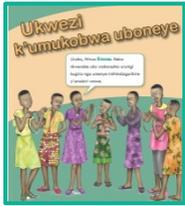


How to Use the CycleSmart Kit with Young People: Programmatic Guidelines



Simple Steps for Including the CycleSmart Kit in Your Program



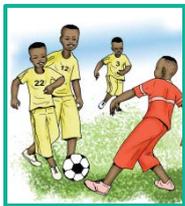
Read the CycleSmart brochure completely, and understand how to use CycleBeads, before discussing them with youth.

- Practice how you will teach this to young people.
- If you have questions, talk with a person who can provide correct answers and more information.



Talk with girls about the brochure and the beads.

- Talk to girls individually or in a group. Discuss the changes both girls and boys notice.
- Show girls how to use CycleBeads to keep track of their periods, and to pay attention to the changes they notice between one period and the next.
- Give each girl a CycleSmart Kit with her own brochure and CycleBeads to use. Your program can add a calendar, a diary, and/or sample sanitary pads to the Kit, as well as information about how to contact local health providers.



Talk with boys also.

- Have a mixed group of boys and girls, or talk to boys by themselves.
- Use CycleBeads to teach boys about the girls' menstrual cycle and the changes girls notice. Also talk about the changes boys notice.
- Give boys the CycleSmart brochure.



Discuss how girls and boys may be treated differently at puberty.

- Find out what young people have noticed about what society expects from girls and boys now that they are growing up.
- Ask what this means to them and how they feel about girls and boys being treated differently.
- Explore together how young people can stay healthy and safe in their community.



Involve parents.

When possible, show parents and other caring adults how to use the CycleSmart Kit to educate their children about puberty and fertility awareness.

What is the CycleSmart Kit?

The CycleSmart Kit includes CycleBeads (a set of color-coded beads that help a girl keep track of her menstrual cycle and learn about her fertility) and a simple, factual brochure about puberty. The CycleSmart Kit is designed to help young people, ages 10 to 14, develop an awareness of their emerging fertility and make decisions which promote their health. The Kit also helps parents, teachers, health providers, peer-educators and others talk to young girls and boys about their changing bodies and how to stay healthy and safe.

Why are the CycleSmart Kit and puberty education so important?

Many girls and boys enter puberty with very little information about their changing bodies. Often parents and other important adults in their lives feel unprepared or uncomfortable talking about this topic. Yet, when young people can discuss the changes of puberty and signs of fertility, including physical and emotional changes of both girls and boys, this helps prepare them to make healthy decisions about relationships and sexual behavior in the future. It also helps them to better care for their changing bodies and notice right away any signs that they need to seek health care. The CycleSmart Kit is an easy, concrete and meaningful tool for puberty education, and has been tested and used in Rwanda and other countries in the world.

Who might explain and give this Kit to youth?

Parents, teachers, health providers, educators, religious leaders, and others are among those well-positioned to offer and discuss the CycleSmart Kit with young people. Programs for parents and peer educators (such as child-to-child or older youth to younger youth) also provide ideal opportunities to do so. The CycleSmart Kit can be offered to young people through clubs like girl guides and boy scouts, after-school programs, pharmacies, elementary and middle schools, girls' rooms, and health posts. Girls and boys can also get the CycleSmart Kit directly and read the brochure themselves, although it is most helpful for them to have access to a person who can respond to questions that may arise.

It is very easy to include the CycleSmart Kit in your program.

Some Ideas for Teaching Groups of Youth about Puberty and Fertility Awareness from the My Changing Body curriculum

- Help young people get to know one another, and feel comfortable with the group leader and the topic, pgs. 16-19.
- Find out what girls and boys know and believe about puberty and fertility, explore myths and provide accurate information, pgs. 20-23, 40-42.
- Use games and role plays to discuss gender roles, basic rights, and possibilities, pgs. 23-28.
- Encourage young people to talk with their parents and ask about their parents' beliefs and experiences, pgs. 30-31. Suggest that they keep a diary of their own experiences, observations and feelings, pgs. 32-33.
- Bring local products used during menstruation to touch, feel and become familiar with, pg. 43.
- Make fertility awareness beads with local buttons or create menstrual cycle flash cards, pgs. 62-69. Bring substances that look and feel like cervical secretions.
- Evaluate your sessions to find out what young people have learned, pgs. 118-126.
<http://buff.ly/15tyFXm>



Involve Parents

Parents are key to providing good puberty and fertility awareness education to their children. There are many teachable moments available to parents, to connect with their children in important ways. Programs can support and train parents, helping them to gain knowledge and confidence.

When parents are “askable” it helps young people feel more comfortable and open to talking about sensitive and personal topics. Good communication between parents and their children builds trust and support throughout the growing up years.

It is OK if parents don't have all the answers, they can find out together with their children.

Be a resource and involve parents in creative ways.

Frequently Asked Questions

If our program has never provided puberty education, can we give young people the CycleSmart Kit?

Yes, you can explain and give the Kit to girls and boys without having a comprehensive sexual and reproductive health program for youth. For programs that do provide puberty education, the CycleSmart Kit can add to and enhance the program in a practical, hands-on way.

What resources are available with fun and meaningful activities we could use when talking about the CycleSmart Kit with young people?

My Changing Body: Puberty and Fertility Awareness Education for Young People, 2nd Edition, is an excellent resource. There are 6 sessions for youth, an evaluation component, and also instructions for parents and trainers. To view and download this curriculum for free, go to: <http://buff.ly/15tyFXm>

The CycleSmart brochure and CycleBeads are more focused on the changes that girls experience. What puberty information is available for boys?

For more male-focused resources on puberty and additional resources for both girls and boys on gender awareness, resiliency, and empowerment of young people to make healthy choices see <http://www.iywg.org/youth/resources>

Are CycleBeads used as a family planning method?

A girl should **not** try to use CycleBeads as a way to prevent pregnancy. It can take quite a few years for a girl's cycles to become regular. A woman with a willing partner, who gets her period every 26 to 32 days, would also need **more** information than is presented in the CycleSmart brochure to be able to use CycleBeads to space or limit the births of her children. However, girls who use CycleBeads to learn about and track their cycles can be better prepared to use a fertility awareness-based method in the future.



For more information about the CycleSmart Kit please contact: irhinfo@mail@georgetown.edu