

ABC of All the Questions We Never Dare to Ask

Marriage

Marriage is the legal act of committing yourself to another person for life, in a traditional marriage arrangement, civil or community court, or in a church. There are different forms of marriage contracts and a couple needs to consider all options before they make a choice of contract. It is worthwhile to get legal advice before you sign a marriage contract, from an attorney or from Legal Aid.

How can a married woman protect herself from contracting HIV?

There is only one way: by ensuring that her husband uses a condom.* If she is not 100% sure that her husband is faithful* to her she should insist that he use a condom—unless she is planning to have a baby. If she is not sure of her husband's HIV status and condoms are not an option, she should insist on an HIV test before she takes the risk.

This might be very difficult though for women in traditional African marriages. They often have very little, if any, control or say over how many children they will bear, as they are not allowed to practice birth control.* Nor can they insist that their husband use a condom, even if he has other women. Thus they are forced to have unprotected sex, which makes them extremely vulnerable. Recent research has shown that married women in Zimbabwe are at greater risk of becoming infected with HIV than anyone else. This is a truly tragic situation.

Other Questions under this Topic:

- **Why do people get married?**
- **Why do some people say marriage is outdated?**
- **What is an arranged marriage and is it recognized by the law?**
- **Do forced marriages still take place today?**
- **Is it right for a young girl to marry an older man?**
- **What is meant by a married woman becoming an inheritance?**
- **What about being married to more than one wife at the same time?**
- **Why can't I have more than one partner when I'm married?**
- **Is it wise to marry when you are young?**
- **What is a marriage proposal?**
- **Is sex before marriage acceptable?**
- **Why can't teenagers get married?**
- **Can there be abstinence* from sex in a marriage?**
- **Does a married woman have the right to refuse her husband?**

* Denotes a topic that is addressed elsewhere in the book.

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