



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT

# Obstetric Fistula

### What is Obstetric Fistula?

Obstetric Fistula is an abnormal connection (hole) between the urinary bladder and the vagina.

### Is it common in Kenya?

Yes, and in many other developing countries. In East Africa alone, it is estimated that there are about 5,000 new cases every year. In Kenya about 1,000 new cases occur every year.

### How does one know she has Obstetric Fistula?

A woman who has vesico vaginal fistula (VVF) leaks urine continuously, all day and night, and she cannot stop it. She wets her clothes all the time and smells of urine. If one has also a recto vaginal fistula (RVF) she leaks stool too.

### What causes Obstetric Fistula?

Most women get Obstetric Fistula as a result of difficult labour which causes injury to the bladder. Any woman who has labour pains for a long time can get VVF and sometimes RVF. When a woman has a difficult and prolonged labour, the baby gets stuck in her birth canal and if this is not relieved quickly through an operation to deliver her baby, the bladder and the rectum can get injured, leaving a hole through which urine or stool can leak.

## How can one prevent this from happening?

- Go to hospital immediately labour begins, so that a nurse or a doctor can examine you to know whether your labour is progressing well or not.
- Always go to the hospital for antenatal care when you are pregnant.
- Always plan to deliver your baby in a hospital.
- Never allow labour at home.
- Always keep aside some money that you can get quick access to because labour can start any time of the day or night.
- Plan when you want to get pregnant.

## What happens to those who have Obstetric Fistula?

They can get help from a hospital. They should go to hospital as soon as they start leaking urine or stool. They should not wait or hide because help is available.

## What happens to those who get Obstetric Fistula in hospital?

- They should not be discharged.
- They should have a catheter (pipe) inserted in their bladder and drink a lot of water (at least six litres per day)
- They should clean their vagina thoroughly with warm salty water, thrice a day.
- The catheter (pipe) in the bladder should stay for at least four weeks.
- They should eat foods that are high in proteins like beans, peas, meat, fish, chicken and eggs.
- They should be given iron supplements.
- The doctor should examine them every week to see that they are healing well.
- If they are not healing well or there is a hole in the bladder the doctor must refer them for further treatment to a hospital where they can be operated on, or call AMREF for help.

