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## **Premarital Package**



## Premarital Package

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### Approach to the Premarital Couple

Premarital services can be a unique opportunity for partners to visit the service provider together or individually, depending on what the couple finds acceptable.

Since gender issues permeate all issues related to reproductive health, gender equality is crucial. To assist in improving reproductive health, the service provider should tell the couple that:

- Men and women are equal partners in reproduction and child rearing.
- Men and women are both entitled to receive proper information.
- Men's support of women's reproductive health will mean healthy children and happier families.
- Women's triple role in reproduction, production and community participation prevents them from visiting the doctor's clinic as regularly as required. Therefore, the husband's support is needed to share some of the domestic roles (such as child rearing) to enable women to have more time to follow up on their reproductive health.

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Note: FGC and beating are both forms of violence. This issue should be discussed, referring to the psychological effects it has on girls' lives.

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In general, family planning information is a gender issue for men because service providers tend to target women. It is important to try to make this information available to men.

### Client Flow and Recordkeeping

Client flow and recordkeeping for premarital services are the same as those for the reproductive health checkup (see Chapter 3 Reproductive Health Checkup).

### Components of the Premarital Package

- The premarital package consists of:
  - ▶ Advocating the premarital package
  - ▶ Premarital counseling
  - ▶ Premarital history taking and examination
  - ▶ Premarital investigations
  - ▶ Premarital immunization
  - ▶ Registration and recordkeeping

### Advocating the Premarital Package

- Tell the couple about:
  - ▶ The importance of premarital counseling and examination as a preventive measure

- ▶ The procedures of premarital assessment, emphasizing the confidentiality of information and the privacy of the examination
- ▶ The value of premarital counseling and examination in preventing:
  - Rh incompatibility
  - Hazards of German measles infection during pregnancy
  - STIs, including AIDS

## **Premarital Counseling**

- Explain the basic RH/FP issues to the couple:
  - ▶ Anatomical facts concerning the male and female genital organs
  - ▶ Reproductive physiology (physiology of menstruation and pregnancy)
  - ▶ Family planning methods suitable for newly married couples
  - ▶ 3-5 years between children is the best spacing for mother and child health
  - ▶ The most common preventable disorders (e.g., Rh incompatibility and Down's syndrome)
- Help couples to discuss their thoughts and fears freely.
  - ▶ Discuss any concerns raised by the couple
- Provide information about the wedding night.
  - ▶ Reassure the couple and alleviate all worries and concerns.
  - ▶ Tell them that minimal pain results from defloration, and therefore does not need any precautions.
  - ▶ Tell them that minimal bleeding usually results from defloration.
  - ▶ Tell them defloration does not require use of force.
  - ▶ Inform the couple about the act of sexual intercourse, particularly the importance of foreplay.
  - ▶ Tell them lubricants can facilitate the first coitus.
  - ▶ Tell them narcotics (such as hashish) and alcohol have an adverse effect on sexual relations.

## **Premarital History Taking and Examination**

- Take the couple's history.
  - ▶ Ask the couple about:
    - Consanguinity or any familial diseases
    - Medical diseases: diabetes, tuberculosis, hypertension, STIs, etc.
    - Previous operations: laparotomy, varicocele, hydrocele, hernia and mumps in men
    - Menstrual history: age of menarche, regularity, duration, heaviness of flow, dysmenorrhea, vaginal discharge and date of last menstruation

- Immunization for Rubella
- Family history of hereditary diseases
- Perform a general examination. Look for the following:
  - ▶ Signs that may indicate endocrine disturbances:
    - Very short stature: may indicate Turner’s syndrome or pituitary dwarfism (this condition can be associated with menstrual troubles or infertility)
    - Very tall: may indicate Gigantism (this condition can be associated with menstrual disturbances or infertility)
    - Size of the breasts and condition of the nipples
    - Abnormal obesity, hirsutism
  - ▶ Signs of general diseases:
    - Cachexia (TB – chronic renal illness, etc.)
    - Signs of anemia
    - Skin lesions
    - Heart disease
    - Diabetes
    - Hypertension
- Perform an abdominal examination.
  - ▶ Look for the following:
    - Distribution of pubic hair
    - Abdominal masses
    - Scars
- Inspect the external genital organs.
  - ▶ For the female, look for the following:
    - Genital ulcers (herpes, syphilitic ulcers, soft sore, granuloma inguinale, or lymphogranuloma venereum) or papillomata
    - The condition of the labia minora and clitoris, evidence of FGC

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**Note: Vaginal examination is not to be conducted in virgins.**

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- ▶ For the male, look for the following:
  - Genital ulcers (herpes, syphilitic ulcers, soft sore, granuloma inguinale or lymphogranuloma venereum)
  - Urethral discharge
  - Varicocele
  - Hypospadias or undescended testicles

## Premarital Investigations

- Rh grouping:
  - ▶ If the woman is Rh negative and the man is Rh positive, explain to the couple that Anti D gamma globulin should be given during the seventh month of pregnancy followed by another dose after each labor or abortion.
  - ▶ Inform couple that the Rh negative female should never receive Rh-positive blood transfusion.
- Refer for other investigations (only if needed), such as:
  - ▶ VDRL for syphilis
  - ▶ ELISA for hepatitis or HIV
  - ▶ Semen analysis
  - ▶ Ultrasound and hormone analysis for female

## Premarital Immunization

- Unless the woman has been vaccinated against Rubella, advise immunization against Rubella at least three months before marriage. This avoids any possible infection by Rubella during pregnancy with possible development of serious teratogenic effects and congenital malformations in the fetus.
- Advise couple to be vaccinated against Hepatitis.

## Referral

Refer the couple to a specialist for preconception advice in case of high risk; for example, if there are medical disorders (e.g., Down syndrome or other syndromes) in the family history.

## Recordkeeping

- Fill in the *Woman's Health Card*.
- Fill in the medical record.
- Fill in results of counseling, examination and investigations.