

ADOLESCENT'S AND SEX

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- It is a different world today with kids growing up faster and TV, movies, magazines and music videos bombarding our children with thousands of sexual messages a day
- More than 1,000,000 US teenagers will end up pregnant this year alone
- According to the Centers for Disease Control, 54% of all American high school students have had sexual intercourse at least once before their 18th birthday.
- Among high school seniors, the figure is 73%
- If you think 14 or 15 is a good age to begin talking about this subject, think again, the dramatic rise in teen pregnancy has revealed that girls are having intercourse at 14 with boys starting at 12
- It's easy to become a parent; it's a lot harder to be a good one. If you really want to make a difference in your child's sexual education, engage in their lives and talk with them frequently
- It is important to realize that your children's sexuality encompasses far more than the physical acts of sex – it also includes how their bodies develop and respond sexually and how they feel about these responses. It also includes what they think is right or wrong related to sexuality.
- Talking with your teen about sexuality does not always need to consist of lectures or situations where you sit your child down to “talk about sex.”
- There are many teachable moments that you can take advantage of to initiate a relaxed discussion. The average TV viewer sees 14,000 references to sex in the course of one (1) year. Use these as a springboard for good healthy discussions.

THE DIFFICULT ISSUES:

- If you are like most parents, you will have to confront some difficult issues as you discuss sexuality with your teen. Here are a few important issues and suggestions as to how they can be discussed
 1. **Masturbation:**
 - Many parents are particularly embarrassed and uncomfortable about this subject
 - It may have been a taboo subject when you were growing up and, because of religious or moral beliefs, you may think it is wrong

- We need to realize that many teen practice this in fact, one study of 15 and 16 year olds found that _ of the boys and more than _ of the girls have used masturbation regularly
- We must realize that the beliefs about the acceptability of masturbation are changing with the medical, psychological and many religious groups now recognizing it as a normal process that causes no harm
- This only becomes a problem when it is practiced in inappropriate places or accompanied by strong feelings of guilt or fear
- Try and let your teenager know that it is normal and natural to be interested in exploring their own bodies, then go on to explain your own values and beliefs
- Try not to use shame or guilt as this may produce fear and confusion and not change behaviors

2. Resisting Sexual Pressure:

- This is a very difficult issue in that it takes more than just stating to your teen to “just say no” to sex.
- Your teen will need to learn how to say “No.”
- Your teenager needs to develop and practice the skills for resisting unwanted sexual pressures
- Talk with them about specific ways to counter the pressure from peers and about ways to show love besides having sex
- Role playing situations may be of some help even though they may feel uncomfortable and it’s okay if laughing starts since laughter is a great tension release
- The goal is to have your teenager prepare some ways to politely, but firmly, decline sexual propositions

3. Contraception and “Safer” Sex:

- Most of parents want to postpone their teen’s involvement with sex and feel that if they provide information about contraception or safe sex that this will send the message that sex is “okay.”
- Studies have found that teens who are informed about sex tend to delay sexual involvement longer than those who are not informed

- While we may want our teens to follow are values that we have taught them, they also may choose a different direction and they may try sexual intercourse
- It would be foolish to compound the problem by them getting pregnant or catching a sexual transmitted disease (STD).
- A sexually active teen needs to know the risks and benefits of different contraceptive techniques and how to reduce the risk of AIDS and other STD's