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Adolescent sexuality education and sources of information.

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PIP: A survey of 959 young females (ages 10-21 years) from India highlighted the importance of educational attainment to fertility-related behaviors. Respondents represented a spectrum of educational levels: school drop-outs (32%), primary and secondary school attendees (41%), and college students (27%). The mean age at menarche was 13.6 years. School drop-outs were most likely to have obtained information about sexuality from films and other mass media, while students cited friends and neighbors as primary sources. There was a positive association between educational level and both preferred age at marriage and intended interval from marriage to first birth. 42% of adolescents with a secondary or college education planned to marry after 23 years of age and 84% wanted to defer childbearing for at least two years after marriage. The desire for formal sex education was strong in all educational subgroups (about 62%), however. It has been estimated that postponement of the marriage age from 16 years to 20-21 years would result in a 20-30% decrease in the annual number of births in India. School-based sex education represents a feasible mechanism for helping to achieve this goal.

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