



# Bright Futures Patient Handout

## 18 to 21 Year Visits

PHYSICAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

### Your Daily Life

- Visit the dentist at least twice a year.
- Protect your hearing at work, home, and concerts.
- Eat a variety of healthy foods.
- Eat breakfast every morning.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Make sure to get enough calcium.
  - Have 3 or more servings of low-fat (1% or fat-free milk and other low-fat dairy products each day.
- Aim for 1 hour of vigorous physical activity.
- Be proud of yourself when you do something well.

RISK REDUCTION

### Healthy Behavior Choices

- Support friends who choose not to use drugs, alcohol, tobacco, steroids, or diet pills.
- If you use drugs or alcohol, you can talk to us about it. We can help you with quitting or cutting down on your use.
- Make healthy decisions about your sexual behavior.
- If you are sexually active, always practice safe sex. Always use a condom to prevent STIs.
- All sexual activity should be something you want. No one should ever force or try to convince you.
- Find safe activities at school and in the community.

VIOLENCE AND INJURY PREVENTION

### Violence and Injuries

- Do not drink and drive or ride in a vehicle with someone who has been using drugs or alcohol.
  - If you feel unsafe driving or riding with someone, call someone you trust to drive you.
- Always wear a seat belt in the car.
- Know the rules for safe driving.
- Never allow physical harm of yourself or others at home or school.
- Always deal with conflict using nonviolence.
- Remember that healthy dating relationships are built on respect and that saying “no” is OK.
- Fighting and carrying weapons can be dangerous.

EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

### Your Feelings

- Figure out healthy ways to deal with stress.
- Try your best to solve problems and make decisions on your own.
- Most people have daily ups and downs. But if you are feeling sad, depressed, nervous, irritable, hopeless, or angry, talk with me or another health professional.
- We understand sexuality is an important part of your development. If you have any questions or concerns, we are here for you.

SOCIAL AND ACADEMIC COMPETENCE

### School and Friends

- Take responsibility for being organized enough to succeed in work or school.
- Find new activities you enjoy.
- Consider volunteering and helping others in the community on an issue that interests or concerns you.
- Form healthy friendships and find fun, safe things to do with friends.
- As you get older, making and keeping friends is important. You may find that you drift away from some of your old friends—that’s normal.
- Evaluate your friendships and keep those that are healthy.
- It is still important to stay connected with your family.



American Academy of Pediatrics



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Illustration by Billy Nuñez, age 16

# TEEN DATING VIOLENCE: TIPS FOR PARENTS

## PARENTS NEED TO KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON

- Learn the myths and facts about dating violence.
- Some teens who are abused don't talk about it.
- There are warning signs of abuse.
- Teach your teenager that respect is the most important thing in a dating relationship.
- Learn how to talk with your child about dating violence.

**R**omantic and sexual feelings develop during the teen years. Teenagers are starting to date and experiment with different types of relationships. It is fun and exciting to meet someone new, and sad and difficult to break up.

As a parent, you can help your teenager make good decisions about dating. With guidance and support, teens can learn about healthy relationships and get the strength and courage needed to leave those that are not.

**There is no place for verbal or physical abuse in a healthy and respectful relationship.**

## MYTHS AND FACTS

MYTH: "Teen dating violence is just another way of saying rape."

FACT: Abuse comes in many forms. Besides sexual violence, it also includes:

- Yelling, swearing, put-downs, and threats
- Being pushed around or hit
- Controlling, bossy, and bullying behavior

MYTH: "Oh, it's not that common."

FACTS:

- More than 1 in 10 teenagers experience physical violence in a dating relationship.
- When threats and emotional abuse are included, it's even higher.

MYTH: "It only happens to kids from bad homes."

FACT: Dating violence is not limited to families with a history of violence. It happens to teens from families of all cultures, income levels, and educational backgrounds.

MYTH: "It can't happen to my child."

FACTS:

- Boys, as well as girls, can be victims of dating violence.
- It can happen in any type of relationship—straight, gay, or lesbian.
- It can occur at any time in a relationship—those just starting or ones that have been going on for a while.

## WHY TEENS ARE SILENT

There are many reasons why teens don't tell their parents or friends about the violence they are experiencing. They may:

- Feel embarrassed, ashamed, or afraid of getting hurt.
- Be convinced it is their fault and do not know that it is abuse.
- Feel afraid they will be forced to break up or of losing privileges.
- Feel certain that being in a relationship is the most important thing in their life.
- Confuse jealousy with love, and think this is how it should be.



- Be afraid of losing friends. They may think friends would not believe this is happening, and they may feel alone after having lost touch with friends.
- Know the abuser will act nice some of the time, and they are happy when this happens.
- Feel hopeful that things will get better and convinced that they can help or change their partner.

## **WARNING SIGNS OF ABUSE**

Some of the following may be just part of being a teenager. But, when these changes happen suddenly or without explanation, there is cause for concern.

### **School**

- Failing grades
- Dropping out of school or school activities

### **Attitude/mood**

- Difficulty making decisions
- Changes in personality, becoming anxious or depressed
- Acting out or being secretive
- Avoiding eye contact
- Having “crying jags” or getting “hysterical”
- Constantly thinking about dating partner

### **Physical appearance**

- Bruises, scratches, or other injuries
- Sudden changes in clothes or make-up

### **Activities**

- Avoiding friends or changing peer groups
- Giving up activities, interests, or family time that previously had been important
- Changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Using alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs

### **Pregnancy**

- Some teenagers believe that having a baby will help make things better.
- Some girls are forced to have sex.

## **ABUSIVE BEHAVIOR**

It is important for you to recognize signs of an abusive relationship.

- Wanting to get serious quickly and refusing to take NO for an answer
- Acting jealous and possessive and wanting to pick partner’s friends and activities
- Being controlling and bossy and making all the decisions, not taking opinions of others seriously, and always checking up on partner
- Using threats and “put-downs” when alone or with friends
- Using guilt trips like, “If you really loved me, you would\_\_\_\_\_.”
- Blaming the victim for what is wrong, like saying, “It’s because of you that I get so mad.”
- Apologizing or giving excuses for violent behavior like, “I promise I’ll never do it again,” or “I was drinking and just didn’t know that I \_\_\_\_\_.”

**Your child needs help in either case—  
victim or abuser**

## **TIPS FOR PARENTS**

### **Talk about healthy dating relationships and possible problems.**

It is never too early or too late to teach about respect. Respect for self and others is important in any relationship.

### **If you think your teenager already may be involved with an abusive partner:**

- Give your teen a chance to talk. Listen quietly to the whole story.
- Tell your child that you are there to help, not to judge.
- If your teen does not want to talk with you, help find another trusted person for your child to talk with.
- Focus on your child’s safety and self-esteem. Point out how unhappy your teenager seems to be while with this person and the possibility of danger or harm. Do not “put down” the abusive partner.
- Let your child know that abuse always gets worse. What may start as minor verbal or physical abuse is very likely to get worse if not stopped immediately.

### **If your teenager tries to break up with an abusive partner:**

- Advise that the breakup be definite and final.
- Develop a safety plan with your teen ahead of time.
- Support your teenager's decision and be ready to help.
- Make sure your teen takes all necessary safety measures.
  - Avoid walking or riding alone, and always travel with another friend.
  - Consider changing class schedules.
  - Get help from the guidance counselor, school principal, or if necessary, the police.

### **WHAT YOU CAN SAY**

It is important for your teen to talk about dating violence, either with you or with another trusted adult. Many people who have been victims of dating violence have been able to change their lives after they began talking with others.

- "I care about what happens to you. I love you and I want to help."
- "If you feel afraid, it may be abuse. Sometimes people act in ways that are scary and make you feel threatened, even without using physical violence. Pay attention to what you are feeling."
- "No one has the right to hit you. No one has the right to control you or what you do."
- "The abuse is not your fault. You are not to blame, no matter how guilty \_\_\_\_\_ is trying to make you feel. This should not be happening to you."
- "It is \_\_\_\_\_ who has a problem, not you. It is not your responsibility to help \_\_\_\_\_ change."

**Ask for teen dating violence prevention and intervention programs at your teenager's school or through religious or other community groups.**

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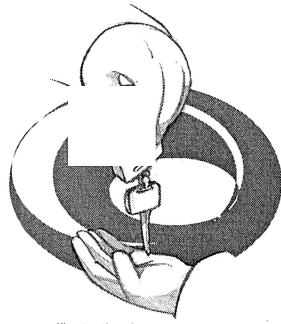


Illustration by  
Billy Nuñez, age 16

# NEXT STOP ADULTHOOD: TIPS FOR PARENTS

## AS YOUR CHILD BECOMES AN ADULT

- Becoming an adult does not happen overnight; it occurs over time and in steps.
- Letting go is a difficult but also rewarding part of life.
- Help your teen learn the responsibilities that come with being an adult.
- Relating to your child as an adult is new for both you and your child.

**B**ecoming a young adult is exciting, difficult, and scary for both parents and teens. It is a time of increasing independence and change, no matter what the situation. For example:

- Going to college
- Moving out
- Starting a job
- Staying at home

## TEACH INDEPENDENCE

Learning to be independent does not happen overnight. Just like getting a driver's license, it occurs over time and in steps.

- Learner's permit—learning new skills with supervision
- License with limitations—taking on some responsibilities, but with parental support
- Full license—being fully responsible for one's own actions

Parents need to give up much of the control over many of their young adult's decisions. But parents still worry about their child's safety, health, and success. This is where you need to trust the job you have done as a parent.

## LET GO, BUT STAY CONNECTED

Parents give guidance and feedback to their children at every age, but giving advice to a young adult is different from telling a child what to do or teaching a child how to do something.

### Giving and getting advice.

Young adults need to know that everybody needs advice and help from others for the rest of their lives. Parents now need to be open to getting advice and feedback from their adult children.

### Effective communication is an important part of this new relationship.

Open and honest communication is key. Even though some topics may be difficult or even embarrassing for you, this is the basis of a healthy adult relationship with your child.

### Understanding each other may be difficult.

There may be times when you do not agree with each other, and conflicts may occur. Try not to let getting mad or angry turn into a fight. Fights don't solve problems; they make new ones.

### Be a role model.

Solve problems and conflicts with respect for your teen. Acknowledge and apologize when you are wrong. This is an excellent way to teach your child how to peaceably solve conflicts with others.



## HELP TEENS LEARN RESPONSIBILITY

As teens gain the privileges that come with being adults, they need to understand the responsibilities toward others and the community that come with these privileges. Decisions that adults make have adult consequences, both good and bad, that they will need to live with.

### Do less.

Parents need to stop doing things for their teens, like making lunch or running an “emergency” load of wash, that teens can do for themselves. Parents who complain most bitterly about their teens’ irresponsibility are often the ones who don’t make their kids do anything for themselves.

### Let consequences happen.

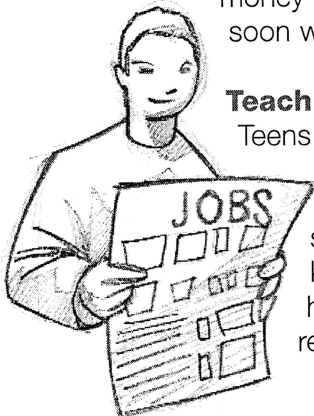
There is no need to come up with special punishments to discourage irresponsibility. Simply let nature take its course.

- Forgotten homework assignments result in lower grades or having to do make-up work.
- Not putting clothes into the hamper means that there might be nothing but dirty clothes to wear.

Of course, it is hard to stand by and see your child suffer embarrassment or defeat. A parent naturally wants to jump in and help. Remind yourself that the most helpful thing you can do is allow your child to learn to take responsibility, the sooner the better.

### Give a regular allowance, but no extras.

When you are seen as a source of ready cash, your child has no incentive to handle money responsibly. Decide on a fair amount, and discuss how to budget by spending a little and saving for larger purchases. Then refuse to pay for any items that are not needed. If teens don’t have money for something they want, they soon will learn to budget.



### Teach ways to be more organized.

Teens who have trouble staying organized can appear irresponsible. By teaching specific skills, like always putting keys in a particular spot, you are helping your child become a responsible adult.

### Help your teen think through options.

Adolescents make large, life-changing decisions, like whether to drink, smoke, have sex, or go to college. They also make smaller but still important decisions, like whether to try out for soccer or use the time for studying or an after-school job.

One way to help with decisions is to sit down together and actually write down the answers to the following questions:

- What is the difficulty?
- What are possible solutions?
- What are consequences of each solution?
- Which of those consequences is most desirable from a practical, personal, moral, or legal point of view?

## RELATING AS ADULTS

As children become adults, the way children and parents relate needs to change. The goal is to respect each other as adults.

### Continue sharing, listening, and asking questions.

Parents want to hear about how their “kids” are doing. It is also important for children to know “what’s going on” with their parents.

Having lunch or dinner together is a good way to keep up-to-date with each other and have fun at the same time. Don’t stop being interested in each other’s lives.

## LIVING AT HOME

### Everyone needs to help with the work of the family.

Whether the chores are divided up using a formal schedule or everyone just pitches in when they can, everyone needs to help out at home.

You might want to have a family meeting to decide who does what. It’s all about fairness.

### A pleasant place to live.

Teens and young adults need to know that they can’t play their music so loudly that it disturbs others. Everyone needs to pick up clothing and other items in spaces they share, especially hallways and bathrooms.

**“Living in the same home means that we need to treat each other with courtesy and respect.”**

**A space to call their own.**

Even in small homes, providing teenagers with a space to call their own is important. This allows them the freedom to express themselves and to develop their own sense of self-discipline.

For example, they can decorate their room as they wish and keep it as messy or neat as they choose, within reason. It is within your rights to insist that a room be picked up if it starts to smell bad or affects the home.

**Being safe.**

Parents always will be concerned about their children. But as children get older, they need to begin to assume some responsibility for their own safety.

For example, when parents communicate curfews as a matter of safety, it is more likely to be accepted. Teens and young adults need to know that if they are not able to make the curfew, they need to get in touch with the person who is waiting up for them.

**“You have to be home by 11:00 because the streets aren’t safe after that. If you can’t be home by then, please give me a call.”**

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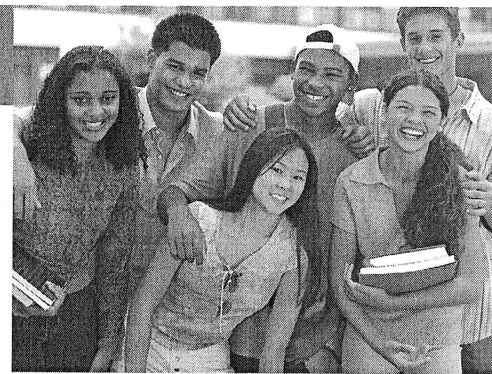
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# for today's teens: a message from your pediatrician



**Now that you are getting older**, you have different health needs than you did when you were younger. However, your pediatrician is still there to help you stay healthy.

## Just ask

Beginning when you are about 11 or 12 years old, your pediatrician might suggest that you spend some time alone with him or her during your health care visits. Why? While it's always important to talk with parents about some personal things in your life, it can be really hard. But you can always ask your pediatrician about personal stuff. They've heard it all! Plus, your pediatrician cares about your health and wants to help you in any way.

Talking with your pediatrician is a great way to get the answers about how your body works, how to take care of yourself, how to handle your emotions, how to stay healthy, and how to talk about these things with your parents.

Remember, your pediatrician will keep most of what you talk about private! This is called *confidentiality*. There may be exceptions, like if your life or someone else's life is in danger. And in some states the law may require pediatricians to share certain information. At your next visit feel free to ask your pediatrician about what's confidential.

## Take charge!

Some kids your age only see their pediatrician when they are sick or hurt. But staying healthy means more than just seeing a doctor when something is wrong. You're getting old enough to start taking charge of your own health. This means preventing problems before they start.

So, see your pediatrician once a year, just to make sure everything is OK.

Of course, you should also see your pediatrician when you are sick or hurt.

## Important stuff

Hopefully you feel comfortable enough with your pediatrician to ask anything, even stuff that's a little embarrassing. But in case you're wondering what kinds of things pediatricians can help you with, check out the following list:

### • Sports or school physicals

If you play sports, you probably need to get a physical before you can play. Some kids need a physical before the start of a new school year. This is a great time to talk with your pediatrician about your health and how to avoid injuries and stay healthy and fit.

### • Treatment of illnesses or injuries

Have you been sick lately? Did you get hurt recently? These are important things to tell your pediatrician about, even if you think they're no big deal. Let your pediatrician know about any pain you have or anything that feels different.

### • Growth and development

Your body is changing fast and you might want to talk about what's going on. Don't know where to start? You may want to ask

—Will I be as tall as my parents?

—What can I do about these pimples?

—Am I fat?

—Why are my breasts uneven? (Girls—The answer is often normal variation.)

—Why are my pajamas wet in the morning? (Guys—The answer is almost always nocturnal emission or "wet dream.")

### • Personal and/or family problems

Having a hard time dealing with your friends or family? Feel like your parents just don't understand you? Maybe you're being teased at school, feeling pressure from some friends, or being bullied. All of these things can be pretty hard to deal with. If you don't know where to turn, remember that your pediatrician is there to help. Just ask.

### • School problems

You may worry about your grades and your future. Maybe you're finding it hard to keep up with school, a job, sports, or other activities. Your pediatrician may be able to help you through this busy time of your life.

### • Alcohol and drug use

You probably know kids who are using cigarettes, alcohol, or other drugs. Maybe you've been tempted to try these things too. But don't forget—what's right for them might not always be right for you.

Becoming an adult means more than just getting taller. It also means you have to make decisions about your life, not letting someone else make them for you. Your pediatrician can explain how smoking, drinking, or taking other drugs can affect you and why it's smart to stay away from them.

### • Sex

During visits with your pediatrician, you'll have a chance to ask questions about dating, sex, and other personal stuff. It's important to make the right choices about sex now. The wrong choice could affect the rest of your life. The good news is, whatever you and your pediatrician talk about is private so go ahead and ask about sex, how to protect yourself against sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and pregnancy, or whatever else you want to know about.



- **Conflicts with parents**

Having any problems at home? Does it sometimes seem like no one understands you or respects your ideas? You're not alone. If you have a problem that your parents may not understand, talk with your pediatrician. Sometimes an outside person can give a better view of these difficult situations. Your pediatrician might also have some ideas on how to get through to your parents.

- **Referrals to other doctors for special health needs**

You may have a medical problem that will require you to see a different doctor or specialist. In that case, your pediatrician can refer you to another doctor who can help you. But even though you may need to see a specialist, your pediatrician still cares about your health and wants to see you for regular checkups or illnesses.

## What you can do to stay healthy

To get a head start on taking charge of your own health, use the following list to keep yourself healthy:

- Eat right and get plenty of sleep (most teens need 9–10 hours a night).
- Know how to handle minor injuries like cuts and bruises, as well as minor illnesses like colds.
- Know how to get medical help for things like vomiting, headache, high fever, earache, sore throat, diarrhea, or stomach pain.
- Ask for help if you have sleep problems, sadness, family stress, school problems, problems with alcohol or other drugs, or trouble getting along with friends, family, or teachers.
- Don't use alcohol, cigarettes, smokeless tobacco (chew), and other drugs.
- Delay having sex or use protection if you choose to have sex.
- Exercise regularly.
- Always wear your seat belt when you are in a car or truck.

As you become an adult, you'll face many challenges. With help from your pediatrician, you'll learn how to make the right decisions that will help you grow up healthy.

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# tips for parents of adolescents



Adolescence is the time between childhood and adulthood when your daughter or son will go through many physical and emotional changes. It begins with puberty which, for girls, usually starts between 8 and 13 years of age, and for boys, between 10 to 14 years of age.

Though these years can be difficult, it can also be a rewarding time watching your teen make the transition into an independent, caring, and responsible adult.

The American Academy of Pediatrics offers the following tips to help you and your teen navigate adolescence. *Teen* will be the term used in this publication when referring to adolescent, teenager, preteen, and tween.

- 1. Spend family time with your teen.** Although many teens may seem more interested in friends, this does not mean they are not interested in family.
- 2. Spend time alone with your teen.** Even if your teen does not want time alone with you, remind him or her often that you are always available to listen or talk. One way to make yourself available is to offer rides; a great opportunity to talk (if the radio isn't too loud).
- 3. When your teen talks**
  - Pay attention.
  - Watch, as well as listen.
  - Try not to interrupt.
  - Ask for further details if you don't understand.
  - If you don't have time to listen, set a time that will be good for both of you.
- 4. Respect your teen.** It's OK to disagree with your teen, but disagree respectfully, not insultingly. Don't dismiss his or her feelings or opinions as silly or senseless. You may not always be able to help when your teen is upset about something, but it is important to say, "I want to understand," or "Help me understand."
- 5. When rules are needed, set and enforce them.** Don't be afraid to be unpopular for a day or two. Believe it or not, teens see setting limits as a form of caring.
- 6. Try not to get upset if your teen makes mistakes.** This will help your teen take responsibility for his or her actions. Remember to offer guidance when necessary. Direct the discussion toward solutions. For example, saying, "I get upset when I find clothes all over the floor," is much better than, "You're a slob."  
  
Be willing to negotiate and compromise. This will teach problem solving in a healthy way. Remember to choose your battles. Let go of the little things that may not be worth a big fight.
- 7. Criticize a behavior, not an attitude.** For example, instead of saying, "You're late. That's so irresponsible. And I don't like your attitude," try saying, "I worry about your safety when you're late. I trust you, but when I don't hear from you and don't know where you are, I wonder whether something bad has happened to you. What can we do together to help

you get home on time and make sure I know where you are or when you're going to be late?"

- 8. Mix criticism with praise.** Your teen needs to know how you feel when he or she is not doing what you want him or her to do. Be sure to mix in positive feedback with this criticism. For example, "I'm proud that you are able to hold a job and get your homework done. I would like to see you use some of that energy to help do the dishes after meals."
- 9. Let your teen be a teen.** Give your teen some leeway with regard to clothes, hairstyle, etc. Many teens go through a rebellious period in which they want to express themselves in ways that are different from their parents. However, be aware of the messages and ratings of the music, movies, and video games to which your teen is exposed.
- 10. Be a parent first, not a friend.** Your teen's separation from you as a parent is a normal part of development. Don't take it personally.
- 11. Don't be afraid to share mistakes you've made as a parent or as a teen.**
- 12. Talk with your teen's pediatrician** if you need advice on how to talk with or get along with your teen.

## Common questions

The following are answers to questions from parents of teens.

### Dieting and body image

*"My daughter is always trying new diets. How can I help her lose weight safely?"*

Many teens resort to extreme diet or exercise programs because they want their bodies to look like the models, singers, actors, or athletes they see in the media.

### Tips for a healthy diet

- Limit fast-food meals. Discuss the options available at fast-food restaurants and help your teen find a healthy, balanced diet. Fat should not come from junk food but from healthier foods such as low-fat cheese or low-fat yogurt.
- Keep the household supply of junk food such as candy, cookies, and potato chips to a minimum.
- Stock up on low-fat healthy items for snacking such as fruit, raw vegetables, whole-grain crackers, and low-fat yogurt. Encourage eating fruits and vegetables as snacks.
- Check with your teen's doctor about the proper amounts of calories, fat, protein, and carbohydrates for your teen.
- As a parent, model good eating habits. Make mealtime family time (5 times per week or more)—eating meals together helps with communication and reduces teen risk-taking.

Be aware of any diet or exercise program your daughter is following. Be watchful of how much weight she loses and make sure the diet program is healthy. Eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa can be very dangerous. If you suspect your daughter has an eating disorder, talk with her doctor right away. Also, if you have a son, it's important to be aware of his diet or exercise habits too.

Many diets are unhealthy for teens because they do not have the nutritional value that bodies need during puberty. If your daughter wants to lose weight, urge her to increase physical activity and to take weight off slowly. Let her eat according to her own appetite, but make sure she gets enough fats, carbohydrates, protein, and calcium.

If your daughter decides to become a vegetarian, make certain she follows a healthy vegetarian diet. She may need to see her doctor or a nutritionist to ensure that she is getting enough fat, calories, protein, and calcium.

If your teen (like many teens) is unhappy with the way she looks, encourage healthy exercise. Physical activity will help stop hunger pangs, create a positive self-image, and take away the "blahs." If she wants to train with weights, she should check with her doctor, as well as a trainer, coach, or physical education teacher.

Help create a positive self-image by praising her wonderful qualities and focusing less on her appearance. Set a good example by making exercise and eating right a part of your daily routine also.

### Dating and sex education

*"With all the sex on TV, how can I teach my son to wait until he is ready?"*

Teens (females and males) are naturally curious about sex. This is completely normal and healthy. However, teens may be pressured

#### Talking with your teen about sex

Before your teen becomes sexually active, make sure you discuss the following topics:

- **Medical and physical risks.** Risks include unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) such as gonorrhea, chlamydia, hepatitis B, syphilis, herpes, HIV (the virus that causes AIDS), and HPV (human papillomavirus—the virus that can cause cancers of the mouth and throat, cervix, and genitals in teens and adults).
- **Emotional risks.** Teens who have sex before they are emotionally ready may regret the decision when they are older or feel guilty, frightened, or ashamed from the experience. Your teen should ask himself or herself, "Am I ready to have sex?" or "What will happen after I have sex?"
- **Promoting safer sex.** Anyone who is sexually active needs to be aware of how to prevent unintended pregnancies, as well as how to protect against STIs. Condoms should always be used *along with* a second method of contraception to prevent pregnancy and reduce the risk of STIs.
- **Setting limits.** Make sure your teen has thought about what his or her sexual limits are *before* dating begins.

Most importantly, let your teen know that he or she can talk with you and his or her doctor about dating and relationships. Offer your guidance throughout this important stage in your teen's life.

into having sex too soon by their peers or the media. Talk with your son to understand his feelings and views about sex. Start early and provide him with access to information that is accurate and appropriate. Delaying sexual involvement could be the most important decision he makes.

### Drugs

*"I am afraid some of my daughter's friends have offered her drugs. How can I help her make the right decision?"*

Teens may try or use tobacco and alcohol or other drugs to fit in or as a way to deal with peer pressure. Try to help build self-confidence or self-esteem in your teen. Ask your daughter about any concerns and problems she is facing and help her learn how to deal with strong emotions and cope with stress in ways that are healthy. For instance, encourage her to participate in leisure and outside activities with teens who don't drink and use drugs.

### Smoking and tobacco

*"My daughter smokes behind my back. How do I convince her to quit?"*

Smoking can turn into a lifelong addiction that can be extremely hard to break. Discuss with your teen some of the more undesirable effects of smoking, including bad breath, stained teeth, wrinkles, a long-term cough, and decreased athletic performance. Long-term use can also lead to serious health problems like emphysema and cancer.

*Chew* or *snuff* can also lead to nicotine addiction and causes the same health problems as smoking cigarettes. In addition, mouth wounds or sores can form and may not heal easily. Smokeless tobacco can also lead to cancer.

If you suspect your daughter is smoking or using smokeless tobacco and you need advice, talk with her doctor. Schedule a visit with her doctor when you and your daughter can discuss the risks associated with smoking and the best ways to quit before it becomes a lifelong habit.

#### If you smoke...quit

If you or someone else in the household smokes, now is a good time to quit. Watching a parent struggle through the process of quitting can be a powerful message for a teen who is thinking about starting. It also shows that you care about your health, as well as your teen's.

### Alcohol

*"I know my son drinks once in a while, but it's just beer. Why should I worry?"*

Alcohol is the most socially accepted drug in our society, and also one of the most abused and destructive. Even small amounts of alcohol can impair judgment, provoke risky and violent behavior, and slow down reaction time. An intoxicated teen (or anyone else) behind the wheel of a car makes it a lethal weapon. Alcohol-related car crashes are the leading cause of death for young adults aged 15 to 24 years.

Though it's illegal for people younger than 21 years to drink, we all know that most teens are not strangers to alcohol. Many of them

are introduced to alcohol during childhood. If you choose to use alcohol in your home, be aware of the example you set for your teen. The following suggestions may help:

- Having a drink should never be shown as a way to cope with problems.
- Don't drink in unsafe conditions—for example, driving the car, mowing the lawn, and using the stove.
- Don't encourage your teen to drink or to join you in having a drink.
- Do not allow your children to drink alcohol before they reach the legal age and teach them never, ever to drink and drive.
- Never make jokes about getting drunk; make sure that your children understand that it is neither funny nor acceptable.
- Show your children that there are many ways to have fun without alcohol. Happy occasions and special events don't have to include drinking.

The information contained in this publication should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

From your doctor

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# STDs/STIs: Protecting Yourself

What is an STD?

An STD -- short for sexually transmitted disease -- is an infection you can get by having sex. Sex in this case includes intercourse, anal sex, oral sex or skin-to-skin contact. Some of the most common STDs are listed below.

## How can I PROTECT myself against an STD?

The only 100% sure way to protect yourself is NOT TO HAVE SEX. It only takes one sexual contact with someone who has an STD to catch it. If you are sexually active, protect yourself by using a latex condom and a spermicide foam, cream or jelly with nonoxynol-9 (check the label on the box) every time you have sex.

Did you know that... **ONE OUT OF EVERY 8 TEENS GET AN STD.**

**Pubic lice** (crabs): Girls and guys may have redness and itching around the genitals.

**Trichomoniasis**: Girls can have a heavy, greenish-yellow frothy discharge and pain when urinating. Guys don't usually have symptoms.

**Chlamydia**: Girls may have no symptoms or may have pain when urinating, itching around the vagina, yellow fluid (discharge) from the vagina, bleeding between periods or pain in the lower abdomen. Guys may feel a burning when urinating and have milky colored discharge from the penis. If not treated, chlamydia can cause infertility and other problems in girls and painful swelling of the scrotum in guys.

**Syphilis**: Symptoms: An early symptom is a red PAINLESS sore, called a chancre. The sore can be on the penis, vagina, tongue or throat. The glands near the sore may be swollen. After a few months, both guys and girls can get a fever, sore throat, headache, or pain in their joints. Another symptom is a scaly rash on the palms of the hands or the bottom of the feet. The sores and other symptoms go away, but this does not mean that the infection is gone. Syphilis can cause serious health problems if it's not treated.

**HIV/AIDS**: HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) causes AIDS. HIV makes the body's immune system weak so it can't fight disease. Symptoms may take years to develop, and can include infections, feeling tired for no reason, and night sweats. HIV CANNOT BE CURED.

**Herpes**: Girls and guys may have tingling, PAIN or itching around the vagina or penis. Small blisters can form in these areas and then break open. When they break open, the sores can cause a burning feeling. It may hurt to urinate. Some people have swollen glands, fever and body aches. The sores and other symptoms go away, but this does not mean that the infection is gone. The sores and blisters can come back (called an "outbreak").  
HERPES CANNOT BE CURED.

**Gonorrhea**: Girls may have no symptoms or may have white, green or yellow discharge from the vagina, pain when urinating, bleeding between periods, heavy bleeding during a period or a fever. Both girls and guys can get sore throats if they've had mouth to penis or vagina contact (oral sex). Guys may have thick, yellow discharge from the penis and pain when urinating. The opening of the penis may be sore.

**HPV/Genital Warts:** HPV (human papillomavirus) can cause warts in or around the vagina, penis or rectum. In girls, the warts can be inside the body on the cervix or vagina so you can't see them. Or they can be on the outside of the body but be too small to see. The warts usually don't hurt. HPV CANNOT BE CURED.

How do I know if my **PARTNER** has an STD?

Ask. Although it may be uncomfortable, talk to your partner before having any sexual contact. Ask if he or she is at risk for having an STD. Some of the risk factors are having sex with several partners, using injected drugs, and having had an STD in the past. To be safe, protect yourself no matter what the person says. You must also tell your partner if you have an STD. You aren't doing yourself or your partner any favors by trying to hide it.

How do I know if I have an STD?

Watch for the symptoms listed above, but remember that most STDs don't cause any symptoms.

If you are sexually active, you should get regular check-ups and tell your doctor that you are sexually active. If you're worried that your parents will find out, you can ask your doctor not to discuss it with your parents. You can also go to a free health clinic. Don't let fear keep you from getting checked out. Imagine how you'd feel -- and how your parents would feel -- if you got really sick because you didn't get help. If you find out you have an STD, both you and your partner should get treated right away.

Can STDs be **CURED**?

Some can. STDs like chlamydia that are caused by bacteria can be cured with antibiotics. But STDs caused by a virus (like HIV or herpes) can't be cured. Your doctor can only treat the symptoms that the virus causes.

Don't wait to be treated! Early treatment helps prevent serious health problems. Even if medicine can't completely cure the STD, it can help keep you from getting sick. If you are given medicine for an STD, take it exactly as the doctor says.

For more information:

National STD Hotline:

800-227-8922

National AIDS Hotline:

800-342-2437 (English)

800-344-7432 (Spanish)

800-243-7889 (Hearing Impaired)

# Effects of Premarital Sexual Relations

## WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL:

Lucy and Ricky Ricardo sleep in separate twin beds in the 1950s comedy "I Love Lucy" to avoid any innuendoes; now media rages with suggestive material. Nick Lebel of Focus Adolescent Services reports:

- In 2003, 83% of the episodes of the top 20 shows among teen viewers contained some sexual content, including 20% with sexual intercourse.
- 42% of the songs on the top CDs in 1999 contained sexual content-19% included direct descriptions of sexual intercourse.
- On average, music videos contain 93 sexual situations per hour, including eleven "hard core" scenes depicting behaviors such as intercourse and oral sex.
- Before parents raised an outcry, Abercrombie and Fitch marketed a line of thong underpants decorated with sexually provocative phrases such as "Wink Wink" and "Eye Candy" to 10-year-olds.
- Neilson estimates that 6.6 million children ages 2-11 and 7.3 million teens ages 12-17 watched Justin Timberlake rip open Janet Jackson's bodice during the 2004 Super Bowl halftime show.

The internet is also a source of the perversion of sexuality; there are more than one million porn sites, and most of them are easy to find, even by accident. Porn, particularly, teaches teens to view women as mere sex objects, and later, porn becomes part of their sexuality. Paul Schenk, Psy.D. says, "It has the potential for teenagers to really mess up what their attitudes are about sexuality and really mess up relationships." "Although most teenage girls believe that sex equals love, other teens-especially boys-believe that sex is not the ultimate expression of the ultimate commitment, but a casual activity". Why shouldn't they? Is this not the message television is sending? Very seldom, if ever, does the entertainment business depict the sexual risks such as incurable diseases and unwanted pregnancies.

In the controversy of premarital sex, one side may argue it produces positive outcomes. The youth are forced to accept responsibilities such as using contraceptives, caring for another life, or dealing with the risks and consequences. In various cases, the teens use the situation as a turning point in life and choose to settle down and act more maturely. To ease the uneasiness adolescents sometimes feel when dealing with the opposite sex, some advocates proclaim it is beneficial to "test the waters" and to acquire experience. In this growing epidemic of sexual relations among teens, the bad results by far outweigh the good.

In his thesis on "The Phenomenon of Premarital Sex," Vic Fabe relates the information he discovered, "In the 1960s 25 percent of young men and 45 percent of young women were virgins at the age of nineteen; by the 1980s, fewer than 20 percent of males and females were." A survey performed in 2003 by a psychology unit found about one in five teens report having sex before age fifteen. More than half of fifteen to seventeen-year-olds have been with someone in a

sexual way. Other surveys have found that nearly two in three teens will have had sex by the time they graduate from high school.

The words most commonly uttered by teens choosing to become sexually promiscuous tend to relate to pregnancy: "As long as she doesn't get pregnant" or "If I get pregnant my parents will shoot me." Out-of-wedlock children constitute one in three of all births. In the United States in 1994, twenty-two percent of the births were to single girls eighteen years old or younger. Statistics show the teen pregnancy rate has fallen steadily between 1990 and 2000; however, the numbers are still quite high. In 2004 more than 415,000 babies were born to teens, and more than eighty percent of these births were to unmarried teens. These numbers do not include the babies conceived and miscarried or aborted.

Pregnancy presents many difficult decisions for the teen mother and father: Abortion? Adoption? Keep? "When teenagers become pregnant, abortion is a likely result. For girls under 15, there are 8 abortions to every 10 live births. For girls 15-19, there are 4 abortions to every 10 live births." If against terminating the pregnancy, adoption is another option, but for most females it is in their intricate nature to be unable to part with the infant. In deciding to keep the child, the mother will face many challenges ahead. More than three-fifths of teen mothers are poverty-stricken at the time of their child's birth and over four-fifths eventually live below the poverty level. Teen childbearing costs U.S. taxpayers an estimated \$7 billion per year. Low education levels account for a major portion of government dependency of teenagers; only about fifty percent of teen mothers are likely to finish high school. Teen mothers have a higher percentage likelihood of experiencing stressful major life events such as having a small child die or taken away, a disabling or life-threatening accident or injury, sexual assault or abuse, or an immediate family member addicted to drugs and alcohol. Despite these details, pregnancy should be the least of teenagers' worries.

For every unwed teenager who gets pregnant this year, 10 teenagers will get an STD. Approximately 333 million new cases of Sexually Transmitted Diseases are reported in the world each year. Teens are only ten percent of the population, but they account for twenty-five percent of all STDs. One out of four Americans has an incurable, viral STD; fifty percent of Americans age fourteen to twenty-five have an incurable, viral STD.

The World is plagued with over thirty-nine Sexually Transmitted Diseases. Hepatitis B is an extremely prevalent STD, and it is the biggest battle for pediatricians; however, the STD that arouses the biggest fear in society is HIV which eventually progresses into AIDS. Approximately twenty-five percent of HIV transmission in the United States is estimated to occur among people younger than twenty-one years of age. The human immunodeficiency virus destroys a certain kind of blood cell which is crucial to the normal function of the immune system. The symptoms of HIV are similar to those of many other diseases, so they cannot be relied on to determine HIV infection. Warning signs of the human immunodeficiency virus are as follows:

Rapid weight loss, dry cough, recurring fever or profuse night sweats, profound and unexplained fatigue, swollen lymph glands in the armpits, groin or neck, diarrhea that lasts for more than a week, white spots or unusual blemishes on the tongue, in the mouth or in the throat, pneumonia, red, brown, pink or purplish blotches on or under the skin or inside the mouth, nose or eyelids, memory loss, depression and other neurological disorders.

Many carriers of HIV do not have any symptoms at all for years. Many people contract HIV as teens but do not develop AIDS until later on in life. This fact is why comparatively few teenagers die of Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome. An estimated one-half million people in the United States died with AIDS in 2002, while only about two thousand of these were adolescents.

On average, the first stage of syphilis occurs twenty-one days after onset of infection. Anytime between ten to ninety days, the person may experience a firm, round, small, and painless sore where the syphilis entered the body. It lasts from one to six weeks, and it heals without treatment. During the second stage, the person may have a red or brownish head-to-toe rash, fever, swollen lymph glands, sore throat, patchy hair loss, headaches, weight loss, muscle aches, and fatigue. Once again, the symptoms of secondary syphilis will go away without treatment; however, without treatment the infection will progress to the late stages of disease. The third stage, also referred to as the hidden stage,



begins when the second disappears. The infection remains in the body even though there are no symptoms. At this stage there is no treatment. It may damage internal organs including: the brain, nerves, eyes, heart, blood vessels, liver, bones, and joints. Signs consist of difficulty with muscle movements, paralysis, numbness, gradual blindness, and dementia.

Between twenty-eight and forty-six percent of men and women under the age of twenty-five are infected with human papillomavirus. The virus lives in the skin or mucus membranes and usually causes no symptoms. It infects the genitalia, causes warts, and, in some instances, leads to anal or genital cancers.

Among the other common STDs are Chlamydia, more so among teenagers than older men and women, and Gonorrhea, which cause painful discharges and may lead to sterility and to pelvic inflammatory disease in females; herpes, which causes genital ulcers; and trichomoniasis, which causes a discharge and itching in females and advances to urethritis in males.

Among teens who have not yet had sex, nearly a third say they have been "intimate" with a partner. So if teenagers decide not to have intercourse, then how far is too far? Is oral sex really sex? As one eighth-grader put it, "What's the big deal? President Clinton did it." The Missouri Division of Family Services of Focus Adolescent Services reports their categorization of the "normal range" of sexual behavior for teens:

- Sexually explicit conversations with peers
- Obscenities and jokes within cultural norm
- Sexual innuendo, flirting and courtship
- Interest in erotica
- Solitary masturbation
- Hugging, kissing, holding hands
- Foreplay, (petting, making out, fondling) and mutual masturbation: Moral, social or familial rules may restrict, but these behaviors are not abnormal, developmentally harmful, or illegal when private, consensual, equal, and non-coercive.
- Monogamist intercourse: Stable monogamy is defined as a single sexual partner throughout adolescence. Serial monogamy indicates long-term (several months or years) involvement with a single partner which ends and is then followed by another.

Alicia in Pure Excitement offers her view on the topic, "Now I know that 'too far' doesn't mean only intercourse, but also the stages leading up to it Too far is when sexual thoughts take over your relationship. Too far is when you don't want to stop." Oral sex, like other methods of sex, carries with it the risk of serious, untreatable and even life-threatening diseases in both young men and women. Oral sex has been found to spread HIV, HPV, syphilis, gonorrhea, chlamydia, genital herpes, and possibly hepatitis C. Studies have shown that petting also leads to the transfer of some STDs. Anywhere genital contact is involved, a person put himself or herself at risk.

Society and even the teenagers themselves focus on the physical aspects of the issue, and they neglect to address the emotional tolls premarital sex has on the younger generation. The sexual relationship is predominantly emotional and moral rather than physical in character. All actions, decisions, and attitudes begin in the mind. The mind is susceptible to manipulation by almost any attractive outside source. The brain has ten billion cells that act like tiny storage building that capture every voluntary and involuntary sight and sound a person ever sees or hears, especially when connected with music. The subconscious mind absorbs thoughts even when the conscious mind does not command it to do so. The mind is the foundation of human emotion, and it plays a large role in the aftermath of a premarital sexual experience. Premarital sex often leads to feelings of fear, guilt, regret, embarrassment, tension, distrust, lack of respect, resentment, confusion, and so much more.

Amidst all the others, depression is a prime mentality scientist have linked with premarital sex among teenagers. The Heritage Foundation found when compared to teens who are not sexually active, teenage boys and girls who are sexually active are significantly:

**Less likely to be happy and more likely to feel DEPRESSED.**

**More likely to attempt SUICIDE.**

In an evaluation 25.3 percent of sexually active teenage girls rate themselves as being depressed all, most, or a lot of the time. Only 7.7 percent of non-sexually active teenage girls report feeling depressed at the same level. While the numbers for teenage boys are much lower, the distinction between sexually active and not sexually active is apparent. 8.3 percent of sexually active teenage boys report being depressed all, most, or a lot of the time. Only 3.4 percent of non-sexually active teenage boys describe themselves in the same way. 14.3 percent of girls who are sexually active report having attempted suicide. Only 5.1 percent of sexually abstinent girls have attempted suicide. Six percent of boys who are sexually active have attempted suicide. Only 0.7 percent of sexually abstinent boys have attempted suicide.

**Sexually active GIRLS are more than three times more likely to be depressed.**

**Sexually active GIRLS are nearly three times more likely to attempt suicide.**

**Sexually active BOYS are more than twice as likely to be depressed.**

**Sexually active BOYS are eight times more likely to attempt suicide.**

Most sexually active teens express reservations and concerns about their personal sexual experiences. Most boys and virtually three-fourths of girls regard their own initial sexual experience adversely-"as an event they wish they had avoided." Nearly two out of three of all teens who have already had sex wishes they had waited longer before engaging in sex. Sixty-two percent of teens regret ever getting started. Janet shares her remorse, "The thing I regret most in my life would have to be losing my virginity. I was so young, and most people don't think 12-year-olds (7th grade) even know about sex." Jason gives his testimony in Pure Excitement, "I have made many mistakes in my life, including having had sex once. Afterward, I felt very bad and empty inside."

A shocking percentage of Americans condone premarital sexual relations; forty-one percent of the population thinks it is "not wrong at all." Merely twenty-nine percent think it is "always wrong." Twelve percent think that it is wrong with a few exceptions, and eighteen percent think that it is right with a few exceptions. "The average person 'falls in love' about seven times before he or she gets married. And there are those who say sex is okay if you're 'in love.' The problem with that is that your bride or bridegroom isn't supposed to be your eighth honeymoon."

Sex outside of marriage also has far-reaching psychological effects. Partakers usually obtain a fear of commitment which follows them later in life. They are less likely to have a satisfying marriage relationship, and non-virgins increase their odds of divorce by about sixty percent. "The Seven Effects of Premarital Sex" summarizes the extensive effects of premarital relations on a future marriage:

1. Premarital sex tends to break up couples before marriage takes place.
2. Many men do not want to marry a woman who has had intercourse with someone else. The strange logic seems to be, "Its (sic) okay for me to have sex with the girl you marry, but it's not okay for you to have sex with the girl I marry."

3. Those who have premarital sex tend to have less happy marriages. The physical relationship is an inadequate foundation upon which to build a lasting relationship.
4. Those who have premarital sex are more likely to have their marriages end in divorce.
5. Person and couples who have had premarital sex are more likely to have extramarital affairs as well. This is especially true for women; those who engaged in sex before marriage are more than twice as likely to have extramarital affairs as those who did not have premarital sex.
6. Having premarital sex may fool you into marrying a person who is not right for you sex can 'blind' you.
7. Persons and couples with premarital sex experience seem to achieve sexual satisfaction sooner after they are married. However, they are likely to be less satisfied overall with their sex life during marriage. It seems that their premarital sex experiences often rise to haunt them.

Mark Twain once said, "**Sex takes the least amount of time, but causes the most amount of trouble.**" This is profoundly true for teen sex outside of a monogamous marriage. Doctor Dean Ornish proclaims:

I am not aware of any other factor in medicine-not diet, not smoking, not exercise, not stress, not genetics, not drugs, not surgery-that has a greater impact on our quality of life, incidence of illness, and premature death from all causes. Love and intimacy are at the root of what makes us sick and what makes us well, what causes sadness and what brings happiness, what makes us suffer and what leads to healing.

In the 1980s America boasted "safe sex" to alleviate the widespread fear of AIDS. As stated in Joe White's Pure Excitement:

**Condoms fail 100 percent of the time...**

**in protecting a boy or girl's virginity.**

**in protecting a girl's reputation.**

**in protecting a boy's complex sexual memory bank.**

**in protecting a couple's purity and friendship development.**

**in protecting a boy's respect for a girl and vice versa.**

**in protecting a girl or boy's delicate self-image.**

The effects of premarital sexual relations on teenagers protrude into all parts of their lives: mental, emotional, and physical. Self-disciplined youth protect their marriage beds from virus, fungi, bacteria, yeast, spores, and parasitic contamination, and they guard themselves from anger, doubt, stress, brokenness, and heartache. **By choosing to abstain, teenagers free themselves to live life to the fullest without all the burdens of sex outside of marriage.**