

# Sexual health research: Ethical and legal considerations in researching sensitive topics

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Training in research on sexual health  
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# Overview

- Recap on ethical principles in research
- Overview of key ethical and legal issues in sexual health research
  - Example: vaginal practices
  - Example: violence against women



# Ethical principles for research in human subjects

- **Respect for persons**

- Autonomy
- Protection of vulnerable people, confidentiality

- **Beneficence**

- **Distributive justice**

- Fairness, ensuring rights to which people are entitled



# Ethical issues – information to be disclosed

- Description of research
- Risks
- Benefits
- Alternatives
- Confidentiality
- Compensation
- Contacts
- Voluntary participation



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# Ethical issues in research on sex, sexuality, sexual health, sexual violence

- Sensitive issues
- Subjects may feel threatened or embarrassed
- Invasion of privacy
- Confidentiality very important
- Danger of violence
- Right to choose whether to participate
- Right to withdraw from study at any time



# Ethical issues in research on sex, sexuality, sexual health, sexual violence

## Adolescents

- Exclude adolescents?
- Definitions
- Legal considerations – parental authorization
- Purpose of research
- Confidentiality



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## Partners

- Agreement needed? (no "consent")
- Autonomy and confidentiality
- Socio-cultural factors
- Legal requirements
- Partner notification



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