

No contraceptives for teens

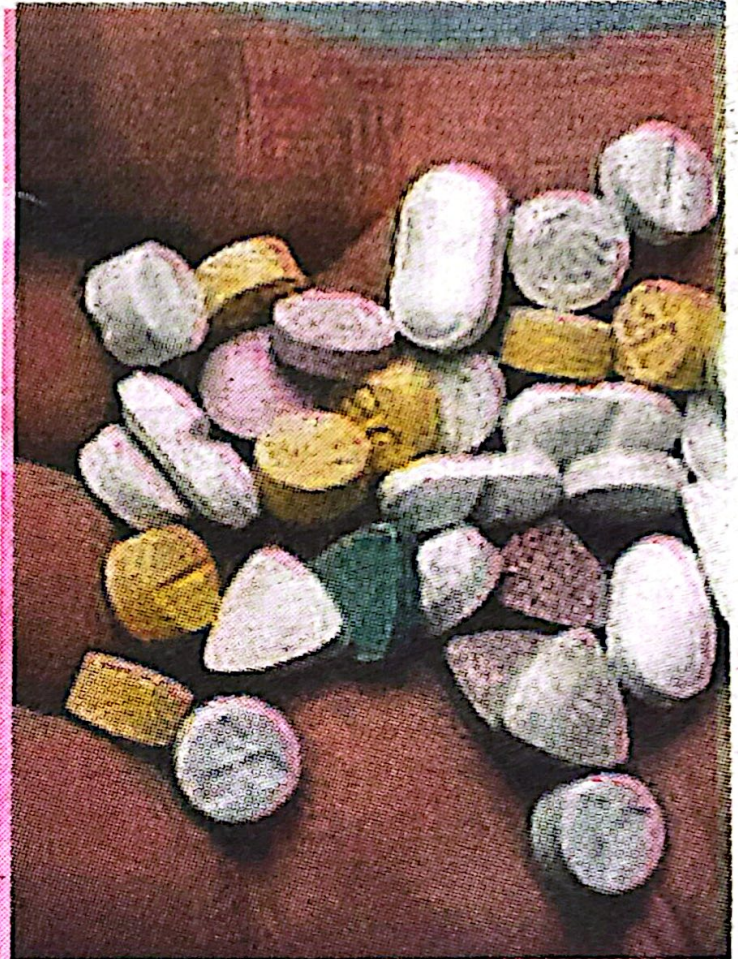
I have been following the debate on the provision of contraceptives to teenagers.

According to the National Policy Guidelines and Service Standards for Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights, girls as young as 15 years should be granted access to contraceptives in a bid to prevent unwanted pregnancies that result in health complications for teenagers.

Those who support giving contraceptives to children overlook two fundamentals about sex. First, it takes two people — a male and a female — for pregnancy to occur. What interventions have been put in place to deter the males from having irresponsible sex? Secondly, pregnancy is only one of the outcomes of sexual intercourse. There are many others which include intimacy, regret (later in life) and STDs. And while pregnancy can only happen once in nine months, the other outcomes can occur at every intercourse, which no child should be exposed to.

A 15-year-old girl is still only a child. I think it is time we asked ourselves once again: What is our responsibility to our children? As adults, we should not run away from our responsibilities and massage our shame in finding unhealthy, quick-fix solutions to symptoms of a generation that has abdicated their parenting responsibilities to schools, social media and television.

A 15-year-old girl is only a child with a right to enjoy her childhood, fully, as she grows to attain adulthood. It is not right



Some experts want contraceptive pills to be availed to teenagers.

to introduce her to drugs as powerful as contraceptives when there is a far better and healthier option — saying no to sex until marriage. In any case, self-control — saying no to irresponsible sex — is a life skill children need, not just for their teen years, but for a lifetime lest their lives come to utter ruin. Let us all nurture this life skill in our children.

**Turakira Reagan
Kampala**