



JUST THE FACTS: TEEN SEXUAL BEHAVIOR AND PARENT-CHILD COMMUNICATION

Teen Sexual Activity

- On average, teens have sex for the first time at age 18 (Finer & Philbin, 2014).
- By age 15, only 16 percent of teens have had vaginal intercourse. By age 19, seven in 10 have had intercourse (Guttmacher Institute, 2014).
- Only 38 percent of 15- to 17-year-old males have engaged in oral sex, and only 33 percent of 15- to 17-year-old females have engaged in oral sex (Copen et al., 2012).
- Teens are as likely to engage in first oral sex before intercourse as they are to engage in first intercourse before oral sex (Copen et al., 2012).

Contraceptive Use

- The majority of sexually experienced teens (78 percent of females and 85 percent of males) used birth control the first time they had sex (Guttmacher Institute, 2014).
- From 2006 to 2010, 86 percent of female teens and 93 percent of male teens reported using birth control the last time they had sex, up from 71 percent of females and 82 percent of males in 1995 (Guttmacher Institute, 2014).

Pregnancy and STDs

- Each year, nearly 615,000 U.S. teens aged 15–19 become pregnant. Two-thirds of all teen pregnancies occur among 18- to 19-year-olds (Guttmacher Institute, 2014).
- African Americans and Latinos face greater obstacles to obtaining health care than non-Hispanic whites. As a result, African-American and Latino teens have the highest pregnancy rates (100 and 84 per 1,000 women aged 15–19). Non-Hispanic whites have the lowest rate (38 per 1,000 women aged 15–19) (Guttmacher Institute, 2014).
- Young people have disproportionately high rates of STDs. Even though 15- to 24-year-olds represent only one-quarter of all sexually active people, they account for half of the new cases of STDs each year (CDC, 2013).

What Parents Say Matters!

- Thirty-eight percent of teens report that parents are the biggest influence on their decisions about sex, while only 22 percent say their biggest influence is their friends (Alpert, 2012).
- Eighty-seven percent of teens say it would be easier to delay sex and avoid pregnancy if they could have more open conversations about it with their parents (Alpert, 2012).
- Teens who report having good conversations with their parents about sex are more likely to delay sex, have fewer partners, and use condoms and other birth control when they do have sex (Guilamo-Ramos et al., 2010; Weinman et al., 2008).

What Parents Do Matters!

- Parents can follow a few simple guidelines that will make their teens less likely to engage in risky behavior like drinking, smoking, having unprotected sex, or having sex before they are ready.
- Parents can lessen the likelihood of their kids engaging in risky behavior by knowing where their teens are, who they are with, and not allowing their teens to spend a lot of time without adults present.
- When teens are invited to another teen's house or to a party, parents can limit their children's risk by making sure there will be adults present. Parents can also discourage their teens from going out on school nights and dating or hanging out with older teens.
- Teens are also less likely to engage in risky behavior when their parents know the teens' friends and the parents of their friends (Guilamo-Ramos & Bouris, 2008). So, getting to know the parents of your kids' friends, and especially the parents of anyone your son or daughter is dating, is a good idea.

Sources

Alpert, Bill. (2012). *With One Voice 2012: America's Adults and Teens Sound Off About Teen Pregnancy*. Washington, DC: The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. [Online]. https://thenationalcampaign.org/sites/default/files/resource-primary-download/wov_2012.pdf, accessed September 3, 2014.

CDC- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2013). *Fact Sheet: Incidence, Prevalence, and Cost of Sexually Transmitted Infections in the United States*. Atlanta, GA: CDC. [Online]. <http://www.cdc.gov/std/stats/sti-estimates-fact-sheet-feb-2013.pdf>, accessed July 30, 2014.

Copen, Casey E., et al. (2012). "Prevalence and timing of oral sex with opposite-sex partners among females and males aged 15–24 years: United States, 2007–2010." *National Health Statistics Reports*, no 56. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. [Online]. <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nhsr/nhsr056.pdf>, accessed July 30, 2014.

Finer, Lawrence B., and Jesse M. Philbin. (2014). "Trends in Ages at Key Reproductive Transitions in the United States, 1951–2010." *Women's Health Issues*, 24 (3), e271-e279. [Online]. <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1049386714000085>, accessed July 30, 2014.

Guilamo-Ramos, Vincent and Alida Bouris. (2008). *Parent-Adolescent Communication about Sex in Latino Families: A Guide for Practitioners*. Washington, DC: The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. [Online]. http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/resources/pdf/pubs/Parent_AdolFINAL.pdf, accessed August 24, 2012.

Guilamo-Ramos, Vincent, et al. (Eds). (2010). *Parental Monitoring of Adolescents*. New York: Columbia University Press.