

# girls only

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**2023**  
Global Collection



A MUST-READ SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS  
GUIDE FOR EVERY YOUNG GIRL





# The Team

*PadHer is a women-led non-profit organization based in Lagos, Nigeria, and Nairobi, Kenya. Our organization educates young African schoolgirls from underserved communities on periods and puberty via the use of comic books so that they can effectively manage their periods and build the self-confidence they need to take control of the future and succeed.*

*We are ending period stigma, one comic at a time!*



**Chika  
Nwaogu**  
Founder /  
Executive  
Director

**Thelma  
Ahamba**  
Director of  
Operations and  
Partnerships

**Elvinah  
Nyambaso**  
Regional  
Director  
(East Africa)

**Deborah  
Henshaw**  
Regional  
Director  
(West Africa)

**Camilla  
Jussab**  
Regional  
Director  
(Central Africa)

**Kelebohile  
Dalaseni**  
Regional  
Director  
(Southern  
Africa)

**Karen  
Ashraf**  
Regional  
Director  
(North Africa)

**Serah  
Wambui**  
Country  
Manager  
(Kenya)

It's crucial to talk about puberty with young girls because they're naturally fascinated by their changing bodies and may have a lot of questions, such as what is this hard lump in my breast, why are my breasts so small (or big), why don't I have pubic hair yet, why haven't I gotten my period yet, and so on.

Because some girls begin puberty at the age of 8, it is essential to begin the 'puberty' conversation as soon as possible. Every young girl should know the physical and emotional changes that come with puberty before they even begin.

Girls Only was created to make it **free, fun, easy, and comfortable** teaching young school girls such as yourself about periods and puberty.

Puberty brings about so many changes, but remember that everyone goes through these similar changes. The time it takes for these changes to occur varies greatly from one girl to the next. Acne, mood swings, growth spurts, and hormonal changes are all part of growing up, and everyone experiences them. So always remember...It's normal, Period!™

# Donate.

HELP US REACH MORE YOUNG SCHOOLGIRLS IN  
UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES BY DONATING TODAY.  
VISIT: [PADHER.ORG/DONATE](https://padher.org/donate)

## Credits

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PROJECT AND RESEARCH ASSOCIATE: SHEILA OMONDI



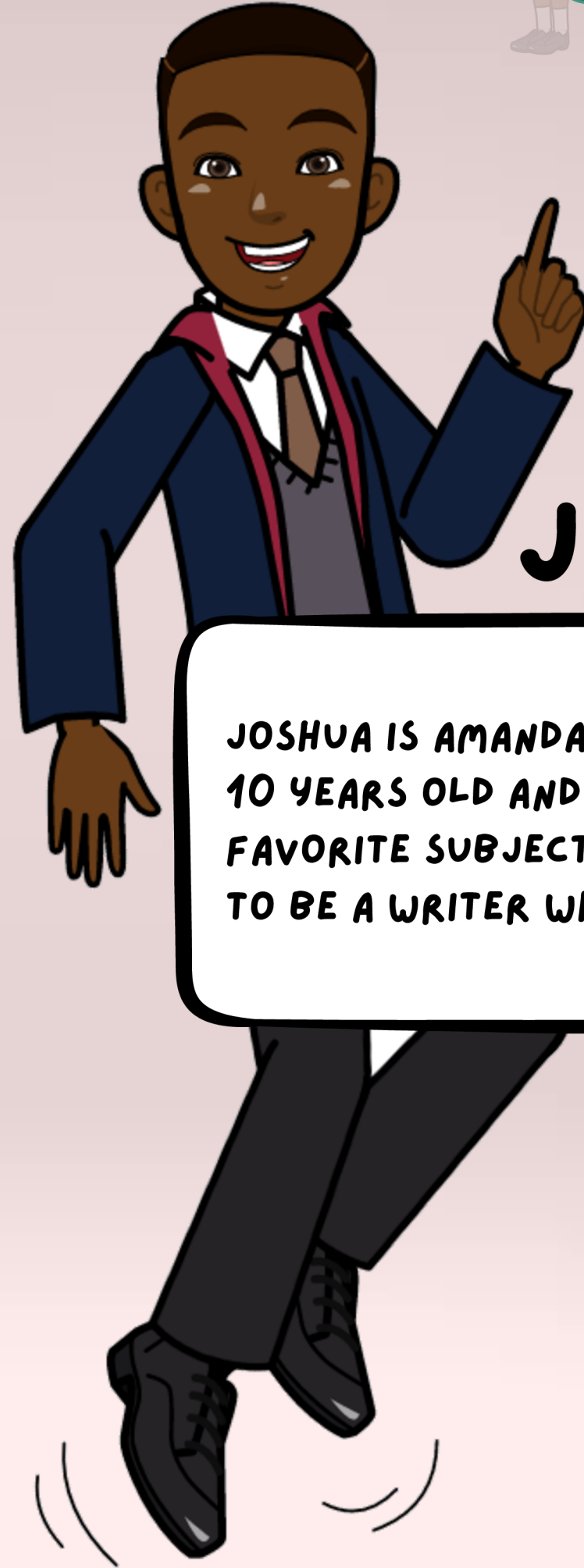


# meet the characters



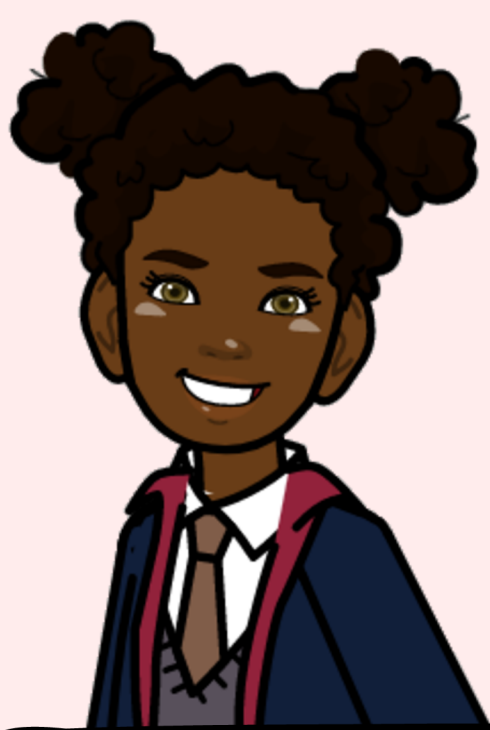
## AMANDA

AMANDA IS THE MAIN CHARACTER OF THIS COMIC SERIES. SHE IS 12 YEARS OLD, AND SHE JUST GOT HER FIRST PERIOD. AMANDA'S FAVORITE SUBJECTS ARE MATH AND SCIENCE. AMANDA WANTS TO BE AN ENGINEER.



## JOSHUA

JOSHUA IS AMANDA'S YOUNGER BROTHER. HE IS 10 YEARS OLD AND LOVES TO DANCE. JOSHUA'S FAVORITE SUBJECT IS ENGLISH, AND HE LOVES TO BE A WRITER WHEN HE GROWS UP.



## SANDRA

SANDRA IS 8 YEARS OLD AND LOVES TO SING. HER FAVORITE SUBJECT IS COMPUTER SCIENCE, AND SHE WILL LOVE TO BE A COMPUTER PROGRAMMER WHEN SHE IS OLDER.



## DR. JOY

DR. JOY IS AMANDA'S OLDER SISTER, AND SHE IS A MEDICAL DOCTOR. SHE IS 28 YEARS OLD AND LOVES TO TEACH AMANDA AND HER SIBLINGS ABOUT PERIODS AND PUBERTY.





**MOM**

**MRS. ABIGAIL COKER, FONDLY CALLED "MOM" BY HER CHILDREN, IS THE MOTHER TO AMANDA, DR. JOY, JOSHUA, AND SANDRA. SHE IS A PETTY TRADER AND LOVES HER KIDS SO MUCH.**



**DAD**

**MR. COKER IS THE FATHER TO AMANDA, DR. JOY, JOSHUA, AND SANDRA. HE IS A BANKER. HIS FAVORITE FOOD IS RICE AND CHICKEN STEW.**



**GRANDMA**

**MRS. JOYCE WALTER, FONDLY CALLED "GRANDMA" BY HER GRANDCHILDREN, IS AMANDA'S MATERNAL GRANDMA. SHE IS A RETIRED BANKER AND LOVES TO SPEND QUALITY TIME WITH HER GRANDCHILDREN.**



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This comic book is a work of fiction that may be based on some personal experiences.

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LATER THAT  
DAY...

KEMI HAD SOMETHING VERY IMPORTANT  
TO TELL AMANDA

What is an STI?

Last week, I overheard a  
group of seniors having a  
discussion about another  
senior getting an STI.

I'm not sure, but the way they talked about an  
STI made me think it was a horrible thing.  
Maybe it means pregnancy.


I'll ask my sister, who is a  
doctor, what an STI is.  
I'll tell you what she says.





LATER THAT DAY AFTER SCHOOL...

I can't wait for Big Sis to come visiting, so I can ask what an STI is.



Amanda you are back from school! How was school today?

It was great, Mom!



**Ask  
Dr. Joy**

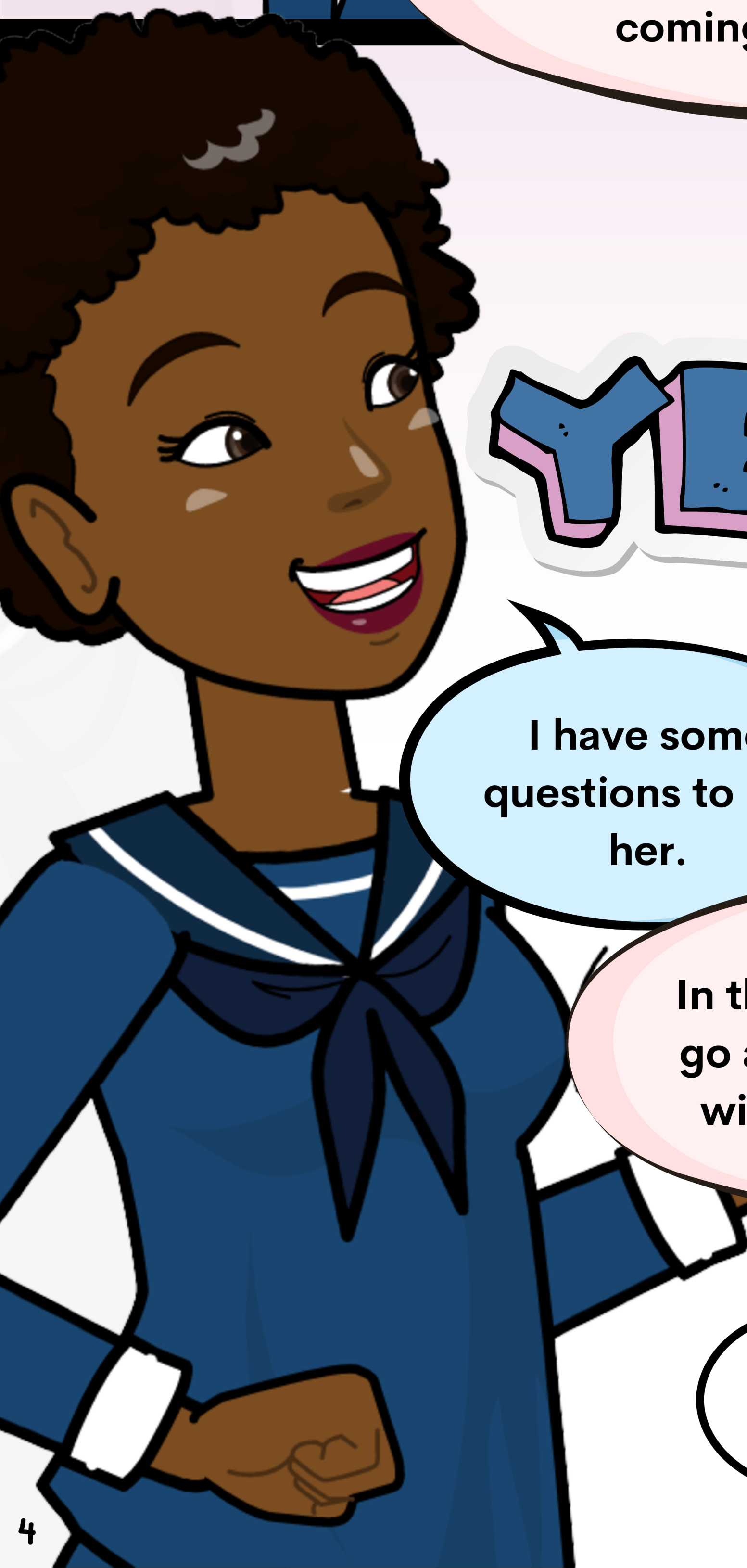
Hi, I am Dr. Joy, and I am here to answer all your questions on sexual and reproductive health and rights. Have a question?

visit: [padher.org/askdrjoy](https://padher.org/askdrjoy)





That's great! You should go and take a shower and eat lunch. Your Big Sis just called to say she'll be coming to visit.

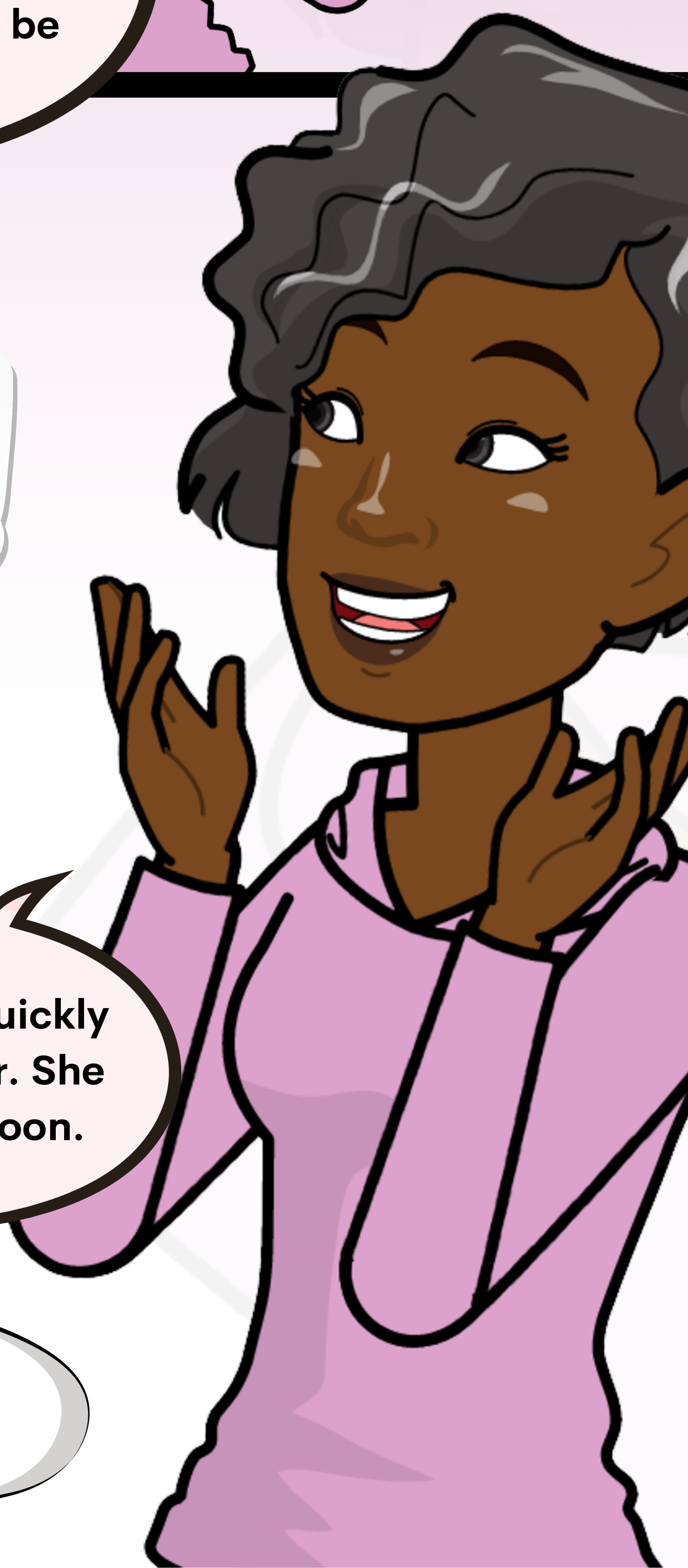


**YES!**

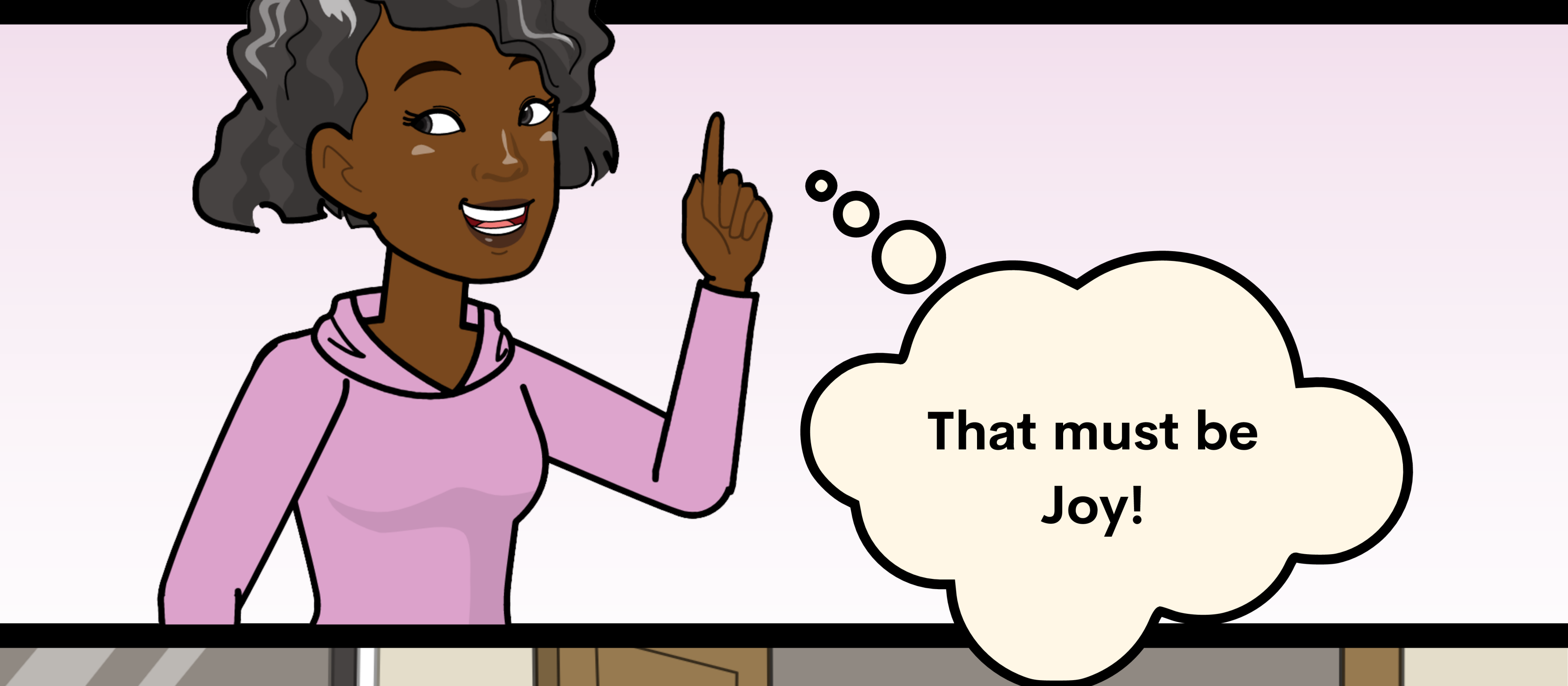
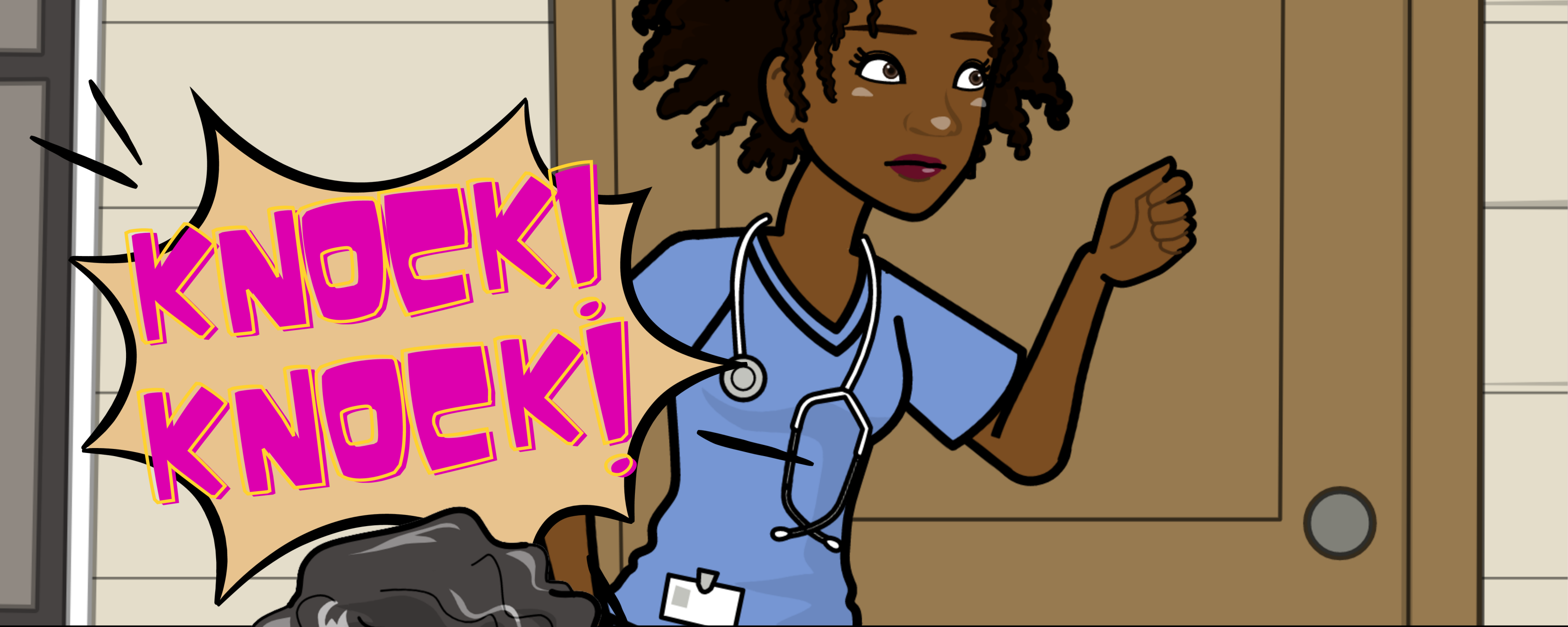
I have some questions to ask her.

In that case, quickly go and shower. She will be here soon.

Okay, Mom!



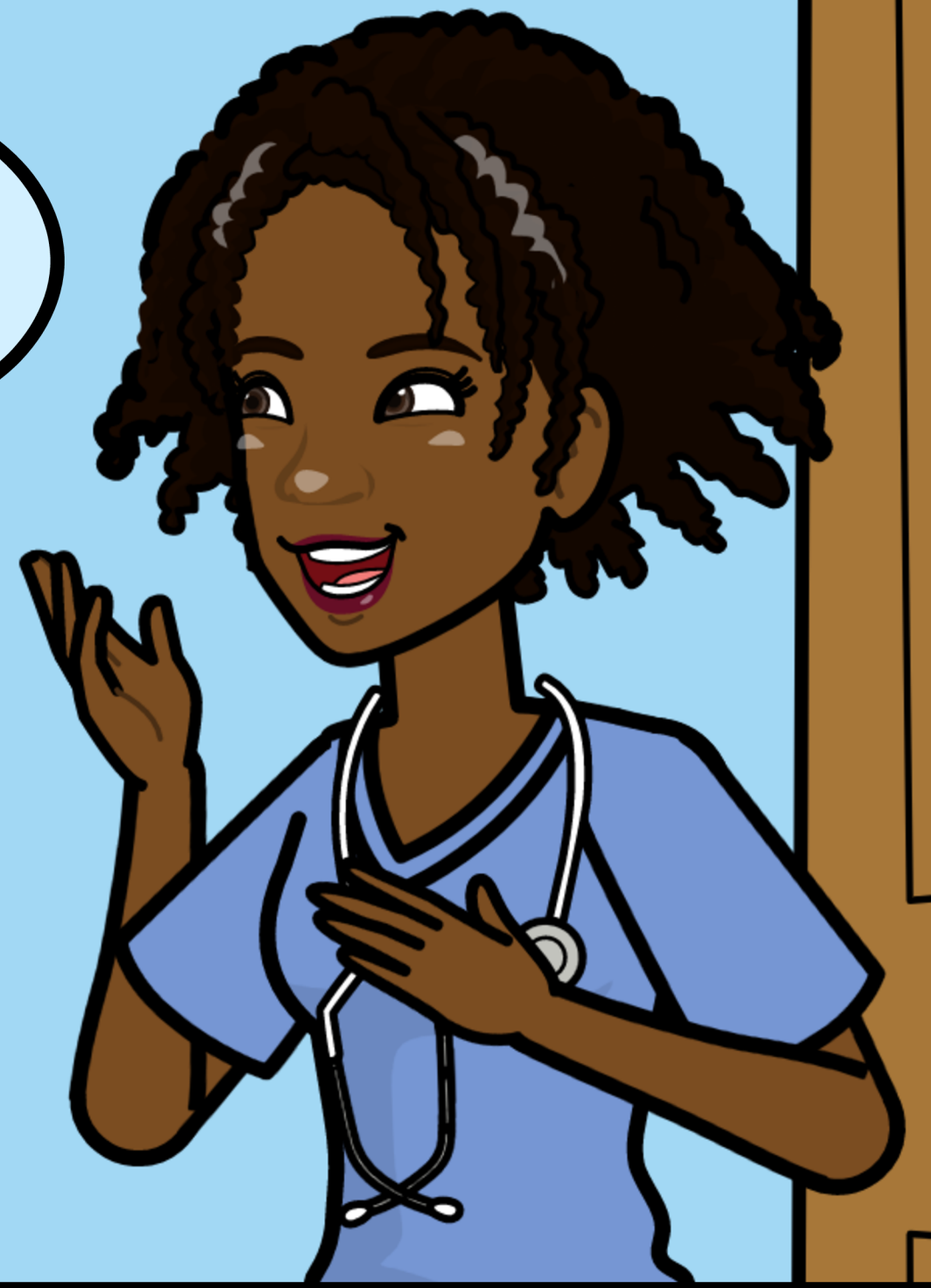








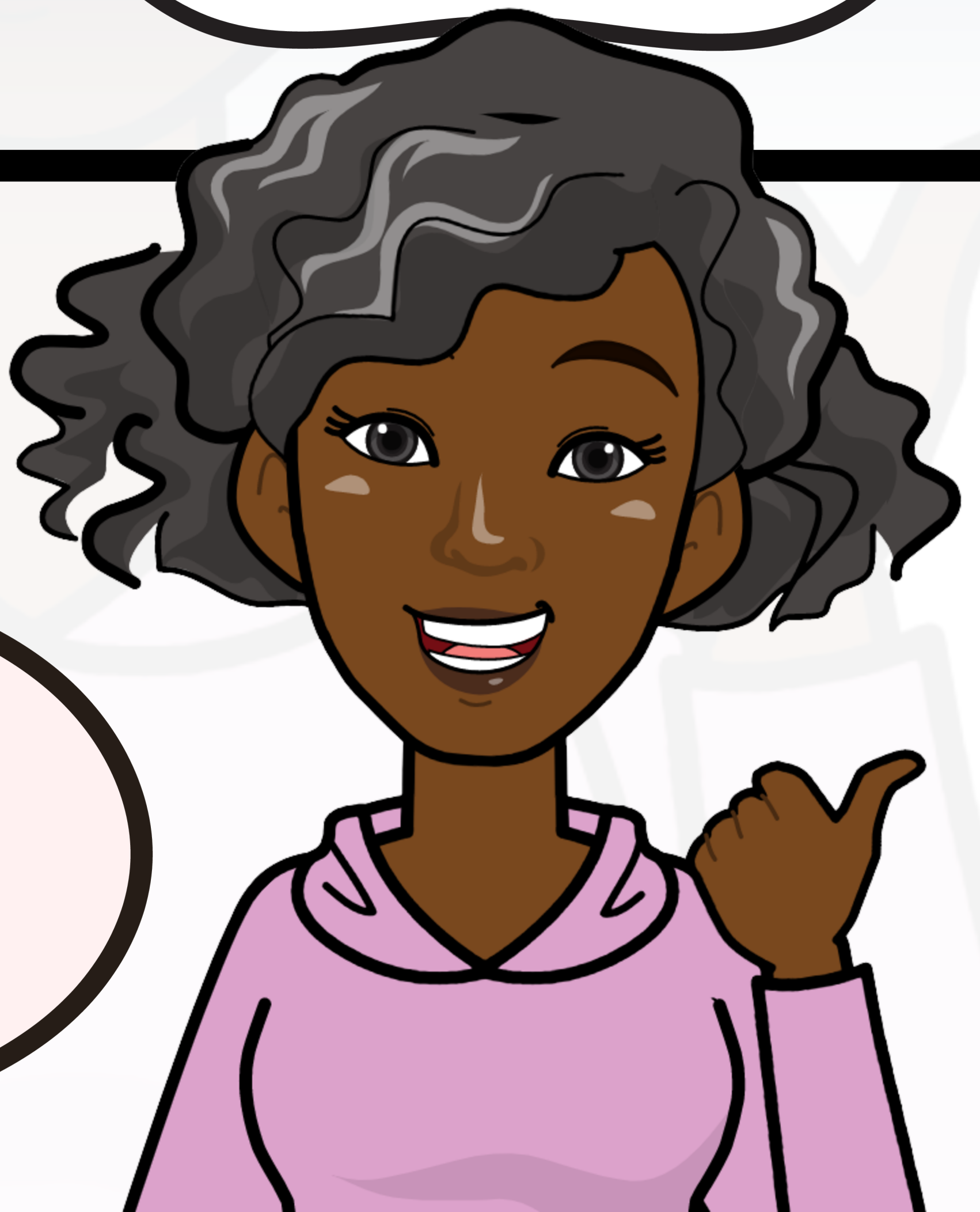
We are all fine! Even Amanda is so excited that you are coming



How is everyone?

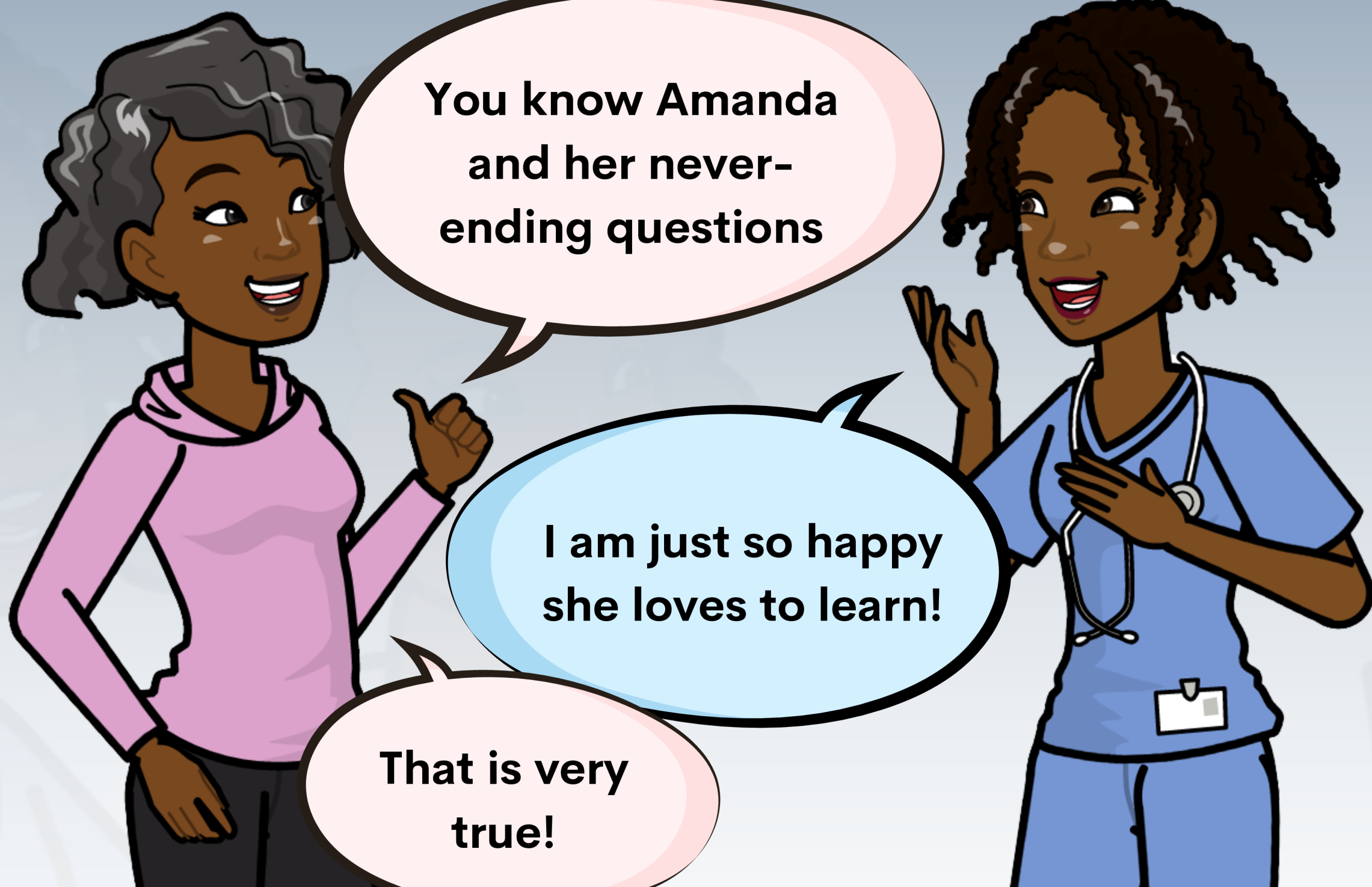


Oh really?



Yes! She even said she has some questions for you!





You know Amanda and her never-ending questions

I am just so happy she loves to learn!

That is very true!

AMANDA HAD CHANGED OUT OF HER UNIFORM AND FINISHED HAVING HER SHOWER.



Good afternoon, Big Sis! I missed you, and I have a lot of questions for you.

Mom already told me. I am eager to know what these questions are.

I want to have lunch, and then I will be back with all my questions.

Haha! Okay, I can't wait to hear them!



AMANDA JUST FINISHED HAVING HER LUNCH...

I am back,  
Big Sis!

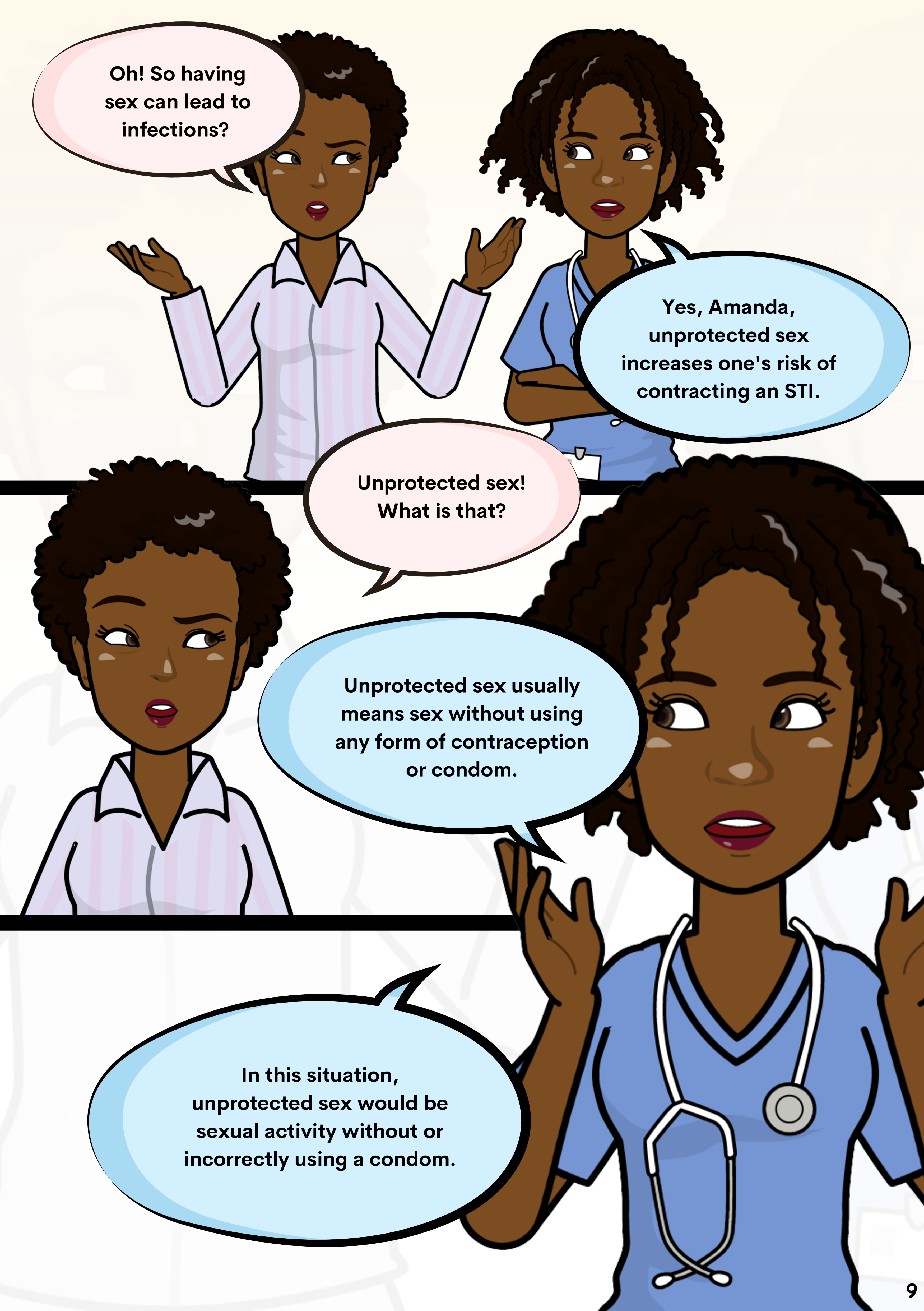
So, what are these  
questions you've got for me,  
you curious little one?

**HAAAA!**

My friend Kemi overheard some seniors talking about another senior with an STI. According to Kemi, based on what the seniors said, having an STI is a horrible thing.

STIs are serious illnesses that require medical attention. Sexually transmitted infections, or STIs, are infections spread by sexual contact with someone who has an STI. Sexual activity involving various parts of the body can result in the transmission of an STI.





Oh! So having sex can lead to infections?


Yes, Amanda, unprotected sex increases one's risk of contracting an STI.

Unprotected sex! What is that?

Unprotected sex usually means sex without using any form of contraception or condom.

In this situation, unprotected sex would be sexual activity without or incorrectly using a condom.





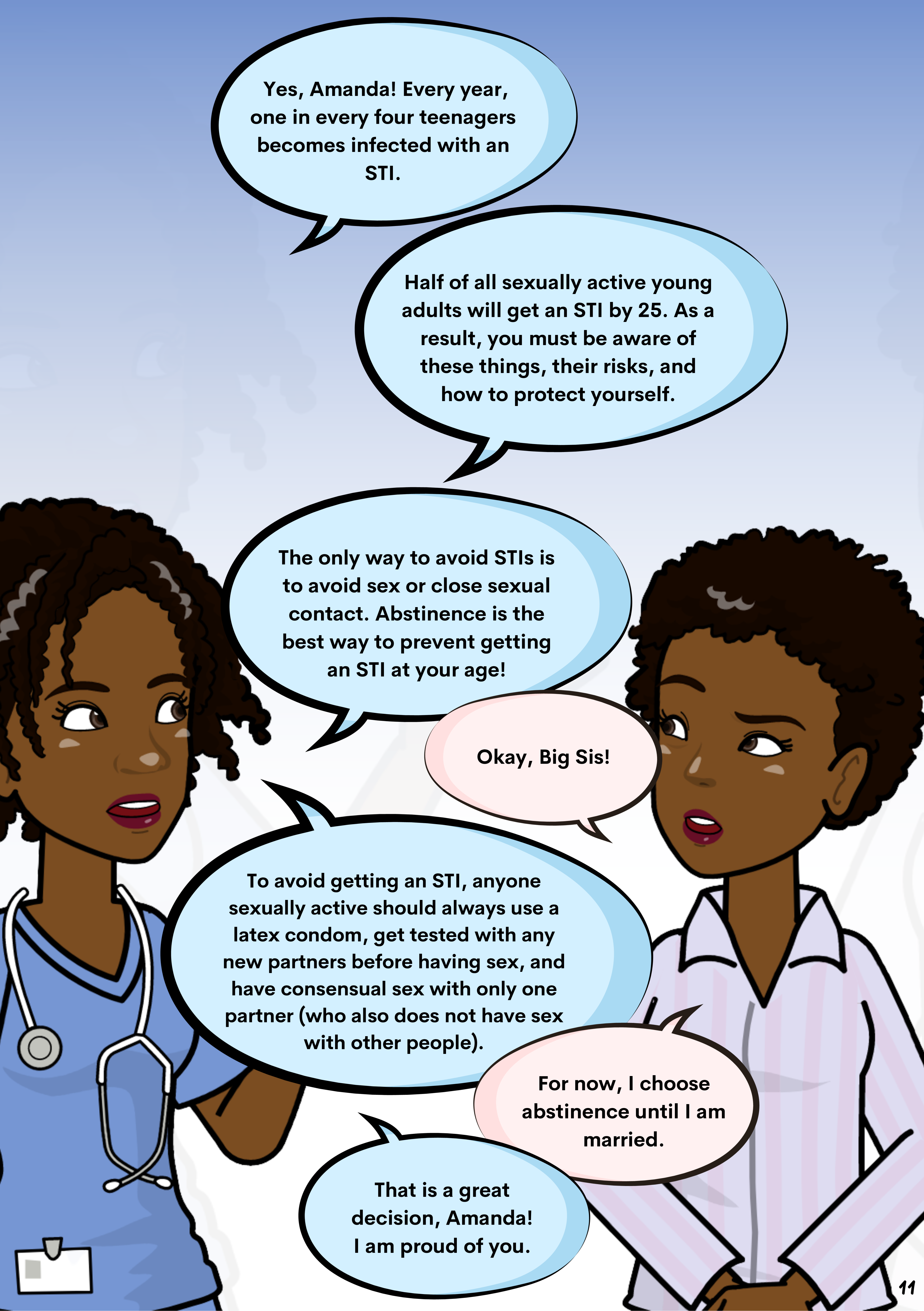
Oh! So that senior they talked about probably had unprotected sex with someone that had an STI?

Exactly, Amanda! If you engage in sexual activity, you are at risk of contracting an STI.

Your chances of getting an STI will increase if you have unprotected sex, incorrectly use a condom, have multiple sex partners, misuse alcohol or recreational substances, or inject drugs into your body.

**really?**





Yes, Amanda! Every year,  
one in every four teenagers  
becomes infected with an  
STI.

Half of all sexually active young  
adults will get an STI by 25. As a  
result, you must be aware of  
these things, their risks, and  
how to protect yourself.

The only way to avoid STIs is  
to avoid sex or close sexual  
contact. Abstinence is the  
best way to prevent getting  
an STI at your age!

Okay, Big Sis!

To avoid getting an STI, anyone  
sexually active should always use a  
latex condom, get tested with any  
new partners before having sex, and  
have consensual sex with only one  
partner (who also does not have sex  
with other people).

For now, I choose  
abstinence until I am  
married.

That is a great  
decision, Amanda!  
I am proud of you.

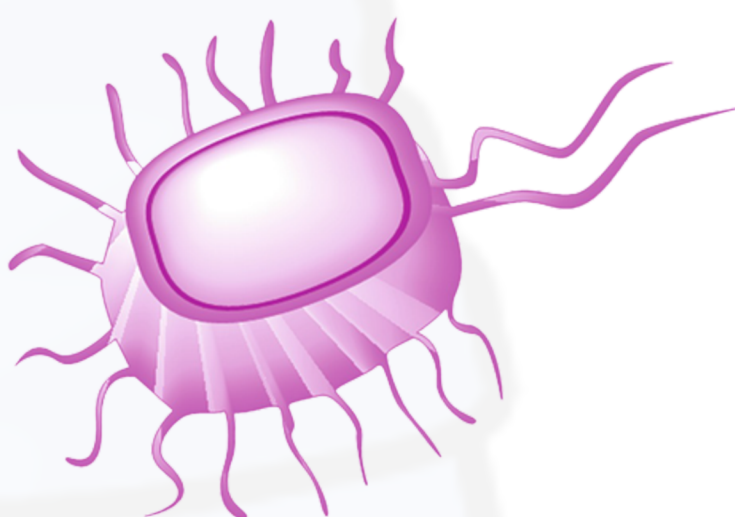


THANK  
you!

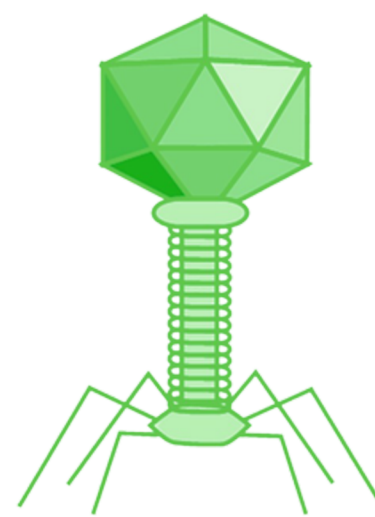
**STD CAUSES...**

Parasites, Bacteria, and  
Viruses are the three  
causes of sexually  
transmitted infections.

STIs caused by bacteria include  
gonorrhea, syphilis, and  
chlamydia, whereas STIs caused  
by viruses include HIV, genital  
herpes, and HPV. Some STIs, such  
as Trichomoniasis, are caused by  
parasites.

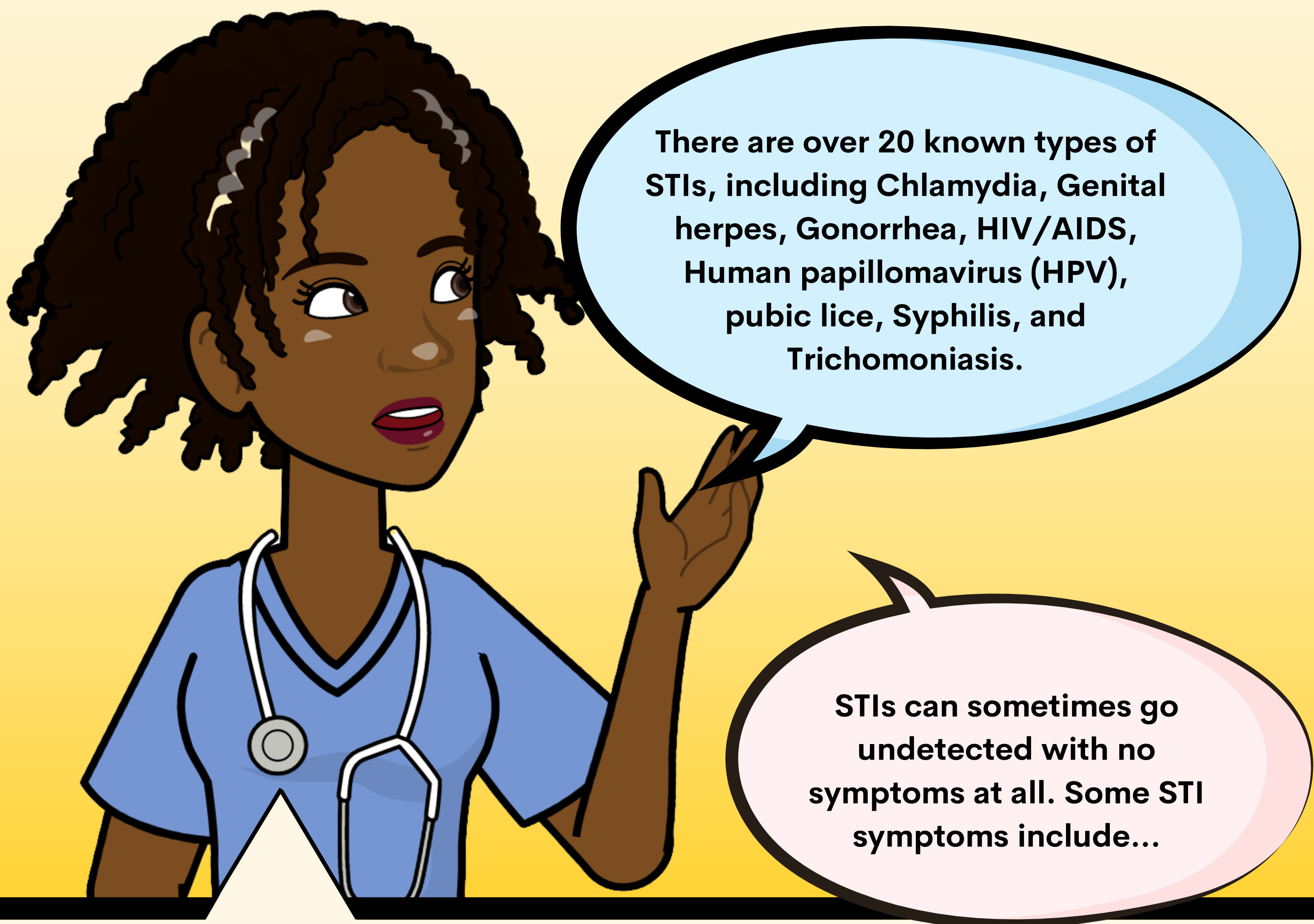


**Bacteria**



**Virus**





## **some STI symptoms...**

- Bumps, sores, or warts near the mouth, anus, penis, or vagina.
- Swelling or redness near the penis or vagina.
- Skin rash.
- Painful or swollen testicles.
- Lower abdominal pain.
- Fever.
- Painful urination.
- Weight loss, loose stools, night sweats.
- Aches, pains, fever, and chills.
- Yellowing of the skin (jaundice).
- Discharge from the penis or vagina. Vaginal discharge may have an odor.
- Bleeding from the vagina other than during a monthly period.
- Painful sex.
- Severe itching near the genital.





It is important to note that if you are sexually active, you can have an STI with no symptoms.

If you plan to become sexually active in the future and experience one or more of these symptoms, you should visit a doctor right away.

Your doctor can examine you and perform tests to determine whether or not you have an STI.

If you experience symptoms, your doctor may subject you to blood, urine, or fluid testing to determine the cause.

Also, many STIs have no symptoms or signs (asymptomatic), and as such, you can spread the virus to your sex partners even if you don't have any symptoms. As a result, it's necessary to use protection during sex, such as a condom. Also, regular STI screening is advisable if you are sexually active, so you can detect and treat an infection before it spreads.





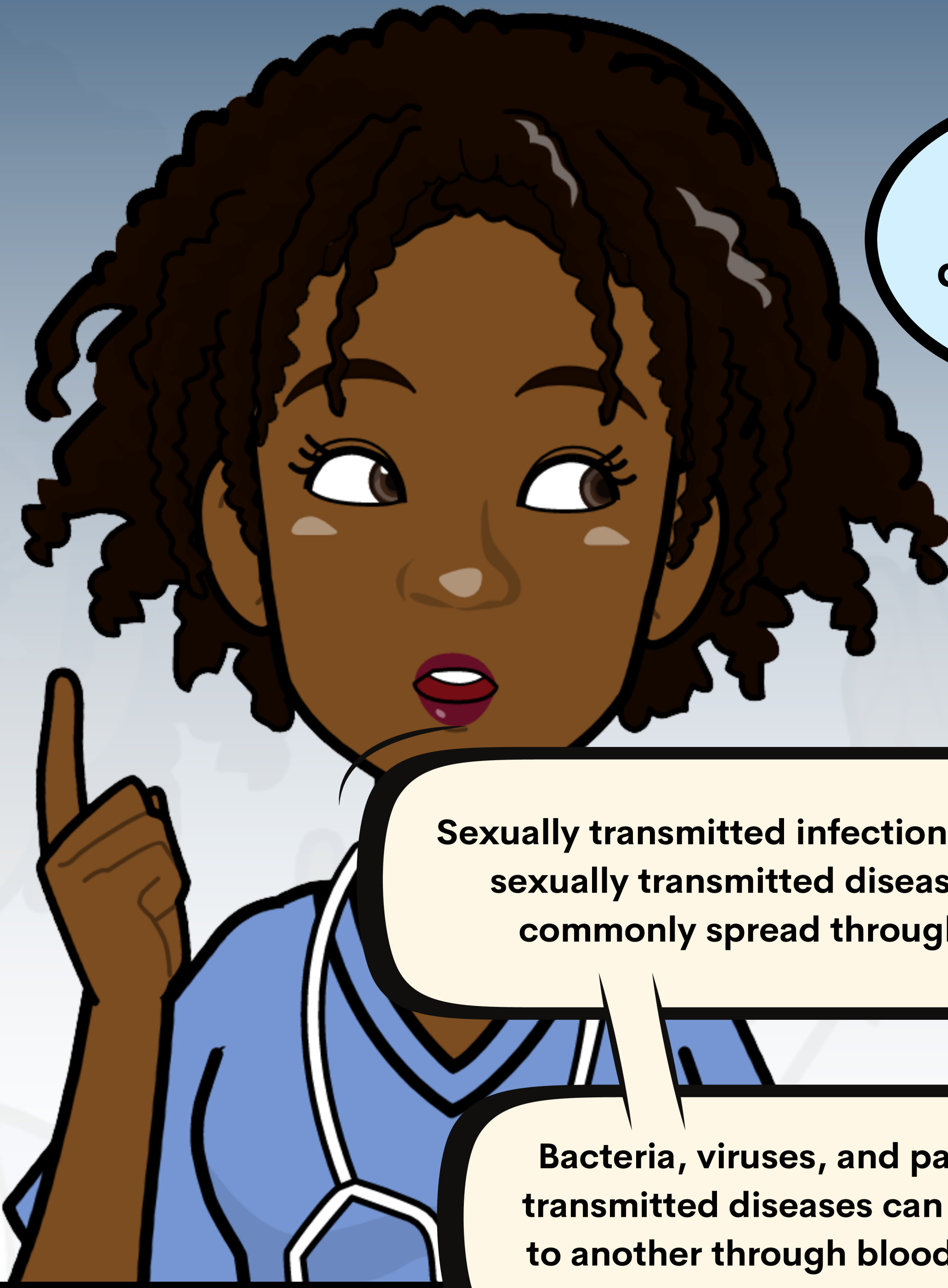
**IT IS VERY IMPORTANT TO NEVER SELF-DIAGNOSE.**  
The only way to know if you have an STI is to get tested for them.

Having unprotected sex of any kind puts you at risk of getting STIs and HIV. HIV is a disease that can be deadly. Anyone who engages in risky sexual activity can get an STI or HIV. You can prevent HIV and other STIs by not having sex. If you choose to have sex, you can lower your risk by always using a condom. The only way to find out if you have HIV or any other STI is to get tested.

Big Sis, I can see why abstinence is necessary based on everything you've told me.

How are STIs transmitted from one person to another?





That is a good question, Amanda!

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs), also known as sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), are most commonly spread through sexual contact.

Bacteria, viruses, and parasites that cause sexually transmitted diseases can be passed from one person to another through blood, sperm, vaginal, and other bodily fluids.

Nonsexual transmission of these illnesses is possible...

...for example, from mothers to their infants during pregnancy or childbirth, or by blood transfusions or sharing needles.




Oh!





Yes, Amanda!

Also, because STIs don't usually show symptoms, it's possible to get sexually transmitted infections from people who appear to be in good health and have no idea they're infected.



STDs or STIs come with different signs and symptoms, including no symptoms. As a result, they may go undetected until complications arise or a sexual partner is diagnosed with an STI.

Signs and symptoms may occur a few days after exposure. However, depending on the organism causing the STI, it may take years before you notice any symptoms.



## RISK FACTORS



### UNPROTECTED SEX:

ANY TYPE OF SEX BY AN INFECTED PARTNER WHO ISN'T WEARING A LATEX CONDOM CAN SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASE THE CHANCE OF CONTRACTING AN STI. ALSO, IMPROPER OR INCONSISTENT USE OF CONDOMS (PROTECTION) MIGHT ALSO INCREASE YOUR RISK OF GETTING AN STI.

### MULTIPLE SEX PARTNERS:

THE MORE PEOPLE YOU HAVE SEXUAL CONTACT WITH, THE HIGHER YOUR RISK OF GETTING AN STI.

### STI HISTORY:

HAVING AN STI MAKES IT MUCH EASIER FOR ANOTHER STI TO TAKE HOLD.



## RISK FACTORS



### **FORCED SEXUAL ACTIVITY:**

**IT IS TOUGH TO DEAL WITH RAPE OR ASSAULT, BUT IT IS CRITICAL TO CONTACT A DOCTOR AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE TO RECEIVE SCREENING, TREATMENT, AND EMOTIONAL SUPPORT.**

### **MISUSE OF ALCOHOL OR RECREATIONAL DRUG USE:**

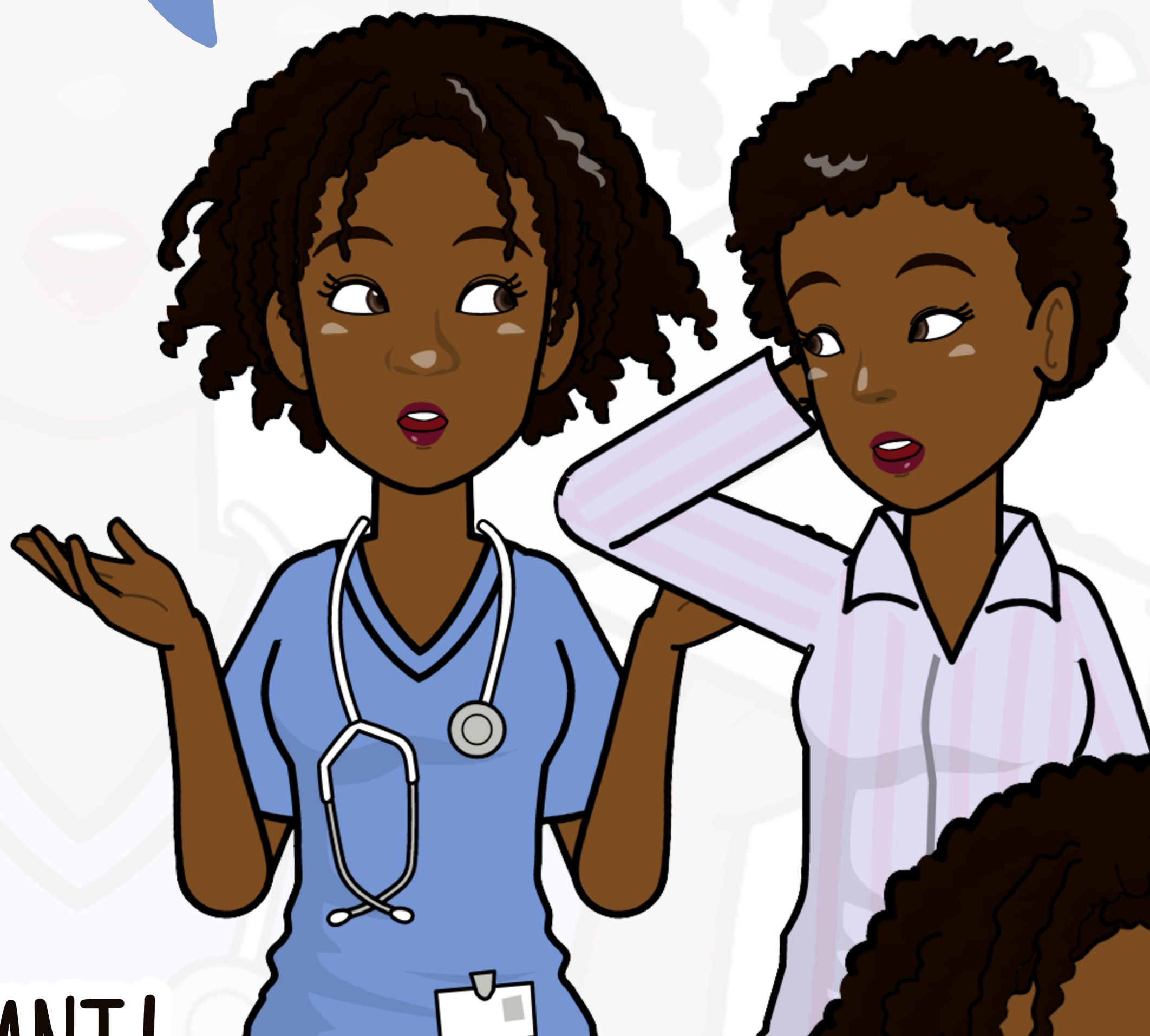
**SUBSTANCE ABUSE CAN IMPAIR YOUR JUDGMENT, MAKING YOU MORE LIKELY TO ENGAGE IN RISKY SEXUAL BEHAVIORS.**

### **DRUG INJECTIONS:**

**MANY SEVERE INFECTIONS, INCLUDING HIV, HEPATITIS B, AND HEPATITIS C, ARE SPREAD THROUGH NEEDLE SHARING.**



**SCREENING FOR STDS IS VITAL TO PREVENT COMPLICATIONS AS MANY PEOPLE IN THE EARLY STAGES OF AN STD OR STI HAVE NO SYMPTOMS. PELVIC PAIN, ARTHRITIS, EYE INFLAMMATION, PELVIC INFLAMMATORY DISEASE, PREGNANCY COMPLICATIONS, INFERTILITY, HEART DISEASE, AND STROKE ARE ALL POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS, EVEN CERTAIN CANCERS, SUCH AS CERVICAL AND RECTAL CANCERS CAUSED BY HPV.**



**IMPORTANT!**

**Certain sexually transmitted infections (STIs) such as gonorrhea, chlamydia, HIV, and syphilis can be spread from mothers to their infants during pregnancy or delivery. STIs in babies can lead to very serious complications or even death. All pregnant women should be tested and treated for these infections.**





## PREVENTION

**STDS AND STIS CAN BE AVOIDED OR REDUCED IN A NUMBER OF WAYS. HOWEVER, THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TO PREVENT STIS IS TO AVOID HAVING SEX (ABSTINENCE).**

**HOWEVER, IF YOU DECIDE TO BE SEXUALLY ACTIVE, STAYING IN A LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIP WHERE BOTH PERSONS HAVE SEX ONLY WITH EACH OTHER AND NEITHER PARTNER IS INFECTED IS ANOTHER RELIABLE WAY TO AVOID STIS.**

**Also, wait until you and your partner have tested for STIs before engaging in any sexual activity.**

**Getting vaccinated early, before any sexual contact, can also help against certain types of STIs. Vaccines are available to prevent STIs such as human papillomavirus (HPV), hepatitis A and hepatitis B.**

**IMPORTANT!**

**When engaging in any sexual act, always use a new latex condom or protection. Never use an oil-based lubricant like petroleum jelly with a latex condom. Using oil-based lubricant with a latex condom will damage the latex of the condom, causing it to break.**





THERE IS A LOT TO TALK ABOUT STIS, BUT THAT WILL BE ALL FOR NOW. I WILL TELL YOU MUCH MORE ON MY NEXT VISIT.

**Okay, Big Sis!**



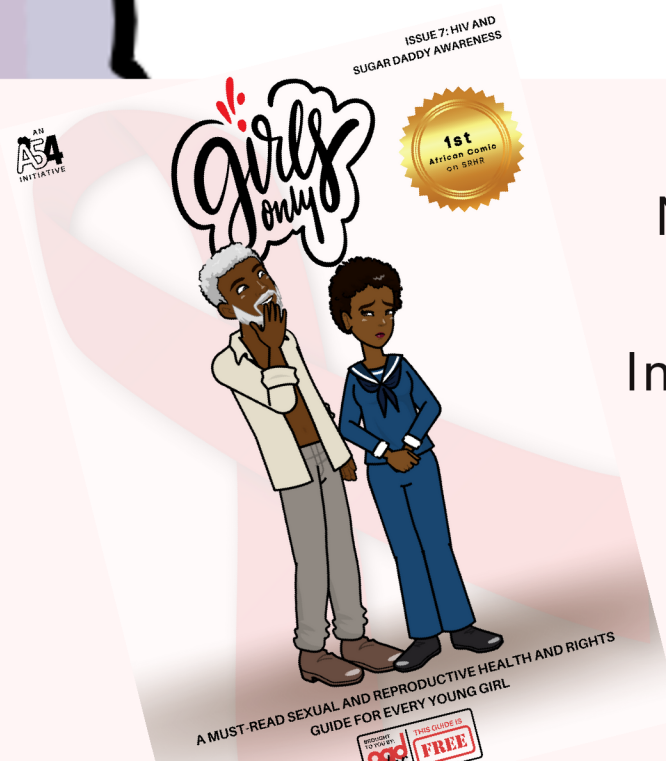


THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE  
TIME TO EXPLAIN EVERYTHING  
TO ME. I CAN'T WAIT TO GET  
TO SCHOOL AND TELL KEMI  
ALL I HAVE LEARNED TODAY!

**HAHA!**

**You are most  
welcome, you  
curious little girl!**

**ON THE  
NEXT  
ISSUE!**



Next month, Girls Only will return with an all-exciting new issue titled  
**HIV and Sugar Daddy Awareness.**

In this issue, Dr. Joy empowers Amanda with the knowledge and skills to  
reduce the risk of STIs such as HIV and teenage pregnancies.

To download this issue for free and/or newer issues, please visit

**[padher.org/download](http://padher.org/download)**





## WHAT MAKES GIRLS ONLY GREAT?

- Well-researched
- Designed for Boys Too!
- Medically accurate contents
- Based on real-life experiences
- Fun for school girls
- Comfortable for Parents and Teachers

**...I DEEPLY APPRECIATE PADHER'S WORK TO INCREASE ACCESSIBILITY  
AND EQUITY FOR GIRLS...**

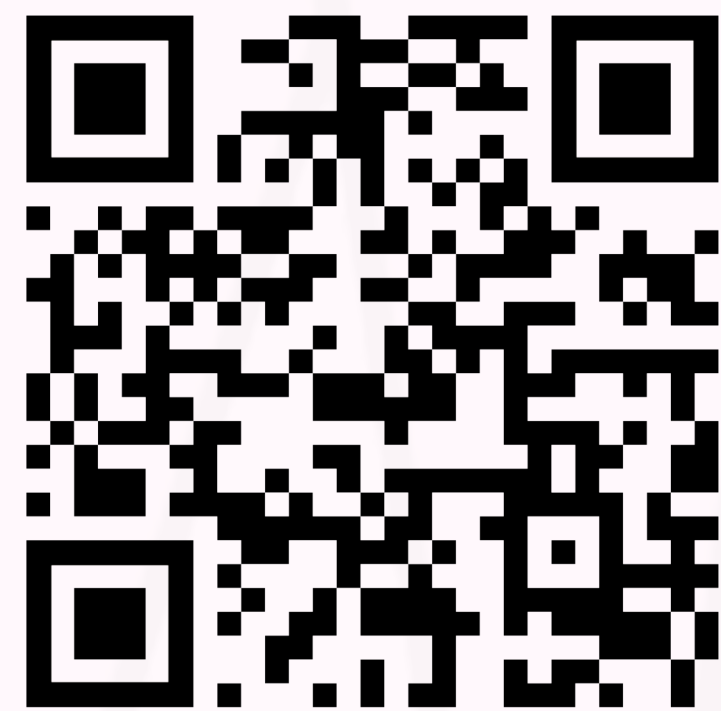
— Meghan Hammond, Project Manager, HundrED



**Want to help your  
daughter manage her  
period?**

Visit  
**[padher.org/for/parent](https://padher.org/for/parent)**  
for a comprehensive  
parent guide

OR

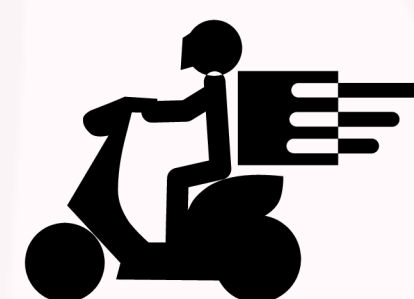


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