

## The Talk"

From the American Academy of Pediatrics

With each year bringing a million teenage pregnancies and three million cases of adolescents contracting an STD, kids aren't just talking about sex; they are doing it.

It is a toss up on whether "the talk" is dreaded more by our children, or by us. As I am sure all parents with kids in their teens will attest, children at this age often feel like they already know everything about a subject ... and everything that you are going to tell them. What could their old-fashioned parents possibly teach them about sex?

We can teach our children not only by making sure they have the correct facts, but by helping them to understand the complexity of intimacy. It is important to share with them that sexual relations aren't as simple or as easy as they are in the movies. We can help them to respect their own bodies, as well respecting the bodies of those with whom they have relationships.

Offer to answer your children's questions... and mean it. It is okay to admit to your child that you are uncomfortable, as long as you are beginning a discussion with this disclosure ... rather than stopping one with it.

It is important to share your own values and explain why you hold these values. But it is just as important to make a distinction between fact and opinion. Make sure your child knows all the information he or she needs to make informed decisions, such as:

- Not everyone is doing it. Statistics indicate that 50 percent of teens are sexually active by the age of 17 ... and 50 percent are not.
- Having sex carries risks ... even sex with a condom. Make sure your child knows what "safe sex" is so that if he or she chooses to have sex, the risks of pregnancy and disease can be reduced.
- Studies have shown that even when teenagers understand the risks associated with sex, they may not understand the risks associated with other behaviors, such as the risk of sexually transmitted diseases through oral sex. Open your discussion up to covering sexual behaviors beyond the act of sex itself.
- The phrase sex, drugs and rock and roll still applies. Studies show that alcohol and drugs are involved in many teenagers' sexual experiences. If your lines of communication are open and you are talking about sex, your child will be more willing to talk about other subjects as well.

- If you have a regular physician who knows your child, use them as a resource. You might want to consider having the physician discuss birth control, abstinence, STDs and other tough issues with your child.

Sex and sexuality are rough waters that our children often navigate alone. We most certainly need to respect their privacy ... but we also need to be present and aware. And while being noncritical, we need to be straightforward about our values and our preferences.

Take a deep breath. I promise ... with openness and honesty, you will survive, and so will your children.

### **Especially for Teens: You and Your Sexuality (What is Sex and Sexuality ....straight forward topics to discuss)**

From the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

The teen years are exciting but confusing. Your body is changing. You are dealing with new feelings. You also may be starting to notice your own sexuality and may want to express it. Forms of sexual expression can range from holding hands, to hugging and touching, to kissing, to having sexual intercourse or other forms of sex.

#### **Your Sexuality**

Sexuality is a basic human condition. It can affect the way you look, feel, and act. Understanding the changes you are going through makes it easier to cope.

#### **Physical Changes**

Some time between the ages 8 and 10 years, most girls' bodies start to change. This time of change is called puberty. As you reach puberty, a part of your brain tells your sex glands, the ovaries, to start working. The sex glands then signal other parts of your body to start to grow. These signals are carried by hormones. Hormones make your body change and start looking more like an adult. Over time, the following changes will occur:

- Your breasts grow
- Your hips grow wider
- You gain weight and grow taller
- You grow hair under your arms and around your genitals
- You get your first menstrual period
- You may get acne
- You start to ovulate
- Boys' bodies also change during puberty. These changes happen when their testes start working. This usually occurs between the ages 12 and 14 years:

- Their testes and penis get bigger.
- The hair on their bodies grows thicker
- They start to grow hair on their faces, under their arms, and around the genitals
- Their voices get deeper
- Their testes begin to make sperm
- They may get acne

#### **Emotional Changes**

During your teen years, the hormones that cause the sex organs to grow and function also cause strong feelings, including sexual feelings. You may get these feelings for someone of the other sex or the same sex. Thinking about sex or just wanting to hear or read about sex is normal.

#### **Homosexuality and Bisexuality**

Many teens wonder, "Am I gay or lesbian?" Things they have done — holding hands with a friend of the same sex, looking at or touching each other's genitals — may make them worry and even feel guilty. These activities are normal in growing girls, and physical affection is common among many women. Many boys and girls are attracted to members of their own sex during puberty.

**Homosexuality** (or "being gay or lesbian") is being emotionally and sexually attracted to a person of the same sex. **Bisexuality** is being attracted to both sexes. Being homosexual is not a choice a person makes or something that can be changed. If you think you may be homosexual or bisexual and feel confused or unhappy, talk to someone you know well and can trust.

#### **Sex**

During sexual intercourse, or vaginal sex, the boy's hard penis goes into the girl's vagina and moves in and out. This can lead to orgasm. Orgasm also can occur during oral sex or masturbation. During vaginal sex, when a boy has orgasm, he releases semen, which contains millions of sperm into the girl's vagina. The sperm can swim up into the uterus and then a fallopian tube where one can fertilize an egg. If the couple isn't using any birth control, the girl can become pregnant.

Some birth control methods, such as a latex condom, help prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

#### **Other Forms of Sexual Expression**

Touching or rubbing your own genitals (clitoris and vagina in girls and penis in boys) can give you pleasure. This is known as masturbation. It can help you learn what kind of touch makes you feel good. Masturbation can let you enjoy your sexuality without having sex with another person before you are ready.

Oral sex is when one partner's mouth comes into contact with the other partner's genitals. Although this form of sex

does not cause pregnancy, it can spread STDs. Some teens believe it is not really sex and do not protect themselves. This behavior increases the risk of getting an STD.

Another form of sex is anal sex, in which the penis is placed into the other partner's anus. This form of sex also does not cause pregnancy, but it can greatly increase the risk of getting an STD, including human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection. Anal sex can cause tiny tears in the anus. A virus or bacteria causing the STD may enter the body through these tears and spread or sperm may leak into the vagina when the penis is withdrawn.

#### **Making a Decision to Have Sex**

Ask yourself what your feelings are about sex. Are you really ready for sex? If you are dating, do you know how the other person feels about sex? Make up your own mind about when is the right time to have sex.

Do not have sex because:

- You think everyone else is
- You think it will make you more popular
- You are talked into it
- You are afraid the other person will break up with you if you do not
- You feel that it will make you a "real" woman
- If you are not ready for sex, say so, and stick to your decision. It is okay to say "no." If the other person truly cares about you, he or she will respect your decision.
- If someone tries to pressure you into having sex, say no.
- You should not feel pressure to have sex with someone, even if the person is an adult. Do not be afraid to forcefully say no on a date. Be aware that using alcohol or drugs may cause you to lose consciousness or that rape can occur.

Being a teen can be both exciting and confusing. You face many decisions. To be sure you make the right ones, talk with someone you trust — your parents, your doctor, a teacher, a school counselor, or a coach — if you have questions.

#### **AAP's Puberty Page:**

<http://www.aap.org/family/puberty.htm>

Written for teens, by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

#### **Abstinence Clearinghouse:**

<http://www.abstinence.net/>

A site for information on abstinence education.

#### **Adolescent Contraception:**

<http://coolnurse.healthology.com/teen-health/article1432.htm>

From CoolNurse.com, run by an RN and about teen health issues.

#### **Advocates for Youth:**

<http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/>

An interest group pushing to give teens the information they need to make responsible sexual decisions.

#### **All About Puberty:**

[http://www.kidshealth.org/kid/grow/body\\_stuff/puberty.html](http://www.kidshealth.org/kid/grow/body_stuff/puberty.html)

A KidsHealth.com page for children on the verge of their body changes.

#### **Contraception Online:**

<http://www.contraceptiononline.org/>

An online resource for clinicians, researchers, and educators.

#### **Puberty 101:**

<http://www.puberty101.com/>

A site run by Virginia's GovTeen.gov program—for teens and by teens.

#### **Scarleteen:**

<http://www.scarleteen.com/>

Scarleteen's operators believe that the current abstinence-focused school sex-ed courses do not address real-world issues, and exists to give information beyond "don't."

#### **Sex On The Brain:**

<http://www.iwannaknow.org/brain2>

From I Wanna Know.com, a site by the sexually-transmitted disease experts at the American Social Health Association,

<http://www.ashastd.org/>.

#### **Sexual Health:**

[http://www.teenshealth.org/teen/sexual\\_health/](http://www.teenshealth.org/teen/sexual_health/)

A page from the TeensHealth.org site, with sex-specific answers to teens' questions. <http://www.familiesaretalking.org/>, which advocates parent-child communication regarding sex, and <http://www.nonewmoney.org/>, which pushes for an end to state-funded abstinence programs.

#### **Teen Growth:**

<http://www.teengrowth.com/>

Featuring Q&A sessions about health, supervised by a medical advisory board.

#### **Teen Health And The Media:**

<http://depts.washington.edu/thmedia/view.cgi?section=teensex/>

A site run by the state of Washington's Office of Maternal and Child Health's Child and Adolescent Health Section.

#### **TeenPregnancy.org:**

<http://www.teenpregnancy.org/>

An organization devoted to reducing the number of teen pregnancies. It's a sister site to:

<http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/>, whose goal is to reduce the number of unwanted pregnancies in total by promoting values, behavior, and policies.

#### **Teen Sexuality:**

<http://teensexuality.student.com/>

Student.com's "Student Center" lets teenagers ask and receive frank advice about sexuality.

#### **What Is Puberty?**

<http://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/Puberty.cfm/>

From the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.

#### **What To Expect When Your Child Goes Through Puberty:**

<http://familydoctor.org/online/famdocen/home/children/parents/parents-teens/445.html>

From the American Academy of Family Physicians.

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### Talking to Teens about Sex

**American Academy of Pediatrics &  
The American College of Obstetricians  
and Gynecologists**

