



**According to the national average, more than half of all teens 15-19 are still virgins.**

# TEEN SEX OUTSIDE OF MARRIAGE

Contrary to popular belief, not everyone is “doing it.” Nevertheless, more than 40% of 15-19 year-olds have been or are currently sexually active—often putting them at far greater risk for pregnancy, infertility and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) than they realize.

## **SEX: WHAT'S REALLY AT RISK?**

If your kids are sexually active, they could get an infection, become pregnant or suffer from guilt, regret or other emotional consequences.

### **STDs/STIs (Sexually Transmitted Diseases/Infections)**

STDs are rampant in America. Symptoms may include burning, pain or blister outbreaks, but many STDs go undetected for years and can cause permanent damage to your child's body.

There are more than 25 known STIs that threaten the health of your teen, and some have no known cure. STIs can be uncomfortable, painful and humiliating. Worse yet, they can make it impossible for your children to have children in the

future, cause cancer...or even death. Recent estimates suggest that while representing 25% of the ever sexually active population, 15- to 24-year olds acquire nearly one-half of all new STDs. HPV (Human Papilloma Virus) is the most common viral STI. It can cause genital warts and causes nearly all cases of cervical cancer (which can be deadly). Most infected individuals are unaware of their infection, and condoms provide limited protection, so abstinence until marriage is clearly the only way to stay safe. About 20% of all Americans age 12 and older are infected with genital herpes, which often results in reoccurring outbreaks of painful blisters on the genitalia.

### **Less Is More**

The more people your teen has sex with,

the greater his or her chances are of becoming infected or pregnant. Even when birth control is used, sexually active teens can still get pregnant or contract an STD, which always complicates and often devastates their lives.

## **FOR TEENS, THE ONLY SAFE SEX IS NO SEX**

The simple truth is there's only one prevention method that works every time it's used—abstinence until marriage. Abstinence is not a rejection of sex, but rather an intentional delay of sexual activity until it can be safely and fully enjoyed within the confines of a lifelong commitment (marriage). It's a positive choice to be free to pursue a brighter future. **Abstinence is not about missing out; it's about holding out for something better.**

## **THE HIGH PRICE OF TEEN PREGNANCY**

Less than 40% of teen mothers who have a child before age 18 ever complete high school. Your child's education usually has a significant impact on his or her earning potential. It's projected that teen pregnancy costs the United States at least \$7 billion annually.

## THE BIG BENEFITS OF ABSTINENCE

Sexual abstinence until marriage frees your teens up to pursue their goals and dreams. They don't have to worry about being sidetracked by the numerous problems associated with premarital sex. They can concentrate on their education, their friendships, their extracurricular activities and simply enjoy this unique stage of life. Abstinence increases their chances of success by reducing the barriers between where they are and where they want to be.

In addition, saving sex for marriage sets couples up for a happier, healthier life together that's free of comparisons, unwanted memories and physical complications or infertility that can result from prior sexual activity. There are numerous benefits to healthy marriage relationships.

Research shows that married people live longer, have higher incomes, engage in less risky behaviors and have fewer psychological problems. Isn't that what you want for your children's futures? It starts now, because today's choices impact tomorrow's opportunities.

## TEEN SEX: QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

### *When Should You Talk About Abstinence With Your Kids?*

Whenever you can. There's never going to be a single perfect time because talking about saving sex for marriage is an ongoing process, not a one-time event. Kids don't respond well to having "the talk"—especially if they're not connected to their parents. Without laying a foundation for discussions about sensitive subjects, your kids will simply feel awkward and embarrassed. The best way to talk with your kids about sex and abstinence includes setting the stage as they grow with age-appropriate discussions. Important topics to cover include love, marriage, commitment, self-control, emotions, delayed gratification and personal hygiene.

### *What If Your Teen Is Already Sexually Active?*

The past is simply that—the past. Help him or her look to the future. Remind your adolescent that it's never too late to start making better choices, especially when his/her health is at risk. Many teens who were sexually active have rededicated themselves to abstinence from that day forward, a concept often referred to as "secondary virginity." While your kids can't change their past, they can certainly still choose their future. If your child has been sexually active, set up an appointment with a doctor to have him or her tested for STDs.

### *How Can I Ask My Child to Abstain From Teen Sex When I Didn't?*

There's nothing hypocritical about trying to keep your child from making the same mistakes you did. If you talk about the times you stumbled, they can be used as stepping stones for your children. Be honest. If you've made mistakes in your own life, share the consequences that resulted from the action. You don't have to disclose every detail, but your vulnerability and experience can make you even more persuasive.

**Your job is not to be perfect, but to be perfectly honest about your desire for your teen to experience the best life has to offer.**

## SURVEY SAYS:

A survey of sexually active teens found that more than 6 out of 10 wish they had waited longer to have sex.

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