads to premature deaths. You might have seen a lot of awareness videos provided by the government of India where they seek to provide awareness regarding cancer, chronic respiratory diseases and other circulatory diseases. Smoking is recognized to cause 80 per cent or more of all lung cancers. In addition, it also causes cancer of the lip, tongue, mouth, pharynx and larynx, bladder, pancreas, oesophagus and kidney. Tobacco use, let it be smoked or smokeless, it causes harm to the soft tissues of the oral cavity. It also causes discoloration of teeth and lips. Continued tobacco use has an adverse effect on the sexual and reproductive health of both men and women. Here, you can look at the chemicals which are present in a cigarette.

Nicotine narrows your veins and arteries which can damage the heart by making it work faster and harder. Tar is a sticky substance that coats your lungs like soot in a chimney. Carbon monoxide deprives your heart of oxygen. Ammonia irritates your eyes, nose and throat. Similarly, there are many cancer causing chemicals in these tobacco products which makes the abnormal growth of cells in your body. As you all know, it also affects the way you look. It causes yellow-brown stains on teeth, fingers and tongue. It increases the risk of tooth loss and bad breath. It also causes premature ageing as your skin becomes saggy and wrinkles start to appear. Apart from these factors you should also understand that smoking is expensive and why should you spend money to harm yourself? You know smoking reduces your life expectancy and the quality of your life and it is upon you to decide what you choose, would you choose a cigarette upon life? I hope from my heart that you would not choose any tobacco product upon your life.

Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Govt. of India enacted a comprehensive legislation, namely the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, 2003 (COTPA 2003) to discourage the consumption of tobacco products in order to protect the masses from the health hazards attributable to tobacco use. You must also be aware of e-

cigarettes which come in many shapes and sizes. They have a battery, a heating element and a place to hold a liquid. You must understand that these products are banned in India through the Prohibition of Electronic Cigarettes (Production, Manufacture, Import, Export, Transport, Sale, Distribution, Storage and Advertisement) Act of 2019. They are not safe for youth, young adults, pregnant women and people who have not yet used any tobacco products. E-cigarettes produce an aerosol by heating a liquid that usually contains nicotine, flavours, and other chemicals that help to make the aerosol. Users inhale this aerosol into their lungs. Bystanders can also breathe this aerosol when the user exhales into the air. These aerosols also contain very harmful chemicals that can cause cancer, ultrafine particles causing serious lung issues and heavy metals like nickel, tin and lead. E-cigarettes are known by many different names.

They are sometimes called “e-cigs,” “e-hookahs,” “mods,” “vape pens,” “vapes,” “tank systems,” and “electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS).” Yes, they also can end our lives and so as a teacher and as your well-wisher, who is concerned about you, I would suggest that it’s always better to stay away from them.

Ok friends, we come to the end of this lecture. Before I stop, let try to answer a question. What are the effects of nicotine on human body? You can see the four options on the screen.

- A) Release of adrenaline and hence increased blood pressure and heart beat
- (B) Stimulation of nerve impulse and muscle relaxation
- (C) Decreased foetal growth
- (D) All the above.

If you have listened to my lecture, then I am sure you would have got the answer. Think for a while and try to answer the question. Yes the correct answer is option d.

So, with this we come to the end of this lecture. In the next lecture, we will discuss prevention of suicides, which is a very important topic.

Until then, bye and thank you.

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**Lecture – 38**  
**Prevention of Suicides**

Hello everyone. Today I will be talking on a very important topic which requires a proper discussion among adolescents. And the topic is prevention of suicides. Now, why do we have this topic in our syllabus? As I said, it's a highly relevant issue to be discussed widely among youth because it is the third leading cause of death among 15-19 year olds, says WHO. Suicide as you all know is an intentional act of self-killing. Hence, by committing suicide an individual knowingly and freely brings about his or her death.

Every year close to 8 lakh people die of suicide. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), some suicides are impulsive acts due to stress, such as from financial difficulties, troubles with relationships, or bullying. Depression among teenagers have increased the cases of suicide among them and incidents such as being unemployed, losing social position, physical illness and ending of a romantic relationship or close friendship. Depression can affect anybody including teenagers. It's a complicated mental disorder which sometimes is very difficult to identify. In cases of acute depression, an individual experiences loss of interest, pleasure, feelings of guilt, low self-esteem, difficulty in sleeping and loss of appetite, low energy, poor concentration etc. Even untreated teen depression can lead to severe depressive disorders in adulthood. Moreover, adolescents with depression can develop habits of addiction towards drinks or drugs, computer addiction, unsafe sex, bullying and even self-mutilation and suicide.

Now, let's have a question;

There are many factors which can lead to teen suicide. Untreated mental illness which might include depression, bipolar disorder, and schizophrenia are some of the causes of majority of suicides. There are some other common causes like:

- Lack of parental support and care
- Lack of understanding between parents and children
- Family or personal issues like love failure or break up of very close friendship
- Academic pressure
- Learning disability among some students can also trigger depression and low self-esteem
- Domestic violence, rape or assault or any other type of abuse

Now, let's look into the alarming signs of suicide. As I discussed before, there might be certain symptoms which if observed carefully can be used to alert and inform parents and teachers. These signs might be behavioural or verbal cues signalling suicidal intentions of an individual. An adolescent who might be at risk of attempting suicide may be going through



the feelings of worthlessness and hopelessness. If observed carefully, it is definite to find noticeable change in their weight, personal appearance, appetite, academic performance or may be in their sleeping pattern.

Sometimes, we can also notice sudden changes in their behavior and they may become aggressive, disruptive, violent, or hostile toward family and friends. So we must understand that timely intervention can prevent somebody from committing suicide and along with them we can save their family and friends from grief.

There are certain alarming signs identified by the American Academy of Paediatrics like isolation and withdrawal from friends, talking about suicides even jokingly or indirectly, drawing pictures of death, running away from home, drug or alcohol abuse, bullying behavior or obsession with violence, feeling worthless, shame, overwhelming with guilt and self-hatred.

Now, how can we prevent suicide? Well, the most important aspect of suicide prevention is early detection of depression or distress in individuals. A major role to identify these symptoms is played by, yes, us the teachers and fellow students along with parents and family. To achieve this, emphasis should be on the school environment which includes teachers and students. Hence, schools can arrange supportive sessions or awareness sessions on depression. Enhancing discussions on positive life experiences can help a students to develop positive self – esteem which can prevent distress.

We should avoid pressurizing ourselves for better performance. Yes, its true that students are sometimes pressurized by their parents to attain top position in whatever they do, let it be academics, sports or any other extracurricular activities. You know as children you should open up your mind to your parents make them realize the stress imposed upon you. There are certain life skills workshops arranged by educational institutions, clubs or NGOs. Do take part in such sessions as they help us to develop essential skills required for efficient social interactions. As I said before, there is nothing wrong in expressing your emotions to your parents and friends. Instead, you should encourage yourself and your friends to share your emotions to parents and other adults. Parents are also humans and they might also be not aware of what is happening to you since they might be busy in arranging everything for you.

As friends you might also identify certain suicidal behaviors among your friends. So in such situations you should inform about this to teachers or their parents. Even evidence of substance abuse and declining interest in school work is something that you can identify in your friends much faster than teachers and parents, so this should be taken seriously and informed as early as possible to the concerned authorities. I must also share another important aspect of preventing suicide. You all should know that your teachers and parents care for you and when you are in trouble they will be there to help you out. Therefore, on identifying suicidal tendencies among your friends, never hesitate to alert parents and help them seek professional guidance from a counselor or psychologist.

Dear friends, a true friend is not the one who cares his/her friend by helping them to hide their problems but a true friend is the one who helps them to find solutions to those problems and also help them to address those problems rather than escaping from it. So, friends it's my humble request that speak up and talk to your parents and your loved ones who care for you and you are sure that they would listen to you until you get tired and stop speaking. We all love you. It's just that we don't get time to show it. I would also suggest you people to read about the African philosophy called Ubuntu that places emphasis on the belief "I am because we are". Our existence becomes meaningful when we experience the presence and happiness of others around us.

In the next class, we will discuss the importance of sexual health.

Thank you and take care.

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**Lecture – 39**  
**Sexual Health**

Hello friends, welcome back. Today we are going to explore the importance of sexual health. You know, Sex and sexual health, these are very sensitive topics. Usually discussions on such topics are not encouraged in family and also in classrooms as healthy discussions. They are considered to be taboo and therefore there is limited scope for public discussion and education on the subject. But there is huge need to impart knowledge related to sexual health education to both adolescents who will become adults due to the prevailing issues of widespread exposure and sex related problems.

Sex education is a lifelong process of building a morally acceptable foundation for sexual health. It can take place on a daily basis at homes, schools, faith-based institutions, through the media and other forms of daily activities.

It is a process of acquiring information and forming attitudes, beliefs, and values. It encompasses sexual development, reproductive health, interpersonal relationships, affection, intimacy, body image, and gender roles. Now, why is it required to have healthy conversation on sexual health among adolescents? As you all know, adolescence is a period of transition between childhood and adulthood characterised by rapid physical, psychological, social and behavioural transformation. Lot of confusions are generated during this period which can also create anxiety and fear and in some cases abnormal behaviour. There can be physical awkwardness.

They might also have lot of doubts and confusions about the changes witnessed by their body. And as we all know, majority of adolescents are hesitant to share their concerns and seek answers from caring adults. The stress of menarche every month in girls, problems with parents, pressure of studies, comparison between brother and sister in terms of freedom given to former, sexual experimentation, non-availability of right place and people for guidance, teens pregnancy are few of the examples. Again it is during this period, when they start extending their relationship with peer group than parents. It is also a period for contracting much negative behaviour like violence, addiction to alcohol, smoking, substance abuse and unprotected sex.

Majority of adolescent mortality is caused by accidents, homicide and suicide. The other causes are related to drug, tobacco, alcohol use, risky sexual behaviours, poor nutrition and inadequate physical activity. Hence, it is essential to stay well informed or guided to avoid making decisions that could harm us. So, it is imperative to include topics on sexual health in our education system to respond meaningfully to the concerns. And it is the responsibility of educational institutions to arrange awareness sessions or to include topics on sexual health in their curriculum so that it will be discussed in classrooms. Discussing such topics can surely

help some by creating self-awareness which aids adolescents to exercise control over their life. It can even help them to have a rational outlook for decision making.

Now, let's come to the topic of this lecture – sexual health. Well, the term sexual health is used to describe the absence of illness and injury associated with sexual behaviour and a sense of sexual well-being. According to the WHO, Sexual health is “a state of physical, mental and social well-being in relation to sexuality. It requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships, as well as the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences, free of coercion, discrimination and violence.” It forms a vital part of our emotional, mental and physical mind-set.

The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), 1994 adopted the Programme of Action (POA) which identified certain specific needs of young people. Through this it was recommended that young people should be adequately informed about reproductive health so that they attain the ability to make responsible decisions. As I already said, teenagers undergo several problems with regard to physical and emotional development, as they become aware of their sexuality. As a consequence of the social and economic changes taking place in the country, marriage and formation of family gets delayed. Therefore, there is a longer interval between the onset of sexual maturity and marriage. This increases the likelihood of young people involving in premarital sex. And as you all know, social and economic development coupled with its consequences have undermined the traditional barriers on premarital sex. Even migration and an increasing exposure to sex and violence through media tend to influence the young people. This might motivate young people to adopt unhealthy behavior and causing an advent of HIV/AIDS, premarital pregnancies, and other sexually transmitted diseases.

Before we move further, let's have a reflection spot;

Suppose a man hits and beats his wife for not doing something properly, for example; not taking care of the children, burning food, leaving house without permission, refusing sex or showing disrespect, so if such situation occurs then who do you think would justify such incidents and consider it as a right of a man to show violence to his wife?

1. Adolescent boys
2. Adolescent girls
3. Both will agree

This might be a confusing question but yes it would let you know your belief regarding this problem.

Did you identify the answer? You see according to the world health organization, in many countries, mostly adolescent girls believe that showing violence towards your female partner is justified if they have been doing any mistake from the viewpoint of the man. And there are countries where adolescent girls and boys are more likely to justify violence than adult women and men. So, the correct answer for the question is option 2 adolescent girls.

As stated by the World Health Organization, “sexual health is fundamental to the overall health and well-being of individuals, families and couples and to the social and economic development of nations and societies”. Well, there are certain factors that shape the ability of men and women to practice responsible sexual behavior; these include biological factors, parents and other family members, schools, friends, the community, the media, religion, healthcare professionals, the law and the availability of reproductive and sexual health services. In addition to reproduction, human sexuality serves many functions. It is the physiological response that shapes sexual experience of individuals. There is much that is still not explored regarding the complex nature of individual capacity for physical sexual response. The quality of parent-child relationship also plays a significant role in determining the adolescent sexual behavior and the risk of pregnancy. Warm and close parent-child relationship and proper parental supervision and monitoring can help adolescents understand the boundaries which are to be maintained while in a relationship. Schools offer an engaging environment which discourages risk taking behavior among children. It also provides a platform for building positive peer association increasing their sense of competence and healthy communication. There are many studies which illustrate that certain physical characteristic of communities like economic conditions, ethnic composition, level of social disorganization and service availability may have an impact on the sexual behavior of their residents, initiation of sexual activity, contraceptive use and pre-marital pregnancy and risk of STD infection. Therefore, an adequate understanding on these features along with proper planning and interventions can promote responsible sexual behavior among community residents. As we all know, media has the potential for providing sexuality information and education to the public but various programmes in media rarely depict sexual behavior in the context of long term relationships, use of contraceptives and critical consequences of sexual behavior. Religious beliefs and attitudes have an important role in sexual functioning as in some religions discussions on these topics are considered a taboo. Law regulates sexual behavior in many ways and it is manifested in the form of criminal, child welfare and civil laws. The law also regulates a community’s influence over sexuality including the factors like family, schools and media. For example, in October 2014, the government started the Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram (RKSK) or National Adolescent Health Programme, which, like adolescent-friendly health clinics (AFHCs) made village health clinics sensitive to adolescent needs.

So along with sexual and reproductive health, it addressed issues on nutrition, injuries and violence (including gender based violence), non-communicable diseases, mental health and substance misuse. Reproductive health services are provided to both men and women by a wide range of health care service providers like private and public hospitals, primary health centres etc. but if these services are not available and affordable and provided when needed then it can affect the sexual and reproductive health of a society.

Now, we know the factors essential for ensuring sexual and reproductive health of a society. We also need to gain some important information on STDs or sexually transmitted diseases. So, in the next lecture we will discuss some of the preventive measures and impacts of sexually transmitted diseases.

Bye and thank you.

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**Lecture – 40**  
**Sexually Transmitted Diseases - Prevention and Impact**

Hello everyone! Welcome back to the lectures.

Sexually transmitted diseases are commonly known as STDs. As the name clearly suggests, these are certain types of diseases that are primarily spread through sexual activities. These diseases are to be taken seriously and managed carefully. In earlier days they were commonly known as 'Venereal Diseases'. The adjective venereal is derived from 'Venus' the goddess of love. All venereal diseases (STDs), except congenital syphilis, are transmitted through sexual intercourse. Because of the social stigma attached to the label VD (Venereal Disease), the WHO changed its nomenclature to STD in 1974.

You know, STDs are highly communicable diseases and can be very painful. Some of them can even cause death like HIV/AIDS. The organisms or agents which transmit the infections are bacteria, virus, fungus and other parasites. Some of the STDs are curable, but some like HIV, hepatitis B and herpes cannot be cured, but they are preventable. STDs have been present for centuries though concern towards it started to arise during the beginning of the twentieth century. WHO has labeled three diseases as the biggest threat to mankind; malaria, tuberculosis, and STD. An international effort was made in 1924 through the Brussels Agreement., to control the spread of STDs from one continent to another by providing free treatment for sailors on ships and ports. Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) have a profound impact on the sexual and reproductive health of people. According to WHO, each year around 376 million new infections with 1 of 4 STIs like chlamydia, gonorrhoea, syphilis and trichomoniasis are reported around the world.

Well, in case of India these STIs and RTIs (reproductive tract infections) are an important public health problem. According to a community based STI/RTI prevalence study conducted in the year 2002-2003 by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) showed that 6% of the adult population in India has one or more STI/RTI, which means about 30-35 million episodes of STI/RTI are reported every year in the country. It is also estimated that sex workers in the Indian metropolitan cities like Kolkata report infection rate of around 59%. Because of the stigma attached with sexually transmitted infections, people tend to hide such problems and also avoid gaining information regarding the same. One of the most dangerous STI transmitted almost always by sexual contact is syphilis. It can pass from mother to her unborn child and as a result the child might be born with serious mental and physical problems. One of the most commonly reported STI is gonorrhea. In case of gonorrhea infection there will be symptoms like inflammation of the urethra and pain while passing urine. Genital Herpes can be considered as one of the most contagious viral infection as it has no known cure. Here also, pregnant women can pass the virus to the fetus. Chlamydial

infection can affect both men and women. It can even cause infertility in women. Again, STIs like Herpes and syphilis can increase the risk of HIV acquisition.

Before we move further, let's have a reflection spot.

What is the name of the medical condition caused by HIV or Human Immunodeficiency virus?

- a) Chlamydia
- b) Herpes
- c) Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome or AIDS
- d) Gonorrhea

Well, the question is very simple and I am sure that you all might be aware of the medical condition caused by HIV. HIV is a virus which causes impairment to the immune system of humans which is the security and the barrier which fights against infections. It weakens the body's immune system making it susceptible to numerous infections. Now, one thing we all must understand and I know that you all might be aware of it. HIV itself does not cause death whereas it is the opportunistic infections that take advantage of body's weakened defense that causes death. Therefore, AIDS is the condition where such infections take hold of the body. Hence, option c is the right answer.

What makes HIV infection most dangerous is that the person infected with HIV may remain asymptomatic for several years, until they do not get infected as a result of body's low immunity. This condition may develop into AIDS after a number of years. As a result, people with HIV may not know that they are infected and can pass this infection to others as well. There are three modes of transmission in case of HIV. Engaging in unprotected sex, i.e. not using condom or other barrier devices can lead to the risk of HIV infection. Then, various blood exposures also carry high risks of

HIV transmissions like sharing of syringes, needles or injecting equipments. Even other procedures like tattooing, piercing, shaving, dental care, manicures and pedicures especially when cuts occur, blood tests, infusions and surgery also contain risks of HIV transmission. HIV can also be transmitted through body fluids such as semen, vaginal fluid, breast milk etc. Though HIV is also present in other body fluids like sweat, saliva and tears but they are in such low quantities that transmission through these routes is impossible. And the last mode of transmission is from an infected mother to the baby during pregnancy or delivery, as well as through breast feeding. However, HIV is not transmitted through casual contacts like hugging, sharing food or drinks, dancing or sharing the bed used by an HIV positive person.

Now the severity of these infections is intensified by alcohol and drugs as they can cause adverse changes in the immune system leading to rapid decline of health in a person who is already HIV positive. Use of such substances can precipitate risk behavior that might lead to STI or HIV transmission.

Now you can see a question on your screen.



What is NACO?

- a) National AIDS Coordination Organization
- b) National Awareness Committee
- c) National AIDS Control Organization
- d) National Abuse Control Organization

Well, the right answer for the question is option c, National AIDS Control Organization which is a division of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare that provides leadership to HIV/AIDS control programme in India.

In a report prepared by the National AIDS Control Organization, it was found that adolescents and youth in the age group of 10-24 are also susceptible to various infections. The data from Indian studies reveal that adolescents indulge in premarital sex more frequently and at an early age. They face enhanced vulnerability to unwanted pregnancy and STI including HIV. And there are many interconnected factors which put them at risk of STI like poor education, unemployment and poverty. Not just that, even urbanization generates more opportunity for sexual encounters due to disruptions in family relationships, social networks and traditional values. Even lack of awareness regarding sexual health and STI prevention, symptoms and treatment put adolescents at risk of STI.

Some even perceive their risk as low due to familiarity with a sexual partner or simply because of a strong influence of peers, multiple and concurrent sexual relationship and lack of access to affordable and effective STI services. Therefore, it is essential to improve accessibility to preventive and curative services like counseling and information.

Now to prevent STIs, we need proper counseling and behavioral interventions reinforcing comprehensive sexuality education, STI and HIV pre and posttest counseling, safer sex and risk reduction counseling, and some of the interventions should be targeted towards key populations like sex workers, and injecting drug users and adolescents. According to WHO, barrier methods like male and female condoms, when used correctly and consistently offer one of the most effective methods of protection against STIs. WHO has also insisted on the availability, affordability and effectiveness of STI diagnosis and treatment especially in low and middle income countries where such services largely unavailable. Along with interventions, proper follow up including vaccines and biomedical interventions are necessary to ensure proper STI management.

So now we come to the end of this lecture and in the next lecture we will be discussing another major issue which is pre-marital pregnancy.

Bye and Take care

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**Lecture – 41**  
**Pre-marital pregnancy - Prevention and Impact**

Dear friends welcome back to yet another important topic of discussion which is premarital pregnancy. Through the previous lectures, we have already gathered a lot of information on sexual health and sexually transmitted infections. In this section we are going to know about the problems of teenage pregnancy. So, I would like to focus on this issue rather than focusing on pre-marital pregnancy which has broad implications. But yes adolescent pregnancies are a global concern occurring in high, low and middle income countries. They bear social and medical implications relating to maternal and child health. According to WHO, every year around 21 million girls aged between 15–19 years in developing regions become pregnant and approximately 12 million of them give birth. In case of developing countries, at least 777000 births happen to adolescent girls younger than 15 years.

Several studies show that adolescent pregnancies more likely occur in marginalized communities, commonly driven by poverty, lack of education and employment opportunities. There are several factors that contribute to adolescent pregnancies and births, like cultural and societal pressures where girls are married early due to prevailing cultural norms. Disruption of education is another which as girls with improper education are more likely to get married and become mothers. There is another serious issue like sexual coercion and rape which not only causes pregnancy but also leads to severe physical and psychological impairments. Even socio-economic factors also contribute to this menace as young girls are often forced into sexual exploitation and prostitution and even marriage due to poverty. UNICEF clearly mentioned that the COVID-19 pandemic can profoundly impact the lives of girls as pandemic related travel restrictions and physical distancing can make it difficult for the girls to access health services, social services and community support that can protect them from child marriage, unwanted pregnancy and gender based violence. Job losses and economic insecurity can also force families to ease financial burdens by marrying their daughters.

India accounts for one-third of child marriages globally and the pandemic has also increased the numbers in some of the states of India. For more information, you can do a search on your own. Lack of access to information, guidance and services can increase the risk of early pregnancy and child birth. Busy lives and the stigma associated with these topics prevent parents or responsible adults to discuss matters on sex and sexual health, which might motivate an adolescent to gather misinformation from their peers or from other sources like media. Lack of knowledge regarding the correct use of contraceptive and peer pressure to engage in sexual activity can also influence the decision towards having sex even without understating its meaning and the consequences associated with the act. There are studies which show that lack of friendship based relation between parents and children and exposure to abuse, violence and strife at home has a significant bearing on early pregnancy and child

birth. As we all know, adolescent pregnancy and childbirth can have detrimental socioeconomic and psychological impacts on the mother and her child. Both unplanned and planned pregnancies have risks and potential problems. There may be health complications like abortion, anaemia, hypertension and as already discussed STIs and HIV infection owing to their biological and social vulnerability.

Even preterm birth is common among girls due to the immaturity of reproductive organs. Poverty also plays an important role in pre-term birth. Infant mortality, malnutrition, and inadequate childcare and breast feeding practices especially among single and poor young mothers are also an issue to be addressed. There are certain social complications associated with teenage pregnancy. As we all know, teen mothers are most likely to be dropped out of school. Poverty, lack of family support and social exclusions are other consequences. In case of India, the present socio-cultural system doesn't support pregnancy outside the marriage as it bears a terrible stigma and the situations worsens when the girls is not married. In such situations there are chances that the teenager might suffer emotional crisis, exhaustion and depression. Now, how can we prevent this issue? Proper education coupled with sex education is essential to generate awareness regarding our life and health. And discussions on such topics should start from family. If your parents find it difficult to talk to you about these issues, then make them realize the importance of such information in your life. You can even help your younger brothers and sisters by sharing authentic information gained through your discussions with teachers, parents and mentors. You have to realize and make your parents understand that an open discussion on sex in a safe, non-judgmental environment will make you capable of taking educated decisions on sex.

Now let's have a reflection spot, from the following identify the measures to be adopted for tackling the issue of teenage pregnancy. The options are:

- a) Screening and counseling
- b) Sexual and Reproductive Health Care Services
- c) Abstinence/ Delaying Sex
- d) Contraception
- e) Communication
- f) Engaging Teenagers in Extracurricular Activities
- g) Vocational Training
- h) Parental Counseling

Which of these can help us in preventive measures? Screening and counseling students, regarding the consequences of STIs and HIV is essential. We also need teen friendly sexual and reproductive health care services. As already discussed, in October 2014, the government started the Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram (RKSK) or National Adolescent Health Programme, which, like adolescent-friendly health clinics (AFHCs), made village health clinics sensitive to adolescent needs.

From being limited to sexual and reproductive health, it now provides awareness on ambit nutrition, injuries and violence (including gender based violence), non-communicable

diseases, mental health and substance misuse. The strength of the program is its health promotion approach. It is a paradigm shift from the existing clinic-based services to promotion and prevention and reaching adolescents in their own environment, such as in schools, families and communities. Key drivers of the program include community based interventions like, outreach by counselors; facility based counseling; Social and Behavior Change Communication; and strengthening of Adolescent Friendly Health Clinics across levels of care. Abstinence or delaying sex until becoming responsible and building a stable relationship with a partner is also a way of prevention. It's also important to attain information on contraception as it helps to avoid STIs and unwanted pregnancies. Communication is also a critical factor where by you can clear your doubts by asking questions to your teachers, parents and doctors. Such conversation should ideally begin before a child reaches teenage. The last solution would be to implement extra-curricular activities for teenagers in order to keep them occupied, and also to help develop their sense of independence and responsibility. These activities can be sports or community services. Vocational training can make an adolescent more independent and enhance her mobility, autonomy, self-esteem and decision making abilities. Again as already discussed, parents should have a proactive role in their children's life. They should have the adequate skills to guide and understand their children irrespective of age gap and differences in perception. So if they don't talk, it's your responsibility to make them comfortable and help them overcome the inhibition. Even counselors provide ample support for parents to come out of these situations.

So, friends with this we come to the end of the end module 4 and in the next we will start module 5, which is drug abuse.

Until then, bye and thank you.