



RISE

YOUNG WOMEN'S CLUBS

Your 8th edition

Living with
HIV



Virginity testing:
the reality

So you want to go to
university?

C O N T E N T S

Welcome to your magazine!

One of the things that fascinates me about life is that no matter our skin colour – white, black or brown – we all have different cultural backgrounds that define us. And we all reach a stage in life where we make individual choices about whether to uphold our cultural practices or leave them behind.

In this issue, we tackle virginity testing, one of the most complex cultural practices affecting young South African women. Every year thousands around the country go through this procedure, which in theory reveals whether a girl's virginity is intact or not.

There are some who respect this form of culture and uphold it with pride. Others find it degrading and without positive meaning.

The opinions about virginity testing are endless, as are the disputes. At *Rise*, we believe that every woman is entitled to make her own decisions about her body.

Page through this issue to find out more and to decide what you think. As always we would love to hear your views.

Until next time,

Mapula

on behalf of the Rise team

P.S. Please tell us about your Club activities on riseywc@gmail.com.

You will stand a chance to have your Club profiled in Rise magazine, or to win some airtime!



Mapula Tloubatla

Rise editor

Let Rise hear what you have to say.

Contact us on the *Rise* Young Women's Movement app or on the *Rise* Reporting tool.

If you have questions about how to do this contact Lovemore Manjoro at lovemore@soulcity.org.za or phone 011 771 7935.

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Use our new
email address to get
in touch:
riseywc@gmail.com

Love yourself and be brave!
Read about Thina Maghubela, a lecturer in statistics at Rhodes University



What was the best day of your life?

we asked Rise Club members in Phuthaditjhaba in the Free State.

This is what they said:



Karabo Dithotaneng, 15 – Dithotaneng Intermediate

I don't think I have experienced the best day of my life yet. The best day of my life will be the day I become successful, independent, powerful, kind, sharing and loving. I will wear simple clothes to show everyone that I am just like them.



Nteboheng Maleka, 15 – Mamosa Intermediate

I got a certificate of merit for Mathematics in Grade 8. It was the first time in my life. I was so proud of myself, I smiled all the time.

Tebello Khotle, 15 – Dithotaneng Intermediate

I was top of my class in Grade 6 and 7. I felt so excited and my mom said that I am her best daughter ever.



Seipati Mkhwanazi, 22 – unemployed

When I got an A for all the subjects in matric I was so happy I even cried. I was shaking. I was even in the newspaper.



Mamello Mahlasela, 16 – Dithotaneng Intermediate

In Primary School I was always in second position and I got a trophy in Grade 4. My mother was so happy she even bought me two cakes. I am very happy that my mother supports me even if she does not have education herself.



Phakiso Motaung, 15 – Dithotaneng Intermediate

My mother had a little girl when I was eight years old. And I was so happy that someone would call me sister. I was feeling lonely and I was wondering why my mother didn't get me a little sister.



Lebohang Magabe, 15 – Dithotaneng Intermediate

I went to the Oprah Winfrey School to write an English and Maths exam. I met new girls. I had never been to Gauteng before.

Madipolelo Mosia, 16 – Mafube Intermediate

I got a medal for shotput. I felt so happy and proud and strong.



Moleboheng Maleka, 15 – Mamosa Intermediate

I won a gold medal for performing poetry at the loveLife festival. I was so happy. I put the gold medal up on the room divider.

What about you? What was the best day of your life? Let us know on the Rise App or on the Rise Talkshow Facebook page. #bestday

Save our Souls

the Rise Club that inspires

(SOS)



From left to right: Anezwa, Ondela, Abongile, Anelisa, Phiwe and Viwe



The town of Dimbaza lies 10 km outside King William's Town in the Eastern Cape. People were dumped here in the 1960s after being forcibly removed from their homes under apartheid's racist policies. Dimbaza was also where many political activists were banished to.

Today the Save our Souls Rise Club still carries this spirit of activism.

Most of the members were part of Soul City's Soul Buddyz Clubs and helping the community is second nature to them.

Anelisa Sauli (22), chairperson of SoS explains: "The things we did in Soul Buddyz helped me to see the world differently – not just to think about myself but about others."

Activities and events

This year the club members made time to visit an institution for the blind and ran a campaign in schools about debt. But what they are most proud of are two community events that they organised.

At the first event they invited school children and their parents to the community hall to discuss peer pressure. The next event was about self-image. This time 200 people attended.

Songs and poems

Here Anezwa Makweni took the lead: "I'm a big woman and I saw that this was an opportunity to encourage young people to love their body. My parents always told me that I was beautiful. A woman needs to associate with people who boost her confidence."



A WOMAN NEEDS TO ASSOCIATE HERSELF WITH PEOPLE WHO BOOST HER CONFIDENCE

Anezwa sang a song and another club member, Viwe Ndudula, recited a poem she had written for the event. The community loved it and are openly proud of these young women.

Sindiswa Sauli, a parent, says: "Rise changes our community. We have lots of challenges like drugs and alcohol abuse. They talk about these things. The events they organised were great – well attended and well organised. I wish I had something like this when I was young. We had to make mistakes. We used to enter into relationships, falling pregnant and no one talked about these things."

Women need an education

The Club members have all studied or are still studying, at tertiary institutions. The women support each other in their struggles with getting their education.

FOR WOMEN TO BE INDEPENDENT WE HAVE TO BE EDUCATED



Anezwa says: "For women to be independent you have to be educated. If you don't have education then you can be much more easily abused by men. Or you are going to look for a sugar daddy."

Anelisa adds: "If we study, we can also have a say in this country."

Male violence

The women have all experienced some male violence in their lives.

Viwe says: "I once saw my brother beat up a girlfriend. Afterwards I asked him why he did it. He said she was making him weak."

This is also why they make a point of inviting young men to their events.

Anelisa says: "We need to use Rise to do things about male violence that is why we make males part of our events. It is a foundation for better things to happen and makes us safer as well."



Boosting confidence

The Rise Clubs in Hammanskraal, northern Gauteng, recently held an event to raise awareness about the Clubs, and to build the confidence of Rise members. There are currently eight Clubs in the area. The event was aimed at attracting new members.

They decided to have some fun and to hold a competition with a difference, to show everything a young woman can be.

The three mentors (lead by Dimakatso Majapelo) were responsible for the coordinating the day. Ten girls, aged between fifteen and nineteen, took part in the competition. An audience of 300, made up of parents and community members, was in attendance. Soul City's Nelisiwe Hlope and two community members were the judges.

The young women dressed in different outfits, starting with jeans and Rise T-shirts. The second outfit was traditional cultural attire, and finally the young women wore formal dresses. Contestants then had to answer questions from the judges relating to Rise Clubs and programmes.

The winners were chosen based on how they answered the questions, as well as their confidence when showcasing their outfits. The Clubs also used the event to raise funds by selling snacks and cool drinks.



The mentors, with Dimakatso Majapelo in the middle



Western Cape

We are glad to announce the launch of Rise Young Women's Clubs in the Western Cape. A warm welcome to our new Rise sisters there. Watch this space for news about their Clubs.



Are you interested in a nursing career? See the interview with Sister Maloleke and information on how to become a nurse on page 8

Driving a youth health project

The Tswelopele Rise Club in Ga-Rankuwa, Gauteng, has linked up with a nurse at the local clinic to start a new youth project.

Sister Maloleke at the Phedisong Clinic in Ga-Rankuwa had found that young people don't like coming to the clinic. This was because they felt that in the past the nurses were either not interested in their problems or judging them.

So when the Tswelopele Rise Club arrived at the clinic to leave pamphlets and magazines, she saw a wonderful opportunity to work with them.

Together they formed the "Rising Youth of Ga-Rankuwa" project and planned a youth event. A lot of hard work went into organising the event and they managed to involve two other Rise groups and loveLife.

The Youth Health event started with a fun walk through Ga-Rankuwa. Afterwards the young people gathered at the clinic where they were entertained by local DJ's and listened to motivational talks. T-shirts, backpacks, cool drinks and food were handed out. Over 50 young people turned up and an article about the event was published in the *Daily Sun*.

As a follow up, Rising Youth of Ga-Rankuwa has started discussion groups at the clinic every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon. These talks are attended by young and old who use the opportunity to ask questions.



Sister Nthabiseng Maloleke is a Youth Health co-ordinator at the Phedisong Clinic in Ga-Rankuwa, Gauteng. Her wish to heal people comes from her own experience of sadness.

This friendly young professional nurse grew up in a happy home in Mabopane near Pretoria. When she was 8 years old, her father passed away. Her mother continued to give her four young children lots of love.

I didn't fit in with the other girls

Despite this, Nthabiseng always felt a little different. "I was a skinny girl, I didn't fit in with the other girls. I thought I was ugly."

After school, she studied radiography at Medunsa University. Towards the end of her first year her mother passed away. Nthabiseng was forced to stop her studies for a year.

But then one day she accompanied her friend who was applying to a nursing college. For some reason, the clerk encouraged Nthabiseng to fill in the forms too. Nthabiseng remembered that her mother had always wanted her to be a nurse and filled them in. She was immediately accepted.

Nthabiseng started to enjoy life again – maybe a bit too much – and as a result of the partying she failed her first year of nursing.

now I had to deal with failure by myself

"It was hard. My mother had always done everything for me and now I had to deal with failure by myself."

She fell into a deep depression. "I just wanted to sleep and never wake up again. People don't know what you are going through when you feel like that."

When she came out of her depression she started focusing on her studies again and passed.

And then she fell in love with a man and became pregnant. The relationship did not work out and they split up. "I was wanting a man who could be my father, and that was the wrong reason."

Again Nthabiseng felt as if her life was falling apart. "I never thought I would be the kind of girl who would look after my baby alone." This time she was admitted to hospital to be treated for depression.

I can talk to people and make a difference.

In 2014 she got the job as Youth co-ordinator at Phedisong Clinic. "This job is a blessing. I can talk to people and make a difference. I love working with everybody, from pregnant teenagers to old women coming to ask me things about sex. In this job it is important to remember that despite your status in life you are also a human being."



Sister Nthabiseng Maloleke and a colleague



This job is a
blessing

Consider a career in **NURSING**

How do you become a nurse?

You can study at a university, or a nursing college. The SA Nursing Council (sanc.co.za) has a huge database of institutions that offer nursing degrees or diplomas.

Universities

- Universities offer a four-year, full-time undergraduate degree.
- Practical nursing experience is obtained at hospitals and clinics during the four years of study
- You need a matriculation exemption. Some universities require certain subjects such as biology or maths. Different universities have different academic requirements.

Colleges

- There are both public (Department of Health) and private nursing colleges.
- Colleges offer a four-year nursing diploma as well as one and two-year courses.
- A matriculation certificate is the minimum admission requirement for college study.

Read about the work that Sister Maloleke does with Rise Clubs on page 6.

It's not every day that you meet a bubbly, well-travelled 26-year-old who runs her own company. Phindile Sithole-Spong is that person. She is passionate about life, love and romance. She is also HIV positive, with a boyfriend who is not. Rise went to find out more about her life and relationship.

When did you discover that you are HIV positive?

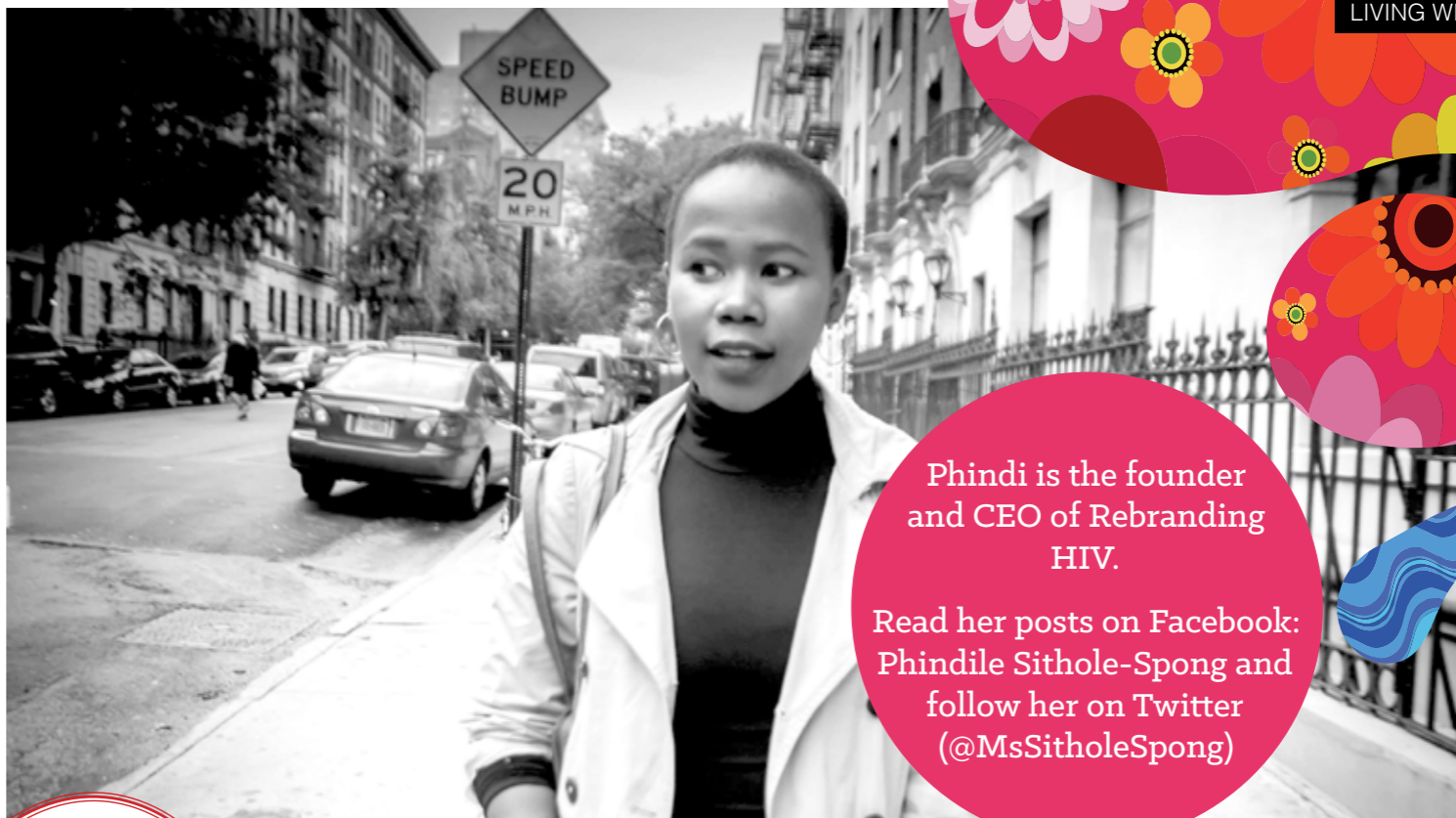
I found out when I was 19 years old. My mother passed away when I was 8, and my father when I was 12. I was adopted when I was 13. I was only tested for HIV when I became so sick I was dying. That is when we found out. By then it had developed into AIDS, since I didn't know my status and had never taken ARVs. Then we looked at my medical history and worked out that I had been born with HIV.

How was your dating life after that?

Relationships are hard, whether or not you are HIV positive. But having to explain myself and teach someone about HIV every time I started a new relationship just became too much. That is until I met my boyfriend.

What was different about him?

He was open minded. He came along when I invited him to meet my doctors. He spoke to me like a normal human being, not like I was dying. He discovered that the chances of me infecting him were very small. I am healthy, I take my medication, we use condoms, and he comes with me for my regular tests. (I test to keep track of my CD4 count, liver function and other vitals that may be affected by ARVs.)



Phindi is the founder and CEO of Rebranding HIV.

Read her posts on Facebook: Phindile Sithole-Spong and follow her on Twitter (@MsSitholeSpong)

WE ALL DESERVE
LOVE

What happened when you had sex for the first time?

We were kissing and it was heating up. So I said, "Wait!" Then I told him my status. He was like, "Whoa!" I said it's better if we stop. He really liked me. I watched the argument between his head and his penis. He said, "It's fine." Then we grabbed condoms and did it. However, he admitted a few days later that he was freaked out. So we just became friends.

How did you get back to being lovers again?

As friends we would hang out all the time. We were both still in love, so we decided to just try it out. I was always scared that it wouldn't work, just like my other relationships. He was worried about dating someone with HIV. But we overcame those challenges and we are making it work. It's been over a year now. It's a milestone for me.

What are your plans for the future of your relationship?

We hope to get married and start a family in a few years' time. Obviously, the problem is that we need to have unprotected sex in order to conceive! After much discussion, we decided to explore the PrEP route. PrEP is a new, pre-exposure drug for HIV-negative people to take before having sex with someone who may be infected with HIV. After speaking to my doctor about it, he suggested that when my boyfriend and I are ready to have children, my boyfriend must go onto PrEP. Then once a week we can have unprotected sex. This is very closely monitored to ensure that I do not infect him.

LA-LA

When the condom is gone-dom

Sis' Dolly must need aspirin after reading such letters! But even the letters she gets can't compare with the weird reasons guys come up with for refusing to use a condom. Think you and your friends have heard them all? We challenge you to take the Rise quiz:

"Dear Sis' Dolly, my boyfriend refuses to use a condom. What should I do?"

"Dear reader, what planet is he from?"



Sex is no laughing matter but sometimes ... we have to smile!

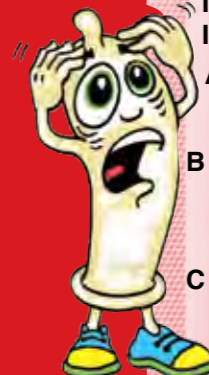


How are you most likely to react to a guy who wants skin-to-skin and says:



"I know we just met two minutes ago, but I know my status. Trust me, I'm safe!"

- A So am I! Let's do this!
- B I'd rather be safe than sorry.
- C You don't look sick or skinny, so I believe you.



"I will pull out quickly before I shoot!"

- A Oh wow! You're a genius! Why didn't I think of that?
- B If you think that works, then you're not as smart as I thought.
- C Even better, let me be on top so I don't catch the sperm and get pregnant.



"We've been together for 6 months we don't need a condom."

- A I don't want you to dump me, so let's dump the condom.
- B Nor do we need children or STDs.
- C 6 months means we are perfect for each other.



"Let's just do it now, getting a condom will spoil the moment."

- A You're so right! This might be our only chance, as you have to rush back to your girlfriend.
- B A moment is all you can do? We might as well not do it at all.
- C We'll think of something tomorrow.

If you answered any A's:
wuuuu shem!

If you answered any B's:
High five!

If you answered any C's, see
"if you answered any A's".

EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE!

Thina Maqhubela is a lecturer in statistics at Rhodes University in the Eastern Cape. Her grandmother, mother and aunt were all street vendors who sold fruit and vegetables by the side of the road. They taught Thina a lot about what it takes to succeed.



Thina Maqhubela was raised in Port Elizabeth by three very powerful women. “My granny and my mom were on the street selling every day. They were very disciplined, hard workers.”

Growing up amongst street vendors made Thina realise that she has a gift for numbers. “I had to do calculations in my head, and I was good at it.”

Focused

Thina says she was determined to do well at school because she knew there was very little money at home. She also says, “I made sure to protect myself from falling pregnant, especially because I was in an environment where it is okay for young girls to get pregnant. I did not want that future.”

“When I was about to matriculate, a few of us applied to go to university together. I chose the University of Cape Town only because it had the cheapest application fee. I got accepted.”

Ubuntu Fund

She approached the Ubuntu Education Fund for a bursary. This is a not-for-profit organisation that provides support for Port Elizabeth’s children. She received a three-year bursary to study for a BSc.

I made sure to protect myself from falling pregnant. I did not want that future.

When Thina completed her degree she went back to Port Elizabeth and worked for the Ubuntu Fund, teaching young high school kids how to use computers.

Next she was accepted to do a Masters degree in the United States. “Being in a different, unfamiliar environment pushes you into seeing things in a new way.”

Finding a job

When she came back to South Africa she struggled to find a job. “I was getting so many rejection letters. You have to learn about failure. It happens even to someone who is doing well.”

You have to learn about failure.

Just as she started working at the Ubuntu programme again she was approached by Rhodes University to teach statistics. “I was 23 years old. I think they saw my passion.”

At the moment Thina is doing her PhD on statistics education. She is the only breadwinner at home and helps to pay for her little sister’s education.

Be brave

She loves going back to her old school and encouraging young people to go to university. “I like to show young girls: Here I am. I was once where you are. Everything is possible. I tell them that my life is all about trial and error. Be brave!”

Thina's tips

for going to university

Apply for more than one bursary.

LOVE YOURSELF AND BE BRAVE!

Ask yourself:

Do you really like to study?
Do you enjoy sitting down and reading and studying?

Don't be shy to admit what you don't know. Try to attend career guidance shows at a university. Talk to people who have a job that looks interesting and ask them how they got there. Go to the admission offices of a university and ask for information.

What do you really enjoy doing?

If something doesn't speak to your heart, don't do it. Your job will have to satisfy you – not your family or your need for status.

What are you good at?

Look at the subjects you are doing at school. Go onto the Internet and Google questions like: "What kind of career does a person who likes to draw do?" Try to match your passion with jobs that are in demand.

What does it take to do the job?

When you discover a career that looks interesting, find out what kind of job this really is. What personality does it take? Google pictures of people in that career.

If you are still undecided, choose a general degree like a BSc or a BA, so that you can still change your mind.

If things don't work out in first year, then be honest with yourself. It is important to make mistakes – that is how you get to know yourself. The problem might not be with you, but with choosing a course you do not enjoy.

Once you have completed a degree it is wonderful to apply to be an exchange student (this means going to study in another town or country). Push yourself. Be adventurous.

The SoS Rise Club members speak out about their experience of tertiary education



Anelisa Sauli

(studying Science at the University of Fort Hare):

We get into debt easily at university because we want to impress others with nice things. We have to realise that it is fine not to have smart clothes.



Ondela Kolokolo

(studying Tourism):

I did not know how to use a computer when I went to college. I found someone who could teach me. Don't be afraid to ask. Find people who don't judge you to help you.



Anezwa Makweni

(studying Agricultural Science at the University of Fort Hare):

At school I was good at Chemistry but when I got to university it was so difficult. So was Economics. I had no clue what it was about. Go to career shows to find out what subjects you will have to do, so that you are prepared.



Viwe Ndudula

(completed one year of Town Planning at Wits University):

I was promised a bursary by a government department. They said I should pay the registration fee and they would re-imburse me. When I got to Wits University they said they didn't actually have money to fund me. So my mom raised money for me.

Accommodation at university is such a struggle. I had to live with my cousin in the centre of town. We got robbed and someone threatened to rape me. I passed everything except History. Then my mom died and I decided to come back home for a while. But I learnt a lot.

I would advise those who want to study to be very organised. Find out everything beforehand. If you have a bursary, make sure it covers everything. Before you travel far, phone University Admissions to make sure that everything is all right.



Abongile Rala

(completed a certificate in broadcasting at Walter Sisulu University):

I was accepted at university, hoping I would get a loan from the Government's National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS). Only in the middle of the year did they tell me that my loan was not approved. I finished the year but I never got a certificate because I could not pay.

You must not rely on only one source of funding. Apply for lots of different bursaries and loans.

The truth about virginity testing



Every year thousands of young women around South Africa are tested to find out if they are a virgin – someone who has not had sex. Some respect this as a cultural practice, others find it degrading. Rise visited a Club in KwaZulu-Natal in 2014 and spoke to some of the women involved. We also asked two young women, Nomalanga and Amanda, about their experiences.



Members of Rise Young Women's Clubs in Nongoma take part in a traditional Zulu dance.

Nomalanga* (27) grew up in Sobantu, a township in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal. She remembers her experience of virginity testing: "It was usually done in a room or enclosed area where a virginity tester would sit on a grass mat, wearing gloves. The woman or girl coming for her testing would lie down and spread her legs wide open. The tester would then open your vagina (like when you enlarge something on your touchscreen phone) with both hands in the vaginal opening. She would look inside, apparently to see if your hymen (see box on the next page) was still intact, or if the size of the vaginal opening had been enlarged by a penis."

Amanda Ndlangisa (26) is a producer at a popular TV station. Her experience of virginity testing was slightly different. "Some testers would use a liquid in a small cap and pour it into the vagina. The idea was that if you are still a virgin, only a small bit of that liquid would flow into your vagina, but if your vagina has been opened by sleeping with boys, then the liquid will flow in easily," Amanda explains.

Prizing virginity

Nana Buthelezi (25) values the procedure. "Umhlanga defines me as a woman of integrity," she says.

Zanele Dlamini (22) agrees, saying, "Keeping my virginity protects me and allows me to build a future for myself before I start dating and settle down."

Culture

Mam' Dladla, who coordinates a virginity testing programme in KZN, is proud of the practice. "It is an amazing tradition which encourages young women to be proud of their bodies while they are still virgins," she says.

Doctor's comment

Dr Fuziwe Dlakavu, a medical doctor specialising as a gynaecologist at a Johannesburg hospital, says there is no science behind virginity testing. She explains: "No-one can examine a patient and guarantee, one hundred percent, whether or not they are a virgin."

Dr Dlakavu says that every woman's body is formed differently: some women's vaginal openings are tighter or looser than others, and the absence or presence of a hymen is not an indicator of virginity. She says, "I'm tired of people who claim to know just by looking at a woman if she is having sex."

Ceremony and talks

For both Nomalanga and Amanda, however, virginity testing is not just about checking for a hymen or vaginal tightness. Amanda describes how the ceremonies would be accompanied by singing, dancing, talks and teachings from the older women "about what it meant to be a woman, about the need to have self-esteem, to be proud of who we are, and not to let men make us feel less good about ourselves".

Nomalanga also says she enjoyed the ceremonies and the teachings. She particularly remembers the reed dance as an exciting time for everyone in the Zulu nation. This annual dance takes place in Nongoma, at the King's palace. It is preceded by an official virginity testing ceremony.



*Not her real name

Being examined

In Amanda's family, her grandmother decided to test the girls in the family herself at home. She did this to protect one of her granddaughters, who was raped when she was 12, and was therefore no longer a virgin. She wanted to avoid gossip in the community.

Amanda remembers having her first virginity test when she was 7 years old. She wasn't told what the procedure was or why it was being done. Now, as a young adult, she believes that her grandmother was fearful that she and her girl cousins would get raped and they wouldn't be able to tell her.

Amanda says she hated being examined and prodded by her grandmother and other women. She says she would have preferred her grandmother and her mother to have educated her about sex and to let her make her own decisions.

Sex talk taboo

"Talk about sex was taboo in a traditional family like mine. No one explained anything to me about what sex was, what virginity was, or why I had to protect it. We were only told that we shouldn't let boys touch us and that we should keep our virginity, because that is ... the pride of our families."

Nomalanga's experience was similar. She says her father was the one who insisted that his four daughters get tested and that he would get the results. No-one ever explained to her or her sisters why it was being done. Even when they were at university, far from home, her father would regularly send for them to come

What is a hymen?

It is a body part about which there are lots of myths (a story that is not true) and beliefs.

The truth:

- The hymen usually looks like a fringe of tissue around the vaginal opening.
- The hymen does not cover the whole vaginal opening. (If it did, blood could not come out of young girls' vaginas each month when they menstruate.)
- Some girls are born without a hymen. Others have only a little bit of tissue.
- Sometimes the hymen gets partly torn when girls play or are active.
- Many women who have never had sex before don't bleed when they first have sex because their hymen has already been a little bit torn.

home to get tested. Nomalanga says she "hated and felt angry about" the invasion of her privacy, the fact that she was forced to do this by her father, and that most often it would be performed by a total stranger who would be touching her private parts. When Nomalanga's father found out that one of his daughters was not a virgin anymore, he disowned her and never spoke to her again.

If I was being a virgin for myself, I would have waited longer to have sex

Amanda also fell pregnant soon after she left home. She says that after she left for university and wasn't forced to take the monthly tests anymore, she had sex as soon as the opportunity arose, out of sheer rebellion. She soon felt pregnant with her first child. Her mother was very angry with her. But Amanda says this anger contrasted with the way the family treated the news of a male cousin making a girl pregnant when he was just 15. This boy cousin was never shamed or punished. All the family did was organise for the two cows, *inkomo ya ka ma*, for breaking the girl's virginity and *Inhlaulo* – for the pregnancy. The girl's bride price fell by two cows as a result of this incident.

Choosing for myself

Amanda is convinced that her virginity "... would have been much more important to me if I was keeping it for myself and because I wanted to, and not because I was nervous about failing my monthly tests. If I was being a virgin just for myself and my own reasons, and if I had been empowered with the information about why it was important to wait before sex, I am sure I would not have had sex so soon."

In contrast, Zanele believes the virginity tests protect her. "I know that engaging with sex at this time comes with many consequences which I am not ready for." And Nana values the procedure for the status it brings, saying, "The community sees me as an example for other young ladies on how a young woman should conduct herself." Mam' Dladla emphasises how important the procedure is in the community. "People must understand that it is part of our culture," she says.

*Patriarchy means a system controlled by men.



I am an example to others

Dr Dlakavu understands that some girls willingly take part in virginity testing to prove their purity to their communities and parents. But she asks, "Why should women be subjected to such outdated patriarchal* practices? And why should our sense of worth be determined by whether or not we are virgins?"



Virginity testing and the law

South Africa has a Children's Act. This is the law about what can and can't be done to children.

According to the Children's Act:

- Virginity testing of children under the age of 16 is **not allowed**.
- Virginity testing of children older than 16 may only be performed:
 - a) if the **child has given consent** to the testing
 - b) after **proper counselling** of the child.
- The results of a virginity test **may not be disclosed** without the consent of the child.
- The body of a child who has undergone virginity testing **may not be marked**.



The Rise App



Step one

Download the Rise App from the App Store and search for Rise Young Women's Clubs.



Step two

Register your Club on the App using your Rise card. You will need to register your cell number, name and card number. If you do not have a Rise card, please contact Lovemore at lovemore@soulcity.org.za or phone 011 771 7935 or use 071 770 9553 to WhatsApp a message or question.

Step three

Use the App to register attendance at your Club meetings and stand a chance to win airtime.

The Rise App is now available on all Nokia phones.

Email us on riseywc@gmail.com

Email us if you have any problems using the App.

You can also email us about your Club activities and stand a chance to have your club profiled in *Rise* magazine, or to win some airtime.



Check up *down there*



Every woman has vaginal discharge: the fluid or mucus that comes out of a vagina. It's nature's way of cleaning out our vaginas. But what's normal and what's not? Read on to be your own vaginal discharge detective.

It is normal and healthy to produce a clear or white discharge from your vagina.

This discharge is produced naturally from the neck of the womb, known as the cervix.

It's nature's way of cleaning out the old cells.

Healthy discharge:

- may make us feel wet, but not sore, itchy or burning
- often leaves a yellow, slightly crusty stain on our underwear when it dries.

How do we know if our discharge is unhealthy?

Any sudden change in your discharge can be a sign of an infection.

Some of these infections, like gonorrhoea, are passed on during sex. Others, like vaginal thrush, are not.

Watch out for these changes in your normal discharge:

- a change in colour or feel
- a sudden bad smell
- an unusually large amount of discharge
- another symptom alongside the discharge, like itching outside the vagina, pain in the pelvis or tummy
- unexpected bleeding from your vagina.

"I always look at my discharge in my panties when I go to the toilet. Sometimes, if I am worried, I even sniff it! I learnt this from a doctor. If it smells bad, there's a chance I have an infection."

– 20-year-old woman, Gauteng



Be a vaginal discharge detective

Your vaginal discharge tells a story. This table will help you to work out what is going on with it. Put a tick next to what is happening with your discharge.

DO YOU HAVE:

Tick the box

- Clear or milky white discharge?
- Brown discharge for a day or two after your period?
- From thin to quite sticky discharge depending on where you are in your cycle?
- Neutral or pleasant-smelling discharge?

If you have ticked the above boxes then your discharge sounds normal.

If you have an infection, the most common causes are:

- **thrush** – a fungal infection that commonly affects the vagina. Most women have it at some stage in their lives.
- **bacterial vaginosis** – a mild bacterial infection of the vagina
- **trichomoniasis** – a sexually transmitted infection (STI) caused by a tiny parasite
- **gonorrhoea or chlamydia** – STIs caused by bacteria
- **genital herpes** – an STI caused by the herpes simplex virus.

DO YOU HAVE:

Tick the box

- Yellow-green, or grey-white discharge?
- Itchy discharge?
- Thick, clumpy discharge (like cottage cheese) that is itchy?
- Unpleasant or fishy-smelling discharge?
- A rash?
- More discharge than usual?
- Pain during or after sex?

ARE YOU:

- Itchy?
- Sore around your vagina?

If you ticked any of the above boxes, you may have an infection. Most infections are easy to treat, but they won't go away on their own. Visit your clinic or healthcare worker to get the medicine you need to be comfortable again.

What else can make your vagina sore and cause abnormal vaginal discharge?

- Strong or very perfumed soap, bubble baths and shower gels can make you sore and itchy.
- The vagina is self-cleansing, so there is no need to wash inside it (called douching).
- Douching can upset the natural balance of bacteria and fungi in your vagina and lead to thrush or bacterial vaginosis.
- Use warm water to gently wash around your genitals, and very mild soap if you need it.

Join the Facebook conversation

The experts answer your health and relationship questions. Send us your questions on the Rise App or on the Rise TV Talkshow Facebook page.

Disclosing to my boyfriend

I have been living with HIV for four years. I'm living a normal life and taking good care of myself. How would I put my status to my boyfriend? I'm having second thoughts about telling him. I just don't know how to. Your advice would be very helpful to me 'cos I think he needs to know at the end of the day.

– **How2Disclose**

Dear How2Disclose

It's great to hear you know your HIV status and that you're looking after yourself. Good for you! Many of us face a similar situation when disclosing to a partner. We suggest you call the National AIDS Helpline on 0800 012 322 to think through what to do, and how to do it. The counsellor will listen and talk with you about disclosing to your boyfriend.

See the article on handling HIV with a boyfriend on page 10.

When to call?

Anytime! The helpline offers telephone counselling and operates 24 hours a day, every day of the week. If you call from a landline, the call is free. If you call from a cellphone, rates will apply. Tell them if you would prefer to have face-to-face counselling. You will have to pay for transport to get to a counselling centre. But the counselling is free.

You can also talk with a nurse about treatment from Mondays to Friday between 7am and 5pm.



Grieving for my baby

I'm a 19-year-old girl. I fell pregnant last year and had to give birth this year. But when I was 38 weeks pregnant, I found out that my baby had died. I got induced and gave birth. The hospital didn't offer any counselling. They just sent me home on the same day after giving birth. They didn't even follow up to find out how I was coping and healing. Even on Facebook there are no support groups here in South Africa for stillbirth. Yet we have a lot of moms who go through it.

– **Still Hurting**

Dear Still Hurting

What you have been through is tragic and so sad. You lost your baby and had to deal with the trauma of the birth and hospital. You haven't had support or counselling afterwards to help you cope and process everything. The most important thing is that you are not alone. See the details below for help and support that is available. You don't have to deal with this alone.

South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG)

Call our 24-hour helpline 0800 41 42 43 for free counselling.
Or SMS 31393 and a counsellor will call you back.

www.sadag.org

Post Natal Depression Support Association (PNDSA)

SMS "help" and your name to 082 882 0072 and a counsellor will contact you.

PNDSA offers counselling and has support groups for women who have lost babies during pregnancy or gave birth to stillborns.

www.pndsa.org.za

There is also a great online support group called 'Born Sleeping':

www.bornsleeping.wordpress.com/about/

Our mistakes help us grow

Members on the Rise Facebook page shared their stories about how they bounced back from low times. Sometimes we first need to forgive ourselves for our mistakes to find the courage to fix them. Be inspired!

Dropping Out

The mistake I made was when I dropped out of school. It left me with regrets the whole year. I was ashamed of repeating Grade 11 so I decided to drop out. I sat at home crying and blaming myself. In the end I told myself it's not the end of the world to repeat grades. I started to forgive myself. And later I told my parents, "I want to go back to school."

I registered at an Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) school and did Level 4. But I was still ashamed of doing Level 4, so I listened to my inner voice and started to take a first step to forgive myself and move on with life. I told myself that I wouldn't hold any grudges for what I did in my past. I bounced back with great things. It wasn't easy but I did it. Now I am so happy to have learnt from my mistakes. Someone once told me you need to make mistakes so that you can grow. Thank you #rise for being part of my life now.

– Naomi

Falling pregnant

The biggest mistake of my life was trusting my baby's dad to the point where I stopped putting myself first and instead did everything for him to be happy. That's when I got pregnant while doing second year varsity. During my pregnancy, he got another girl pregnant too. By then I wanted nothing but to die. But I bounced back. I have a very close relationship with the mother of the other baby. We've been very supportive to one another because neither of us want the babies' dad now. She has been doing her final year and has been helping me apply. And guess what? Next year I'm going back to school!



For discussion in your club:

- When have you bounced back?
- What helped you to get through?
- How can Club members support each other in hard times?

Sisonke Mom

Pregnant?
momconnect
is here to help!

*134*550#

You'll get weekly messages to help with your pregnancy, and answers to all your questions. Join our community - it's completely free and we're here to support you.

It is my dream to register all pregnant women in the country - and help you have the healthiest possible pregnancy.

MINISTER OF HEALTH
AARON MOTSOLEDI



- 1 Ask a nurse to confirm you are pregnant.
- 2 We will help you register on a cellphone.
- 3 Answer a few simple questions about your pregnancy.
- 4 And you're registered - welcome to the family!



Save our Souls

Meet the Rise Club that inspires. Save our Souls Club from Dimbaza in the Eastern Cape.

#SoS

