**NATIONAL FAMILY PLANNING BOARD**

*An Agency of the Ministry Of Health*

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**CONTRIBUTED ARTICLE: ADOLESCENCE AND SEXUAL FEELINGS**

How adolescents react to their sexual feelings can take different forms. Do you remember when you had that initial attraction to someone. There were a whole slew of emotions and physical responses that were awakened. The initial approach would invariably have involved some conversation, that then progressed to touching where the reaction of the other party was observed and noted. Then hugs, then kissing. These are relatively safe expressions of feelings and it is fine for the adolescent to remain in this zone.

The mounting pressure from peers to explore one’s sexuality can push others to enter into relationships before they have the required maturity. Standing up for your ideals, dreams and aspirations and resisting the pressure to give in shows strength of character. We have heard the other reasons for early sexual encounters such as the need to fit in, aspirations to feel grown up, and wanting affirmation and affection from someone else. Added to this is what may seem to be a foreign concept to some adolescents but there are girls who want a baby, now.

In the end, it is up to the adolescent to decide when they become sexually active as we are all sexual beings.

When relationships become sexual the risk increases, as now infections and pregnancy have to be factors in the equation. It is important that an awareness of how to acquire and use condoms is also present to protect the couple. Ideally, we seek one faithful, uninfected partner but if that isn’t the case in your relationship a HIV test should be done periodically.

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***Contributed by: Dianne Thomas, Director, Communication and Public Relations, National Family Planning Board***

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