



Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur

*Detailed content
in sexuality education*

SECONDARY



Theme

Comprehensive View of Sexuality

Secondary I (12-13 years old)

Become aware that during adolescence, you will gradually adopt new roles and behaviours related to your sexuality and increasingly make your own decisions

- › Sexuality and its dimensions: biological, psychoaffective, socio-cultural, interpersonal, moral
- › Construction of a vision and personal choices: wishes, needs, limits and the ability to consider those of others, whether or not to follow various gender stereotypes and social norms, strategies for finding information and help



Secondary V (16-17 years old)

Become aware of the different facets of yourself so you can embrace your sexuality all your life

- › Be able to make decisions, assert yourself, articulate your needs and wishes
- › Be able to examine the ways you express your sexuality, including your sexual behaviours
- › Have a positive body image from a sexual point of view (consider yourself attractive)
- › Be able to obtain sexual pleasure alone and with a partner



Why do students need to learn this?

Secondary school students experience numerous changes in the area of sexuality:¹ they consolidate their gender identity,² become aware of their sexual orientation, engage in emotional and romantic relationships,³ progressively experiment with sexual behaviours⁴ and develop their capacity for emotional and sexual intimacy.⁵ These experiences are sources of learning, but they can also induce students to question themselves⁶ when they are exposed to different sources of contradictory information.⁷

The approach taken with secondary school students should:

- be consistent with that taken at the elementary level, where students begin to develop a positive, comprehensive view of sexuality.
- emphasize the positive role that sexuality plays in our lives⁸ and not focus only on the “risks” associated with it or on prevention.⁹
- help young people face the challenges posed by their sexuality.

Sexual Growth and Body Image



SECONDARY

Secondary I (12-13 years old)

Reflect on the advantages of having a positive body image

- › Feelings about your own body
- › Attitudes and behaviours related to appreciating your own body
- › Influence of body perception on the expression of sexuality
- › Advantages of having a positive body image

Understand how certain norms can influence body image

- › Standards and messages about the body from the people in your life (peers, family), society and the media
- › Influence of these standards and messages on people's body image



Why do students need to learn this?

Puberty destabilizes body image to some extent during a period when adolescents are preoccupied with what they wish to project (fashion, peer affiliation, attitudes).¹⁰

Adjustment to pubertal changes occurs differently in individual young people and depends on various factors:

- Adolescents who go through gradual changes at more or less the same time as their peers are more likely to adapt to these changes better than adolescents who go through changes quickly and separately from their peers.¹¹
- Peer pressure (conversations about appearance, comparisons), media and other social pressures can create dissatisfaction with one's own body.¹²
- As adolescents mature over time, they are more capable of bringing their beliefs into harmony with those of the significant people around them.¹³

A negative body image is associated with feelings of depression, eating disorders and low self-esteem, especially among adolescent girls.¹⁴

The approach taken in Secondary Cycle One should:

- take into account the delayed onset of puberty in some young people: age 13 for girls and age 14 for boys.¹⁵
- support adolescents in developing a positive body image.

Identity, Gender Stereotypes and Roles, and Social Norms



SECONDARY

Secondary I (12–13 years old)

Recognize the role of puberty in the consolidation of your gender identity

- › Events at the beginning of adolescence: physical and psychological transformations of puberty, evolution of relations with peers, romantic and sexual awakening
- › Exploration of new sexual values and norms, some of which reflect stereotypes (peers, social environment, media)
- › Influence on your gender identity



Secondary III (14–15 years old)

Analyze different representations of sexuality in the public space

- › Messages and images in media: advertising, reality TV, movies, music, social media and other interactive technologies, Internet, sexually explicit material
- › Comparison of messages in the media and those conveyed by the people around you (peers, family, school)

Explain how representations of sexuality in the public space can influence the expression of your sexuality

- › Norms and values conveyed in the public space and by the people around you
- › Personal norms and values
- › Expression of your sexuality in the public space (expressing your identity, relationships), intimate space (shared with a few chosen people) and private space (personal feelings and experiences)



Why do students need to learn this?

Adolescence is a period of transition marked by the discovery of feelings and introspection¹⁶ and in which gender identity, formed during childhood, becomes strengthened, consolidated and differentiated.¹⁷

- › This process of individuation¹⁸ is characterized by a distancing of oneself from parents, a search for independence¹⁹ and the growing influence of one's peer group. The emotional experiences (interactions with peers,²⁰ dating, romantic relationships) and sexual experiences (fantasies, sexual behaviours) that gradually appear contribute to shaping identity and adolescent self-awareness as sexual beings.²¹
- › Adolescents' interactions with their social environment also contribute to defining the attitudes, behaviours and experiences that are deemed by society as being appropriate for boys and girls.²² Furthermore, the media plays an important role in forming certain beliefs, attitudes and behaviours in the area of sexuality.²³ By observing the people around them and imitating²⁴ them, adolescents are liable to subscribe to gender stereotypes²⁵ that may vary according to the norms established by society or by peer groups.
- › Although new norms may emerge and spread quickly, especially through increased access to technologies such as the Internet, social media and smartphones (e.g. sexualization of social relationships and media space, sexting), other more traditional norms continue to exist and influence the beliefs of adolescents about gender roles and the relations between men and women (e.g. double standard regarding the socially acceptable sexual behaviours of girls as opposed to boys, the initiation of sexual behaviours).

Young adolescents between 12 and 14 years of age:

- › can be flexible in adopting non-stereotypical gender roles, but after the onset of puberty they are confronted with growing pressures to conform to more traditional behaviours and attitudes.²⁶
- › make decisions partly influenced by the desire to conform to expectations related to their gender and to peer interactions,²⁷ especially to avoid rejection.²⁸
- › who do not conform to gender stereotypes or who are homosexual are subjected to more physical and verbal violence than young heterosexuals.²⁹ Girls are more open than boys toward those who do not conform to stereotypes,³⁰ mainly because adopting masculine roles is more positively perceived.³¹

The approach taken with adolescents in Secondary Cycle One should:

- › support their reflections on their gender identity and on certain negative effects of traditional versions of masculinity and femininity that may affect their interpersonal relationships and sexual behaviours.³²

Adolescents between 14 and 17 years of age:






- › are especially preoccupied with what others think about them,³³ but they are returning to a more flexible view of gender roles.³⁴
- › may feel embarrassed or anxious about³⁵ what behaviours to adopt, but they are able to evaluate more dimensions of a situation and make decisions about their behaviours, attitudes and beliefs with greater independence.³⁶
- › need consistency and are faced with the challenge of constructing their own identity, a task that can be even more challenging for young people from different cultural communities.³⁷
- › move toward a more realistic perception of their aspirations at the end of their secondary studies (reducing the distance between the ideal self and the real self).³⁸

The approach taken with adolescents in Secondary Cycle Two should:

- › continue to support the development of their self-awareness in order to increase their ability to make decisions based on their desires and needs.
- › take into account the positive and negative influence that may be exerted by certain prevalent norms in society and in the peer group regarding the expression of sexuality.

Emotional and Romantic Life

SECONDARY

Secondary I (12-13 years old)	Secondary II (13-14 years old)	Secondary III (14-15 years old)	Secondary IV (15-16 years old)	Secondary V (16-17 years old)
<p>Become aware of the role of feelings of love and attraction in adolescence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Similarities and differences between feelings of friendship, love and attraction › Manifestations of feelings of love and attraction: inside yourself and in your attitudes and behaviours › Variations as to for whom and when these feelings arise › Importance of these feelings in your life <p>Understand how feelings of love and attraction help you to become aware of your sexual orientation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Sexual orientation: definition and continuum › Gradual nature of the discovery of your sexual orientation › Situations that can give rise to questions about your sexual orientation › Feelings associated with the discovery of your sexual orientation › Factors that can help and factors that can act as obstacles to accepting your sexual orientation 	<p>Engage in a critical reflection on adolescent romantic relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Characteristics of the couples around you and those presented in the media › Influence of these models of couples on your representations of romantic relationships › Characteristics of romantic relationships in adolescence › Importance attributed to being in a romantic relationship <p>Become aware of the challenges involved in first dating relationship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Nature and intensity of feelings of friendship, love and attraction › Issues involved in sharing your feelings: requited/unrequited, fear of rejection › Social pressures: positive or negative pressures from the people around you and influence of the media › Approaching the other person: appropriate and inappropriate ways of seeking attention and approaching the other person › The relationship itself: divergent expectations, needs, motivations and limits of the partners › Challenge of breaking up and heartbreak: feelings experienced and situations that arise after the breakup › Search for help and solutions to meet the challenges: people around you, school personnel, health professionals 	<p>Become aware of the benefits of a romantic relationship based on mutuality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Consideration of each partner's needs: to love and be loved, to assert yourself and be listened to, to recognize the other and be recognized, to feel safe, to have space for yourself and leave space for your partner in the relationship, to respect your sexual needs and those of your partner › Emotional intimacy: reciprocal feelings of sharing, caring for your partner and feeling cared about, trust and emotional closeness <p>Identify the importance of healthy conflict management in a romantic relationship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Difficulties in a romantic relationship: sharing time between your friends and your partner, difficulty in assuming your sexual orientation, jealousy, cheating, violence › Behaviours that promote conflict resolution: listening, communication of feelings, proposal of mutually satisfying solutions, compromise, seeking of help from the people around you and from school personnel › Strategies to adopt when conflicts persist: seeking help from the people around you, school personnel and health professionals › Separation: reasons to separate and ways of separating 	<p>Recognize the signs of violence in a dating relationship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Warning signs: feeling that something is not right, feeling controlled or manipulated, feeling cut off from the outside world › Occurrences of violence: verbal, psychological, sexual, physical › Mutual violence › People concerned, regardless of gender: victims, perpetrators or witnesses of violence <p>Search for solutions to prevent or stop violence in the context of a dating relationship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Social support: seeking help from people close to you, listening to a friend who confides in you, reporting a situation of violence › Empowerment: listening to yourself and trusting your intuition, taking your time before entering into a relationship, considering ending a relationship, ending the relationship 	<p>Become aware of what supports the establishment and maintenance of meaningful interpersonal and romantic relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Balance between the dimensions of dependence and autonomy and of the importance attributed to interpersonal and romantic relationships › Capacity for emotional intimacy: maintenance of your identity and a self-image consistent with your values and personality, openness about yourself and acceptance of the other person, reciprocal feelings, self-care and care for the other person, commitment, expression of your needs, trust <p>Understand how experience acquired in previous interpersonal and romantic relationships can enrich your current relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › What you learned about interpersonal relationships › What you learned about romantic relationships › Applying your past experience to your present relationships
				

Emotional and Romantic Life

SECONDARY

Why do students need to learn this?

All adolescents are faced with emotions, and most even experience romantic relationships. However, among young people of the same age, each individual's experience is different.³⁹

Romantic relationships contribute positively to adolescents' development.⁴⁰ Through these relationships, they gain valuable experience in this period of their lives.⁴¹ Regardless of the adolescents' gender, sexual orientation or culture, such relationships provide a learning context in which young people can progressively construct their identity as a romantic partner,⁴² which will be useful to them in future intimate relationships.⁴³ Reciprocity, characterized by mutual support and shared trust,⁴⁴ is a central feature of romantic relationships.

The gradual path to intimacy⁴⁵ is marked by a desire for closeness, an exchange of confidences, and opening up. Entering into a romantic relationship calls for new skills that are nevertheless an extension of previous experiences in relationships with family and peers.⁴⁶ The intensity of romantic feelings and the awakening of sexuality distinguish adolescent experience from that of childhood.⁴⁷ Many adolescents with no romantic partner participate in outings and activities with peers to whom they may sometimes be attracted. These activities are often a prelude to the development of a romantic relationship⁴⁸ as they help them meet potential romantic partners.⁴⁹ The need for security, self-fulfillment and recognition are some of the developmental needs that are satisfied by adolescent romantic relationships.⁵⁰

Adolescent romantic relationships are influenced by:⁵¹

- the peer group, which dictates romantic norms.⁵²
- the family, which acts as a model for close relationships and regulates the speed at which young people engage in romantic relationships.⁵³
- social and cultural norms, which convey beliefs about the value of love, the appropriate times for forming romantic relationships, and gender roles in such relationships.⁵⁴ Social and cultural norms also encourage or inhibit romantic and sexual involvement by defining which romantic and sexual partners are appropriate.⁵⁵
- representations of adolescent romantic relationships constructed⁵⁶ from their own romantic experiences and from the observation of relationships in their environment (e.g. parents, siblings, peers, the media),⁵⁷ which shape their romantic behaviours and form the basis of their interpretation of the behaviour of others.⁵⁸ Young people's representations of romantic relationships are also influenced by social⁵⁹ and cultural⁶⁰ norms that dictate the nature of and appropriate time for these relationships,⁶¹ as well as by the characteristics that make people more attractive or less attractive.⁶²

Young people between 11 and 13 years of age are intensely interested in topics related to love⁶³ and report that they have already been in love, and 20% to 40% of young people between the ages of 11 and 15 say that they have a boyfriend or girlfriend.⁶⁴

Romantic relationships at the beginning of adolescence are complementary to young people's friendships because they often form within a group of friends who act as matchmakers.⁶⁵

Why do students need to learn this?

Adolescents between 12 and 15 years of age:

- › have expectations about their romantic relationships that mainly involve doing things they enjoy together.⁶⁶
- › may have several short-term romantic relationships in the same year and go through the same number of breakups.⁶⁷
- › frequently experience non-reciprocal feelings, mainly because they have mistaken friendship with a peer for romantic interest; feel confused about a friendship that includes flirting and physical contact; and want to have a romantic relationship with someone who does not share their feelings.⁶⁸
- › are preoccupied with their peers' acceptance of their romantic partner⁶⁹ and are more influenced by stereotyped representations of romantic relationships in the media, given their less developed self-awareness.⁷⁰
- › who are wondering about their sexual orientation and who are attracted to members of their own sex are faced with more challenges in identifying and meeting a potential partner⁷¹ and often go out with partners of the opposite sex. These relationships may provide a facade of heterosexuality and help them to become aware of their emotional and sexual homosexual attractions.⁷² These young people, especially boys, are at greater risk of being victimized or harassed by their peers because of the social non-acceptance of homosexual attraction and behaviours.⁷³

The approach taken with 12- to 15-year-olds should:

- › help them develop a realistic vision of romantic relationships (expectations and beliefs about attachment, caring for someone, sexuality and affiliation).⁷⁴
- › support them in their reflections about the new feelings they are experiencing in relation to love and romantic relationships and teach them to manage positive and negative feelings (non-mutual attraction, rejection, breaking up, betrayals, heartbreak).⁷⁵
- › help them develop their ability to manage in a healthy way the difficulties and conflicts that arise in a romantic relationship, since this can foster the partners' autonomy in the relationship.⁷⁶

Adolescents may experience violence in their dating relationships.⁷⁷

The prevention of all types of violence in dating relationships is necessary, especially since:

- › more than one-third of young people in Secondary III and V who were in a dating relationship experienced at least one type of violence (verbal, psychological, physical or sexual).⁷⁸
- › 60% to 80% of relationships continue⁷⁹ in spite of episodes of violence. Love or the hope to change the partner are among the explanatory factors.
- › young people who have experienced violence in a relationship are more at risk of experiencing it in future relationships.⁸⁰

Prevention at this age should:

- › help students to recognize the types⁸¹ of violence and their manifestations (e.g. control)⁸² and warning signs.⁸³
- › form part of a broader reflection⁸⁴ on love⁸⁵ since certain unrealistic representations can contribute to violence (as inflicted by the perpetrator or suffered by the victim).⁸⁶
- › take into account the positive role of peers, since young people who experience violence often have difficulty recognizing it (help, witness, confidant), as well as the negative influence they can have by encouraging violence.⁸⁷

Between 60% and 80%⁸⁸ of adolescents 16 years of age or older report that they are in a romantic relationship. Young people at this age:

- › are more likely to be in a committed relationship and to share emotional intimacy and take care of one another.⁸⁹
- › place more value on a romantic partner on the basis of mutual feelings and less on the basis of physical appearance and personality.⁹⁰
- › place emphasis on the long-term aspects of a relationship and are able to define commitment in a relationship based on emotional (feelings) and cognitive (intimacy) dimensions.⁹¹
- › who are entering into a romantic relationship for the first time are more likely to experience fluctuations of emotion and behaviour⁹² because they cannot rely on previous experience and a peer group to judge what is acceptable in a relationship.

The approach taken with adolescents at the end of secondary school should:

- › teach students the advantages of engaging in romantic relationships that are consistent with the goals they are pursuing in other areas of their lives in order to achieve overall personal satisfaction.⁹³



Secondary II (13–14 years old)

Discuss the characteristics of sexual behaviour in adolescence and the motivations behind it

- › Sexual desire and physiological manifestations of sexual arousal
- › Role of emotional commitment: first sexual contact is often experienced with a romantic partner
- › Exploratory and progressive nature of sexual behaviour: sequence of sexual behaviours, from exploratory activities (kissing, touching) to genital sexual relations
- › Norms of adolescent sexual behaviour: perpetuated myths about the precocious nature of adolescent sexual behaviour, contradictory nature of certain norms

Recognize what can inform your choices concerning sexual behaviour in adolescence

- › Knowing yourself: attitudes toward sexual behaviours (e.g. masturbation, touching, kissing, embracing), feelings, motivations, expectations, needs and limits
- › Relationship with your partner: nature and intensity of shared feelings, comfort and trust felt with your partner, ability to respect the needs and limits of your partner
- › Anticipation of positive or negative implications concerning situations of sexual behaviour, including those involving the use of technology
- › Self-assertion and negotiation
- › Real or perceived pressure from peers and the media, including sexually explicit material



Secondary III (14–15 years old)

Reflect on the importance of desire and pleasure in sexual behaviour

- › Questions and concerns regarding sexual behaviours
- › Place of desire and romantic and sexual fantasies
- › Place of psychological and physical pleasure: positive feelings that go with sexual behaviours (feelings of closeness, intimacy, well-being), sexual response (desire, arousal, orgasm, relaxation)

Become aware of the factors that can influence sexual relations in adolescence

- › Context: romantic involvement or non-committed relationship (casual sex, friendship with benefits, one-night stand), planned or spontaneous, protected or unprotected relations, relational dynamics (interdependence or control), consent
- › Internal motivations: to express your sexual desire, feel pleasure, release sexual tension, express love, explore, satisfy curiosity
- › External motivations: to keep up with your peers in terms of experimentation, to escape from your problems, to keep your partner, to please someone else, to impress others, to be popular, to reject parental norms, to acquire social status, to avoid conflict
- › Conditions for enjoyable sexual relations: to express your needs and limits (sense of self-efficacy), to respect them and respect those of the other person, to confront obstacles (perception of control: being able to stop sexual relations at any time if they are no longer desired), to be able to talk about it with someone you trust (people around you, school personnel, health professional), as needed



Secondary IV (15–16 years old)

Understand your position on different issues related to sexual relations in adolescence

- › New socio-sexual realities: non-committed relationship, use of social media to express your sexuality, sexting, sexualization of the public space
- › Alcohol and drug consumption
- › Slander of reputation and double standards in the perceptions of girls and boys who engage in sexual behaviour
- › Consent
- › Differences between the expectations and motivations of partners
- › Dealing with social pressures and norms: from a partner, peers, parents and media, including sexually explicit material, and performance anxiety

Become aware of factors important to sustaining emotional intimacy and sexual intimacy

- › Emotional intimacy between partners: sharing your secrets, communicating, trusting the other person, sharing activities and interests, sharing points of view, taking care of yourself and of the other person, ability to be assertive and to negotiate
- › Capacity for sexual intimacy: sexual relations considered as a measure of a relationship, ability to learn from past experiences, decisions about how to express your sexuality, comfort with your sexuality, whether or not you are in a couple, whether or not you are sexually active



Why do students need to learn this?

In adolescence, initiation into active sexual life takes place progressively in an exploratory mode.⁹⁴ Sexual behaviours with a partner for the most part occur in a romantic context.⁹⁵ The range of sexual actions that adolescents consider acceptable increases as the partners become more involved emotionally.⁹⁶ Those adolescents who reach pubertal maturity earliest are also, on average, the first to engage in active genital activity.⁹⁷

Young people who understand that the development of satisfying sexuality is a learning process will have more realistic expectations regarding their first sexual experiences and will be better able to evaluate how positive or negative experiences affect their self-image, their current relationships and their gender identity.⁹⁸

Sexual behaviours are generally sporadic⁹⁹ and not always planned.¹⁰⁰ Adolescents:

- learn and model their sexuality on that of their friends and parents as well as the media.¹⁰¹ They are influenced by social norms that dictate what constitutes an appropriate sexual life.¹⁰² They are also influenced by a number of individual factors (romantic feelings, sexual desire, etc.) as well as by other factors connected with the relationship and its context.¹⁰³
- experiment with various actions,¹⁰⁴ often performed in the same sequence (masturbation, kissing, touching, sexual fondling, oral-genital contact, sexual relations with penetration).¹⁰⁵
- may have sexual relations with a member of their own sex. These sexual actions are either related to an openness to and desire for sexual exploration or take place in a context of discovering their own sexual orientation and later identifying as homosexual.¹⁰⁶
- seem to have different gender-based perceptions of expectations regarding sexual behaviours. Girls more often speak of emotions as motives for engaging in sexual relations, while boys speak more of curiosity and sexual pleasure.¹⁰⁷



Why do students need to learn this?

Young people between 12 and 14 years of age:

- › have not generally engaged in a sexual act with penetration¹⁰⁸ and have mostly experimented with kissing¹⁰⁹ and touching.¹¹⁰ A Québec study has found that 4.2%^{111, 112} of young people at this age have had sexual relations with consensual penetration.
- › have often already been exposed to explicit sexual material (at about 11 years old for boys and 13 years old for girls).¹¹³

The approach taken with young people in Secondary Cycle One should:

- take into account the fact that sexual behaviour is an important preoccupation in the lives of adolescents, whether or not they have had actual sexual experiences.¹¹⁴
- encourage them to reflect on their expectations, their intentions of engaging in sexual actions or not¹¹⁵ and the context of adolescent sexual relations so that they can develop a realistic vision of future sexual experiences.¹¹⁶

One Québec study shows that one out of two young people have already engaged in sexual relations (oral, vaginal or anal)¹¹⁷ between the ages of 15 and 17. Other studies find that 20% to 30% of young people of that age have engaged in a sexual act with penetration.¹¹⁸ By the age of 16, 38.9% of young people say they have engaged in sexual relations with vaginal penetration.¹¹⁹ This number rises to 68% among 18- and 19-year-olds.¹²⁰

Between the ages of 14 and 17, adolescents' exploration of sexual behaviour develops considerably:¹²¹

- › Adolescents move from auto-erotic sexuality to sexual experience with a partner,¹²² but continue to experiment with masturbation more often than with other acts with a partner.¹²³
- › Sexual relations with penetration increase in frequency among boys between 14 and 15, and among girls between 15 and 16.
- › A minority of adolescents may have sexual relations without emotional involvement. New socio-sexual phenomena such as friends with benefits have emerged (a friend to have sex with outside of a romantic relationship).¹²⁴ This type of sexual interaction is considered positive for some,¹²⁵ but it can be a problem for others who have vain hopes that a romantic relationship will result from it, or who consider the relationship to be romantic even though the feeling is not mutual.¹²⁶

The approach taken with young people in Secondary Cycle Two should:

- consider sexual relationships from a positive perspective¹²⁷ and present their useful contribution to adolescent development as well as their challenges.
- place value on respecting the needs of the people involved in sexual behaviours,¹²⁸ especially by helping adolescents appreciate the connections between behavioural choices and their implications.¹²⁹
- raise awareness of strategies that enable adolescents to make enlightened choices concerning sexual behaviours. These strategies must take into account the particular contexts of adolescent sexual relations¹³⁰ (desire and intense sexual arousal, limited time, peer and social pressure, new socio-sexual realities, etc.).

Sexual Assault and Sexual Violence

SECONDARY

Secondary II (13–14 years old)

Reflect on the impact of myths and prejudices about sexual assault

- › Myths and prejudices: about the person who is a victim or a perpetrator, girls, boys, the context of sexual assault (e.g. drugs, alcohol), consent
- › Impact of myths and prejudices: diminished ability to recognize a situation of sexual assault, attribution of blame (shame, guilt and confusion felt by people who are victims), obstacles to reaching out for social support (difficulty of reporting the assault), isolation

Understand your own position on the notion of consent and its application in order to recognize a situation of sexual assault

- › Notion of consent: age difference, reasons for accepting or refusing a sexual behaviour, validity of consent and situations in which consent is not possible, real or perceived sexual pressure, in the virtual world
- › Contexts: situations (e.g. isolation, drug or alcohol consumption, relationship of authority that makes refusal difficult, fear of upsetting the person), rights



Secondary III (14–15 years old)

Become aware of the active role you can play in preventing or reporting a situation of sexual assault

- › Situations requiring the use of self-protection skills: with a friend, an acquaintance, a romantic partner or ex-partner, a stranger in the real or virtual world
- › Factors of vulnerability in each situation

Understand the experience of people who are victims of sexual assault in order to react appropriately if a friend confides in you

- › Helpful attitudes: listening, empathy, non-judgmental attitude, believing the person, confidentiality, not insisting on hearing details of the assault, referral to a person who may be able to help (person at school or an organization)
- › Resources that can help: at school, in the community



Why do students need to learn this?

Certain factors related to the psychosexual development of young people make adolescents vulnerable to sexual violence, including:

- curiosity about sexuality, desire for love, closeness,¹³¹ romance and romantic relationships,¹³² desire for acceptance,¹³³ feeling of independence.¹³⁴ All these can cause some young people to ignore safety rules, especially in the presence of their friends,¹³⁵ whether in the real or virtual world.

Among 12- to 17-year-olds:

57% of sexual assaults are perpetrated by an acquaintance, a friend or an ex-partner.¹³⁶ The age of the presumed perpetrators indicates that many of them are peers since 39% were between 12 and 17 years old.¹³⁷

The Internet is an integral part of their social life:¹³⁸ they spend a lot of time on social media¹³⁹ where they are supervised less¹⁴⁰ than they were in their childhood. Although this is not the most frequent form of sexual assault in early adolescence, young people 12 to 17 years old are overrepresented among victims of online luring (82%, of which 46% are between the ages of 12 and 14 and 36% are between the ages of 15 and 17).¹⁴¹

At this age, prevention of sexual assault should consist of:

- › repeating prevention messages,¹⁴² reinforcing the self-protection skills taught in elementary school and examining the notion of consent and the nuances associated with it¹⁴³ so as to be able to protect themselves in risk situations common in adolescence.
- › reducing the number of new cases of sexual violence by targeting young people with problematic behaviours as well as potential victims.¹⁴⁴

Young people between the ages of 15 and 17:

They represent 15% of all victims of sexual assault under 18 years of age in Québec.¹⁴⁵ Among girls, 6.4% of 13-year-olds and 10.9% of 16-year-olds have experienced at least one episode of sexual violence¹⁴⁶ committed by their romantic partner.

As well as continuing to be vulnerable to sexual assault, young people are at risk of experiencing violence in a romantic context.¹⁴⁷ (See the content for Secondary IV under the theme “Emotional and Romantic Life.”)



Secondary II (13-14 years old)	Secondary III (14-15 years old)	Secondary IV (15-16 years old)	Secondary V (16-17 years old)
<p>Become aware of the importance of taking responsibility for your sexual and reproductive health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Portrait of STBBIs and pregnancy among young people › STBBIs and modes of transmission › Pregnancy and the window of fertility › Methods of protection: condoms, hormonal contraceptive, emergency contraceptive <p>Adopt a positive attitude toward the use of condoms and contraception</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Perception of the risk of STBBIs and pregnancy and of the severity of the consequences of unprotected or poorly protected sexual relations: immediate, short-term and long-term consequences › Advantages of using protection: avoiding the consequences of STBBIs and pregnancy in adolescence › Protection factors: perception of the risk of STBBIs and pregnancy, perception of shared responsibility, postponement of sexual relations, positive attitudes to protection, planning of sexual relations, access to condoms and contraception › Personal options: attitudes toward the use of condoms and contraception, proper use of protection methods, access to resources, confidentiality starting at 14 years of age <p style="text-align: right;"></p>	<p>Understand how protection methods work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Action of hormonal contraceptives in the body › Correct use of condoms › Effectiveness of methods › Proper use of methods (practice) › Double protection (STBBIs and pregnancy) <p>Understand attitudes and behaviours to adopt in situations in which it may be difficult to protect yourself</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Perception of control and sense of self-efficacy: in refusing or stopping an unwanted or unsafe sexual relation, in negotiating the use of a condom, in feeling able to assert yourself when needed › Obstacles to safe sexual behaviours: unfavourable attitudes of peers, partner or family toward sexual relations and safe behaviours, consumption of alcohol or other drugs, belief that the partner is not infected or is infertile or that the pill protects against STBBIs › Personal options: protection methods adapted to your needs, context and planning of sexual relations, ability to assert yourself and negotiate the use of a condom, strategies for accessing protection methods, strategic place and time for prevention counselling (emergency oral contraception, testing for and treatment of STBBIs, vaccination) <p style="text-align: right;"></p>	<p>Be familiar with the steps to take after unprotected or poorly protected sexual relations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Emergency oral contraception: consultation process › Possible outcomes of pregnancy (abortion, continuing with the pregnancy with the intention of keeping the baby or giving the baby up for adoption): impacts and responsibilities of adolescent parenthood › Testing for STBBIs: consultation process, physical and psychosocial consequences of STBBIs <p>Identify strategies favouring safe sexual behaviours based on factors that influence your own ability to protect yourself</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Risk factors: peer and social pressure and norms, nature of the sexual activity with the partner, questions regarding your own sexual orientation, difficulty accessing resources › Protection factors: individual responsibility, desire to adopt and maintain safe sexual behaviours, shared responsibility (to protect yourself and to protect the other person), personal values (self-care and care for the other person, safety, equality, exclusivity) <p style="text-align: right;"></p>	<p>Identify the risks of STBBIs and pregnancy associated with different contexts of a sexually active lifestyle</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Context of sexual relations: nature of the relationship with the partner, choice and number of partners, frequency of sexual relations, meeting places, risk level of sexual behaviours, consumption of alcohol and other drugs › Measures of protection/testing: importance, frequency and times to consult a health professional and be advised on safe sexual behaviours <p>Reflect on the ethical issues associated with STBBIs and pregnancy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Sense of civic responsibility concerning STBBIs: using a protection method when you have an STBBI or abstaining from sexual relations, notifying an exposed partner, completing the treatment, respecting the wishes of the other person to use protection or to not engage in sexual relations › Unplanned pregnancy: analyzing the situation and making a decision based on possible pregnancy-related issues › Stigmatization and judgment of others <p style="text-align: right;"></p>

Why do students need to learn this?

Adolescence is an important period of transition for learning and/or maintaining safe sexual behaviours.¹⁴⁸ Several factors increase the vulnerability of adolescents to STBBIs and pregnancy:

- self-discovery, the search for identity and sexual orientation,¹⁴⁹ learning about sexuality (planning to have sexual relations, negotiating condom use,¹⁵⁰ asserting themselves in romantic and sexual relationships),¹⁵¹ feelings of invulnerability, magical thinking,¹⁵² a desire to take risks, thrill-seeking, bravado, the need to reassure themselves of their sexual maturity.¹⁵³
- starting to be sexually active at a younger age (longer exposure to risk),¹⁵⁴ having unprotected sex and several sexual partners.¹⁵⁵
- LGBT young people being victims of heterosexism, homophobia and transphobia, which can affect self-esteem and the ability to be self-assertive.¹⁵⁶

The vast majority of 13- and 14-year-olds are not sexually active.¹⁵⁷ They have mainly experimented with kissing¹⁵⁸ and touching.¹⁵⁹ A Québec study estimates that 4.2%^{160, 161} of young people at this age have had consensual sexual relations with penetration.

Sexually active 16-year-olds have reported having had their first sexual relations at the age of 14.5.¹⁶² The sexual behaviours of young people (e.g. age of first sexual relations, number of partners, use of contraception) have changed little in recent decades.¹⁶³

However, early initiation into active sexual behaviour increases the vulnerability of young people to risky sexual behaviours¹⁶⁴ by extending the period in which they have sexual contact¹⁶⁵ and consequently increasing the number of sexual partners.¹⁶⁶

The approach taken to encourage students to take steps to prevent STBBIs and pregnancies in Secondary Cycle One should:

- consider the age, level of development and sexual experience of the students.¹⁶⁷
- be offered prior to the start of sexual activity because safe behaviours applied in first sexual relations have a greater chance of being maintained over time.
- ensure that students understand that they can play an active role in prevention.¹⁶⁸
- consider the protection factors and risk factors (environmental and individual) that influence the sexual behaviours of adolescents¹⁶⁹ as well as other key health factors (knowledge, perception of risk and severity,^{170, 171} personal attitudes and values, perception of norms and behaviours of peers) with the aim of developing attitudes favourable to safe practices.¹⁷²

A Québec study shows that one young person in two has had sexual relations (oral, vaginal or anal)¹⁷³ between 15 and 17 years of age. Another study suggests that 30% of young people of this age have had sexual relations with penetration.¹⁷⁴ By the age of 16, 38.9% of young people claim to have had sexual relations with vaginal penetration.¹⁷⁵ This number increases to 68% among 18- and 19-year-olds.¹⁷⁶

Adolescents between the ages of 15 and 19 form one of the groups most at risk of contracting an STBBI:¹⁷⁷ cases of chlamydia among girls between the ages of 15 and 19 have risen more than 250% since 2006.¹⁷⁸

- 59% of sexually active young people used condoms each time they had sexual relations,¹⁷⁹ while 10% have never used them.¹⁸⁰ The use of condoms tends to diminish¹⁸¹ over time in adolescence, mainly owing to the use of oral contraceptives¹⁸² or to having a regular partner.¹⁸³
- Sexual behaviours in adolescence are characterized by their sporadic and unplanned nature,¹⁸⁴ which can have a negative effect on the adoption of safe practices.¹⁸⁵
- Many young people who have not yet had sexual relations say that they are firmly in control regarding the use of contraception and communication with their partner.¹⁸⁶ This perception of control diminishes when young people become sexually active and are confronted with the difficulties of maintaining a relationship, and communicating and negotiating with a partner.¹⁸⁷

The approach taken to continue increasing the students' awareness and responsibility regarding the prevention of STBBIs and pregnancies in Secondary Cycle Two should:

- reinforce individual values that promote safe sexual behaviours and skills in managing sexuality, sexual risks and practices.¹⁸⁸
- emphasize the use of condoms¹⁸⁹ and contraceptive measures in order to enable young people to reduce the possibility of pregnancy or STBBIs.
- encourage the adoption and maintenance of safe sexual behaviours¹⁹⁰ by reinforcing young people's sense of self-efficacy¹⁹¹ in asserting themselves and negotiating the use of a condom.
- develop the motivations and skills required to judge the risks involved in different situations.¹⁹²

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