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## SEXUAL BEHAVIOR AND KNOWLEDGE ABOUT SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES OF HIGHSCHOOL STUDENTS FROM THE WESTERN HERZEGOVINA COUNTY

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Paediatrics Today 2010;6(1):53-65.

Original article

**Objective** The aim of this research was to define the knowledge, attitudes and risk taking behaviours of high school students from Western Herzegovina county, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

**Patients and methods** This research involved 518 students in the age range from 16 to 19, from four different high schools. The questionnaire contained 28 items which referred to sociodemographic variables, knowledge about sexually transmitted infections and preventing them, sexual history, attitudes, behaviour, source of knowledge, and contraception methods being used.

**Results** AIDS (99% girls and 95% boys) is the most recognized sexually transmitted disease, and venereal warts and hepatitis b are the least recognized sexually transmitted diseases (about 20% of the examinees). In our research 21% of girls and 61% of the examined boys were sexually active. 5% of girls and 12% of boys had their first sexual intercourse before they turned 14, 37% of girls and 47% began sexual activity at ages 14 – 17, and 44% of girls and 30% of boys were older than 17. 75% of girls and 34% of boys had had only one sexual partner. 5% of girls and 13% boys had had sexual intercourse with more than 5 partners. Condoms were the most frequent contraception method (15% of girls and 10% of boys), followed by stopping intercourse before ejaculation (15% of girls and 10% boys).

**Conclusion** Most of the examinees in this research are adequately informed about sexually transmitted diseases and about the risk group. The examinees obtain information about sexuality and sexually transmitted diseases mostly from newspaper and magazines, books, television and their parents. Boys are sexually more active than girls, have their first sexual experience at a younger age than girls and change more partners than girls.

**Key words:** Sexually transmitted diseases ▪ Contraception ▪ Adolescence

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