

Strengthening Counseling for Adolescents at VMMC Services: Follow-Up Visit Day Seven Cue Card

Counseling/Communication Objectives

As a result of this counseling session, adolescent clients will understand:

- Effective continued wound care and pain management instructions (*refer to the Immediate Postoperative Counseling Cue Card*)
- Warning signs of adverse events/recommendations for contacting clinic staff if client suspects an adverse event (*refer to the Immediate Postoperative Counseling Cue Card*)
- The necessity of abstinence or risk reduction strategies during the healing period and ways to improve compliance with abstinence or mitigate elevated risk of transmission of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- Voluntary medical male circumcision (VMMC) provides only partial protection from HIV transmission
- The need for continued practice of other prevention methods, especially condom use, once the healing process is complete
- The importance of returning to the clinic if there are any signs of adverse events, infection, or complications
- Additional topics that the counselor deems relevant to the client, including masculinity, gender-based violence, and alcohol and/or drug abuse/use
- The location of facilities the adolescent may visit for support related to these additional topics

Content to Be Delivered During the Session

Physical Exam

Conduct a physical exam, including:

- Assess the status of wound healing and remove (or replace) dressing as indicated.
- Check and record client's temperature, blood pressure, pulse, and respiration rate.

Wound Care

Reinforce or restate key messages:

- Review wound care instructions provided during counseling and at the day two visit as necessary.
- Keep the wound clean, using clean water and mild soap to wash the penis at least two times each day.
- Do NOT pull or scratch the wound during healing.
- Client should have returned to school and may have resumed sports and other activities. Make sure these activities have not delayed or interfered with healing and wound care.
- If the client works, ensure that any heavy, physical work has not disrupted healing and/or led to bleeding. If so, he must be advised to refrain from such activity.

- Do not apply home remedies (herbs, ash, dung) not prescribed by a doctor as these can cause tetanus. Tetanus is a serious bacterial infection that affects the brain and nervous system and can lead to severe muscle spasms, serious breathing difficulties, and death.¹ If the client does use alcohol or other substances that can impair their judgment, he should avoid driving a car, motorcycle, or bicycle while under their influence.²
- Erections for no clear reason, although possibly uncomfortable, are no cause for concern. Urinating at the first urge may reduce frequency of erections.
- Client should continue taking pain medications as prescribed.
- Provide additional wound care/pain management instructions as needed or requested.

Adverse Event Warning Signs

- Explain that complications from VMMC are rare, but can be serious if ignored or improperly treated.
- Remind the adolescent client of the warning signs of adverse events:
 - Continued bleeding that does not stop or gets worse
 - Swelling or tenderness around the wound (worse than you have now)
 - Increased pain that does not improve with medication
 - Fever (Do you have a thermometer or can your parent/guardian determine if you have a fever?)
 - Swelling or tenderness in the groin
 - Pus coming from the wound
 - Difficulty passing urine/peeing
 - Hardness or stiffness in the lower abdomen (*show them where this is*)
 - Stiffness of the jaw, chest, and/or back, fits and/or convulsions
- If the client experiences any warning signs, he should contact clinic staff immediately at (emergency phone # _____)

Abstinence and Risk Reduction During the Healing Period

- Remind the client of the importance of abstinence (from masturbation and sexual intercourse) during the healing period. Repeat definitions discussed during previous sessions, as needed:
 - **Masturbation** is when people touch their own bodies for sexual pleasure. For boys, this may involve stroking or rubbing the penis when it is erect. Masturbation may result in ejaculation/orgasm.
 - **Sexual intercourse** typically means when a man inserts his penis into a woman's vagina. It can also refer to oral or anal intercourse.

See the *Group Counseling Session Cue Card* if needed to provide a more thorough explanation.

¹ Felman, A. (2017) Everything You Need to Know about Tetanus. *Medical News Today*.

<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/163063.php>

² World Health Organization (WHO) (2010) *Adolescent Job Aid, A Handy Desk Reference Tool for Primary Level Health Workers*. Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development, WHO.

https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/44387/9789241599962_eng.pdf;jsessionid=B77D841906EC046270924C482513735D?sequence=1

- Ask the adolescent if he believes he can adhere to the abstinence recommendations.
- If NOT, come up with a plan to improve his ability to abstain from masturbation and/or sexual intercourse to reduce the increased HIV risk. Plans may include:
 - Consistent and correct use of condoms
 - Other forms of sexual intimacy that do not involve sexual intercourse/penetrative sex

Importance of Continued Use of Other Prevention Methods When Resuming Sex

- Emphasize the importance for sexually active adolescent clients to:
 - Remember that VMMC does not provide total protection from HIV.
 - Use condoms correctly and consistently to reduce the risk of HIV, other STIs, and unintended pregnancy.
 - Reduce the number of sexual partners (if they have multiple partners).
 - Know their HIV status. If they have not tested for HIV, consider doing so with their partner(s).
- Offer a condom demonstration, if you have not already given one.
- Provide written information about any of the topics discussed (if available).
- Provide referrals to additional services (as appropriate/available).
- Encourage the client to bring friends to VMMC if they are interested.

Additional Important Topics

- Assess/introduce as relevant the following topics: masculinity and gender-related issues and alcohol and drug use and abuse.

Masculinity and Gender-Related Issues

Explain:

- One issue related to violence is what it means to “be a man,” or what some people call “masculinity” or “manhood.”
- Some people incorrectly associate “being a man” with engaging in violent behaviors such as yelling, hitting, kicking, and other such behaviors, against men, women, or children.
 - This is NOT correct. There are many men and leaders in the community such as (*list names*) who are not violent and to whom others look up and respect.
- By understanding and challenging the idea of masculinity, men can expand their views, take better care of their health, and become better partners, fathers, and citizens
- Is there a man whom you admire and look up to? Why do you admire him?
- What does it mean to you to be a “good man”?
 - Being a good man means seeking health care rather than not asking for help with health issues. Coming for VMMC is one way of being a good man.
 - Being a good man does not mean using violence to solve problems, especially against girls and women.
 - Being a good man means taking responsibility for practicing safer sex, discussing and adopting family planning with one’s partner, and protecting oneself and one’s partner from HIV/STIs.

- Being a good man means treating girls and women as equals and thus contributing to the full potential of one's relationship, family, and society.
- Being a good man means using condoms correctly and consistently, reducing the number of partners, and not equating sex with dominance and risk-taking, thus reducing HIV/STI infection and transmission.

Alcohol and Drug Use and Abuse

Explain:

- Tobacco use is bad for your health. Tobacco use results in stained fingers, lips, and teeth. It also causes bad breath. Smokers tend to be less fit and get short of breath more easily. Tobacco use also causes problems later in life, notably heart disease, cancer, emphysema, and early death.
- The consumption of alcohol, even in small amounts, can impair judgment. While under the influence of alcohol or other substances, people do things they would not normally do, such as driving dangerously, being verbally or physically violent, or having unprotected sexual activity.
- Many adolescents die from accidents, such as motor vehicle crashes, under the influence of alcohol and other substances.
- The consumption of large quantities of alcohol in a short period of time can cause neurological and liver damage.
- Substances such as tobacco, khat, heroin, amphetamines, and cocaine can induce dependence. Being dependent on these substances impairs one's ability to carry out everyday activities and can lead to tensions with family members, friends, and others. Most people who develop dependence on substances do so during their adolescence
- Using cannabis, khat, heroin, amphetamines, or cocaine can cause damage to the brain, liver, kidneys, and lungs in both the short and long terms. Injecting substances with shared needles and syringes greatly increases the likelihood of getting HIV.
- If you do use alcohol or other substances that can impair your judgment, avoid driving a car, motorcycle, or bicycle while under their influence.³
- If you have started using alcohol or other substances, I can refer you to (*name service for counseling and support around substance abuse*). Counselors at this service can help you stop.

³ World Health Organization (WHO) (2010) *Adolescent Job Aid, A Handy Desk Reference Tool for Primary Level Health Workers*. Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development, WHO.
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