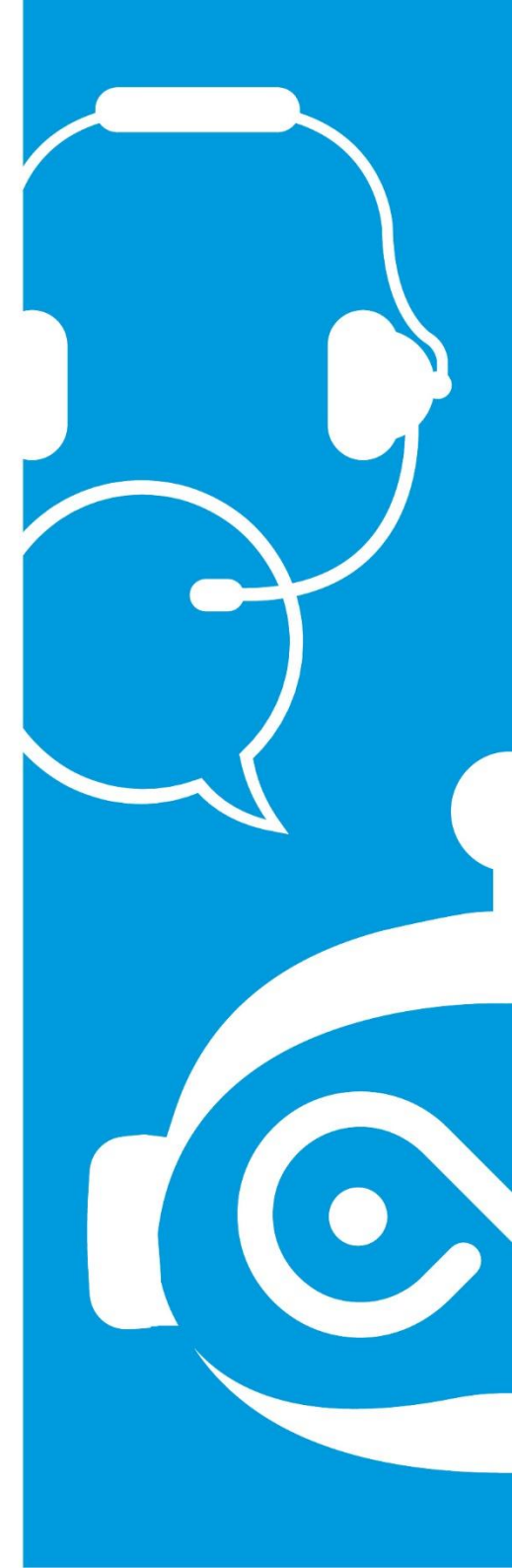




# MISCONCEPTIONS AND MISINFORMATION: REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND ANATOMY

## What is it?

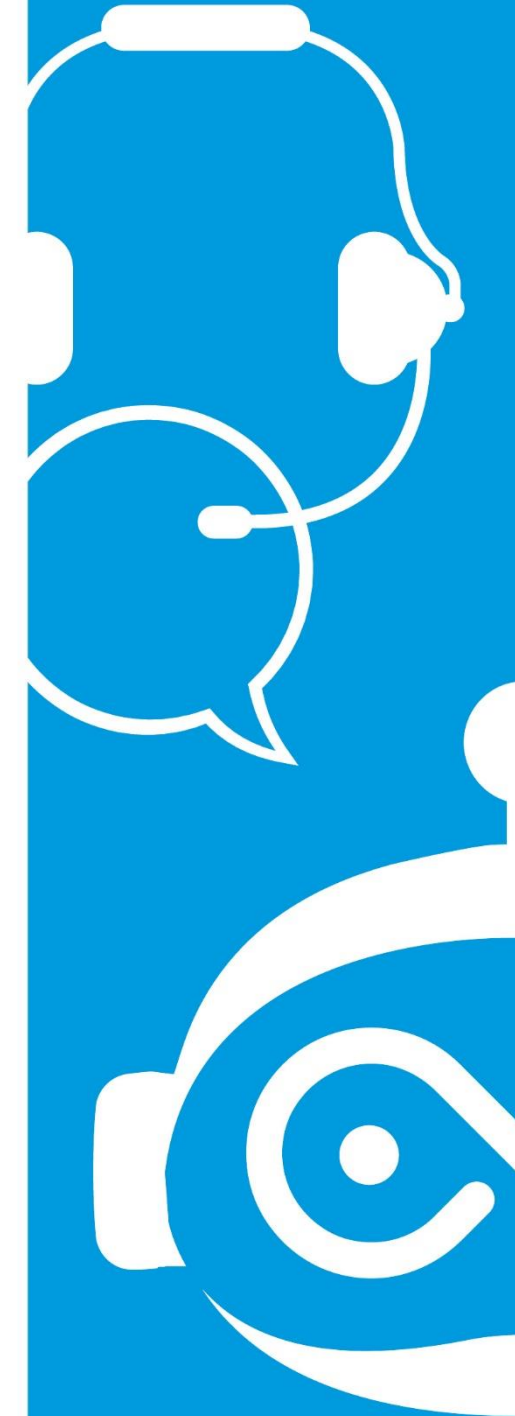
Understanding the anatomy, physiology and development of our body as well as recognising and taking care of our health is key to being able to make responsible and correct decisions. This is especially important in decisions that are closely related to our physical and mental health, sexuality and decisions about young people's well-being. Misconceptions and misinformation on this topic are **digital phenomena** which can lead to unhealthy and uninformed actions.



### How can it impact the sexual and reproductive health of youth?

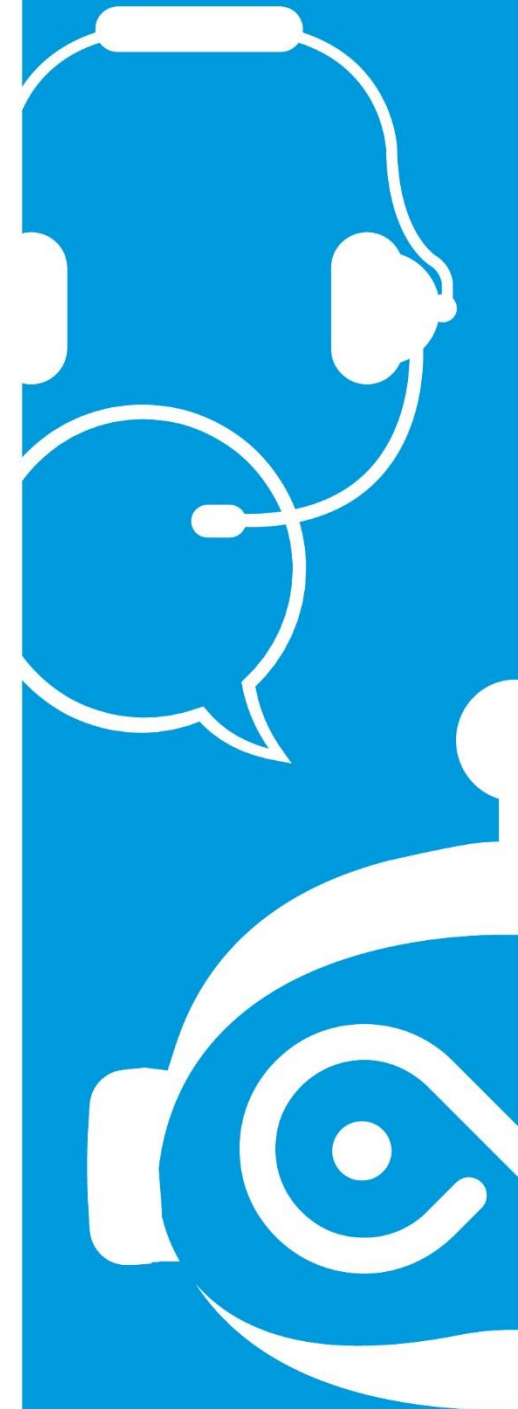
Digital interventions need not be considered a replacement for the traditional teacher-led approach, but rather a complement to comprehensive sexuality education, which will reinforce and enrich knowledge and attitudes. Learning the anatomy of the reproductive organs is easier to do in a digital environment. A realistic display can provoke unpleasant feelings in young people, such as shame or fear, so a digital display is welcome. For example, we can use an animation that also shows the inside of the body, which is not possible with a realistic display.

Misinformation that young people receive on the Internet may reflect the opinion of individuals or various organisations (governmental or non-governmental) or companies that only care about profit, leading to the advertising of various products, viewpoints and services. Some organisations are, for example, against contraception, abortion, and other SRH matters, and they widely advertise this stance on social networks. Young people, thus, get the feeling that contraception is not a responsible decision, but rather something unusual and inappropriate, just because they are often shown anti-contraception advertisements.



### What are some ways in which youth can be supported?

- Teach youth about biases presented as facts. It is important that young people are made aware of possible abuses via Internet resources.
- Discuss 'mindful' browsing. Since young people can be exposed to misconceptions about anatomy, menstruation and bleeding, advise them to look for multiple sources instead of blindly consuming content presented and promoted to them, and if they see inconsistencies, to consult with a trusted adult.
- Suggest medical help. Young people should be made aware that the answers they seek related to their reproductive health are best found speaking directly to a medical professional such as a gynaecologist, as a gynaecologist examination can provide real-time and personalised information about the normal development and functioning of their body, hormones and reproductive organs. If young people are more aware, it will be easier for them to make decisions about whether an internet source is credible or not, and they will be less vulnerable to abuse.
- Direct them to credible digital resources and material about the topic, such as:  
<https://www.plannedparenthood.org/>  
<https://sexetc.org/>  
<https://www.youtube.com/@amazeorg>



### Related digital phenomena/tools:

See sheets:

- Apps: Period/fertility tracking
- Misconceptions & misinformation: STDs and contraception
- Misconceptions & misinformation: Emotional effects of sex

### Further reading:

- Wynn, L.L., Angel M. Foster, and James Trussell. "Can I Get Pregnant from Oral Sex? Sexual Health Misconceptions in e-Mails to a Reproductive Health Website." *Contraception* 79, no. 2 (2009): 91–97. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.contraception.2008.08.009>.
- "Six Teen Sexual Health Myths Spread by Web Identified in Packard/Stanford Study." News Center, April 14, 2009. <https://med.stanford.edu/news/all-news/2009/04/six-teen-sexual-health-myths-spread-by-web-identified-in-packardstanford-study.html>.
- "Female & Male Reproductive Organs and Sexual Anatomy." Planned Parenthood. Accessed August 9, 2023. <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/health-and-wellness/sexual-and-reproductive-anatomy>.
- "What Happens during a Wellness Visit & Exam?" Planned Parenthood. Accessed August 9, 2023. <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/health-and-wellness/wellness-visit>.
- "Reproductive Well-Being." 2023 | Power to Decide. Accessed August 9, 2023. <https://powertodecide.org/reproductive-well-being>.

