



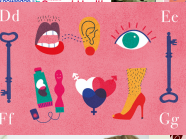
A GUIDE TO DISCUSSING SEXUAL HEALTH WITH TEENAGERS

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Introduction.

*Guarding against harm
Preparing our teens.*



WHY does adolescent sexual health education matter?

In recent years, social and cultural influences have surged as primary aspects that shape adolescent sexual behavior. A literature review assessing the results of studies providing sexual education found that 48% of the studies showed increased condom use and overall suggest that sexual education discourages sexual risk behaviors.

SO WHAT?

don't schools provide sexual education?

YES, but it is not always comprehensive.

In the United States, abstinence forward sexual education is prioritized in federal funding and implementation. Additionally, the majority of the information provided pertains only to heterosexual relationships and contributes to an increase in risk behaviors and sexually transmitted infections for non-heterosexual and non cis-gendered adolescents.



²sexually active adolescents in the United States has a sexually transmitted infection.
²

Comprehensive Sex Education⁶

Includes:

- Human growth and development
- Healthy and respectful relationships
- Gender identity/sexual orientation
- Dating violence
- Consent
- Communication skills
- Prevention of unplanned pregnancy
- Disease/infection education and prevention
- Information on access to services

Using this manual



Read and inform yourself about key topics related to adolescent sexual health including: puberty, sexual relationships, contraception, and conversation tips



Reflect on what you have learned and what is appropriate for your situation



ACT

SEXUAL HEALTH

is unique to everyone and depends on aspects such as:⁵

SEX

GENDER IDENTITY

SEXUALITY

AGE

BEHAVIORS

CULTURE AND BELIEFS



Take the photo above as an example.

FINDING INFORMATION

It is not hard to find good information regarding sexual health, but it is easy to find BAD information. Use the tips below to guide you.

- Look for websites that end in '.gov'
- Discuss with your pediatrician when you have concerns
- Approach social media with hesitancy.

While media is a great tool for dispersing information, it may not always be accurate

A few people are represented here. All are women, who would not have the same needs as men. Additionally, they are all of varying age.

The middle-aged woman most likely needs mammograms every year or so, where as the teenager will not need screening until she is older.

Further, the woman in the middle is wearing a Bindi, which is associated with Southeast Asian religions. These beliefs may be different than the pregnant woman on the far left. All of these differences contribute to their unique needs.

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Chapter

1

Puberty and Changing Bodies

What is puberty?

- Puberty is the time when all your major organs and body systems mature. At the end of puberty, you are sexually and reproductively mature.¹
- Puberty usually starts at around 10 years for girls and 11 years for boys. It's important to remember that puberty occurs at different times for everyone. Some may begin earlier or later than others. Generally, girls tend to start puberty earlier than boys.



Why is it important to understand?



- It's important to understand the changes that puberty brings before they occur, so you can be prepared. This is a new and important stage in your life. Knowing what to expect can help reduce confusion and anxiety, helping you handle these changes with more confidence and power.



Physical Changes in Boys and Girls¹

Boys



- Height growth
- Muscle growth
- Acne
- Voice changes
- Hair Growth
- Genital Growth



Girls



- Body shape
- Height
- Acne
- Breast Growth
- Hair Growth
- Periods
- Period Irregularity
- Period Pain



Emotional Changes



*Emotional changes sometimes occur before the physical changes of puberty.

- Experiencing a greater sense of self.¹
- Experiencing changes of mood, energy and sleep patterns.¹
- Feeling uncertain/looking for identity.²
- Mood Swings, overly sensitive, feeling self-conscious.²




How to Talk About Puberty with Your Child




Initiating the “puberty” discussion

- Because puberty ushers in many changes over time, you need to have a series of discussions with your children. Introduce the subject when they are about 8 years old. While this might seem early, children should feel secure and prepared about the forthcoming changes, not startled or surprised.³
- Don't wait to have “the talk.” It's never too early – kids are getting exposed to these topics in school and on TV and social media a lot sooner than you think!⁴
- The initial conversation doesn't need to be an in-depth one. You can explain some of the changes they'll start to experience and let them know you're available to talk any time. Encourage them to ask questions. As your child ages and begins to experience the changes, you can address them as they come up.³


Conversation Tips




Be sure to ask questions and listen.⁵



Be direct and matter-of-fact, especially when it comes to more sensitive topics such as sexual arousal or menstruation.³



Don't be afraid to use humor. These are serious issues, but it's better to laugh at some of the awkwardness and for all involved to grow to find these conversations fun and useful than dreaded and overly serious.⁶



Use simple, factual explanations when describing physical changes.⁶

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Chapter

2

Contraception & Birth Control



Why Contraception Matters:

75

%

OF PREGNACIES ARE UNINTENDED

Contraception knowledge and access significantly reduce unintended pregnancies, safeguarding teens' emotional and educational futures.



WHAT IS THE CAUSE OF TEENAGE PREGNANCY?



Parents; by guiding your teen, you're empowering them to make safe, healthy decisions

“ Teenage pregnancy incidences were shown to be mostly caused by a lack of education, lack of access to contraception and health information, and autonomy in making decisions.³ ”



How Well Does Birth Control Work?

Most Effective ↑ Less Effective	 Sterilization	 Implant	 IUD	99% effective
	 Shot	 Pill	 Ring	92–97% effective depending on the method
	 Diaphragm	 Condoms (Internal/External)	 Sponge	78–82% effective depending on the method
	 Spermicide	 Fertility Awareness	 Withdrawal	71–78% effective depending on the method

Types of Contraceptives

KEY

TYPES OF

CONTRACEPTIVES



PILLS

Hormonal Method

Uses hormones to prevent ovulation.

- Must be taken at the same time daily.
- Regulates periods and can reduce acne.¹²

CONDOMS

Barrier Method

Only method that protects against STIs.

- Available as male and female options.

IUDs

Long-Acting Method

Prevents fertilization
Effective for 3–10 years,
Low maintenance
Requires Medical help

EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTIVES

Morning after pill:
Plan B

- Delays ovulation or prevents fertilization.
- Most effective within **72 hours**.

COMPARING RISK & BENEFITS

OF CONTRACEPTION METHODS

METHOD	RISK	BENEFIT
Birth Control Pills	Possible side effects like nausea	Regulates periods
Condoms	May break if used incorrectly	Protects against STIs
IUD	Discomfort during insertion	Long-lasting, low maintenance

UNDERSTANDING & USING

CONTRACEPTIVES EFFECTIVELY

A GENERAL OVERVIEW

HOW IT WORKS

Hormonal Methods:

Birth control pills, patches, and injections prevent ovulation (release of eggs) and thicken cervical mucus to block sperm.⁹

Barrier Methods: Condoms and diaphragms physically prevent sperm from reaching the egg.⁹

Long-Acting Methods: IUDs and implants create an environment that stops sperm from fertilizing eggs or prevents the implantation of fertilized eggs.

V.S

Emergency Contraception: Plan B pills delay ovulation and reduce the chance of pregnancy after unprotected sex.⁹



PROPER USE & CARE

DON'T'S

- Store condoms in hot places like wallets or cars
- Reuse condoms—they are single-use only
- Rely solely on withdrawal ("pulling out") as a contraceptive method—it's unreliable.



DO'S

- ✓ Use Condoms every time
- ✓ check the expiration dates on condoms
- Follow instructions for IUD insertion and care.
- ✓ Use a backup method (like condoms) if you miss a birth control pill.



Missed a Pill: Take it as soon as you remember and use a backup method if necessary.

Stay Consistent: Finish the entire pack even if you feel side effects (consult a doctor if they persist).

Track Your Pills: Use the pack or a phone app to ensure you don't miss a dose.

Dispose properly

COMMON STEPS

BIRTH CONTROL PILL



1. **Set a Daily Reminder:** Take the pill at the same time every day.

2. **Read the instructions & start on the right day:** Understand whether you're using a 21-day or 28-day pill pack.

4. **Use Backup** if You Miss a Pill: If you miss a dose, take it as soon as you remember and use a condom if necessary.



CONDOMS

1. **Check the Expiration Date:**

2. **Open Carefully:** Use your fingers to tear open the package—don't use teeth or sharp objects.

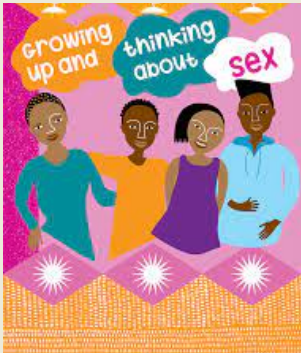
3. **Use as directed**

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Chapter

3

Myths & Misconceptions



TRUE

Addressing Myths & Misconceptions

Sti cases accounting for adolescents and young adults in the United States.¹

50%

25%

Despite being only 25% of the sexually experienced population.¹

The prevalence of sexual health issues in this age group makes accurate education and dispelling myths more urgent.



WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Dispelling myths can empower youth to make healthy, informed decisions about sex and sexuality as they become adults. Young people deserve to decide what feels right as they know their bodies and relationships best.²

MYTH

A widely held but false belief or idea.³

MISCONCEPTION

A view or opinion that is incorrect because it is based on faulty thinking or understanding.³

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

FALSE

Common Myths & Misconceptions



MYTH

VS



FACT



You can't get pregnant your first time having sex.⁴

1

Pregnancy can happen anytime sperm enters the vagina. Contraception is needed to prevent pregnancy.

The withdrawal method is effective in preventing pregnancy.⁵

2

Although it may reduce the chance of pregnancy, the withdrawal method is not a reliable way to prevent pregnancy.⁵

You can't get an STI if you use a condom.¹

3

While condoms are effective in preventing STIs, it's still possible for sexually active individuals to get an STI any time they have sex, even if a condom is used.⁶

STIs can only be transmitted when symptoms are present.⁷

4

Many STIs do not have symptoms but can still be damaging to your body and spread to sexual partners.⁸

You can't get an STI from oral or anal sex.⁶

5

You can get an STI from any kind of sex or close intimate contact with your partner.¹

Using two condoms doubles the protection.⁵

6

It is actually more risky to use two or more condoms when having sex. The likelihood of the condom breaking is higher due to the amount of friction the condom is enduring.

Urinating after intercourse will not help prevent infections.⁶

7

It's recommended to empty your bladder after having sexual intercourse. Going to the bathroom right after sex helps flush bacteria out before they travel to your bladder.⁶

Sperm can only live for a short time after it's released.⁶

8

It can live within the body for up to 5 days, even if you wash yourself.⁶

Condoms are only for men.⁶

9

There are condoms made for women as well as men and are just as effective.¹

You can't get pregnant from pre-ejaculation.

10

You actually can get pregnant. This is due to the lingering sperm cells released with pre-ejaculation fluid during sex.⁴

Myth

Why Do These Myths Exist?



The most important reason that sexual myths continue to exist is that in almost all societies from the past to the present, sexuality is closely related to society's value judgments and sexual issues are not openly talked about or discussed.

Lack of sexual knowledge and education can lead to the emergence of sexual myths.



Young people rely mostly on friends, relatives, newspapers, and magazines for sexual information. Most of the information obtained from unofficial sources will be inaccurate or exaggerated. This situation could contribute to sexual prejudices and completely affect people's sexual behavior and attitudes.

The Impact of this on Teenage Health



These myths can cause a lot of confusion among young people when it comes to sex, sexuality, and their bodies. They can negatively affect young people's expectations of sexual relationships as they transition into adulthood, and they can leave young people with more questions than answers.



What Can I Do As a Parent?



1

Have open and honest discussions about sex and sexuality: This gives young people an opportunity to explore their own values, with all of the facts in mind, which is essential to their health and well-being. Talking about this topic openly can also help to reduce stigma and remind young people that having questions about sex is totally normal.

2



Correct misinformation: Myths often come from a place of curiosity, assumptions and storytelling. Youth will fill the gaps in their knowledge with the assumption that what they hear and see is truthful. As educators, our job is to correct misinformation and provide youth with the tools they need to make the safest and healthiest decisions for themselves.

3



Display empathy and active listening when youth ask questions: Puberty can cause young people to feel more self-conscious, like they're the only ones experiencing these changes. The truth is that many of them are sitting there wishing they could ask the same question. Validating their questions, encouraging feedback, and connecting them to resources all let youth know that they have a right to this information, which helps them stay engaged and take the topic seriously.

4



Understand that your own assumptions and values on sex and age-appropriate behavior can impact the conversations you have with young people about sexual health: Your values can become apparent to young people based on the discussions you have, the language you use, and the topics you discuss, avoid, or speed-through.

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Chapter

4

*Tips for Starting the
conversation*

When & why to start the conversation

When

During **puberty** or before sexual activity begins.

It's never too early to start discussing body changes and healthy relationships. Waiting until a teen becomes sexually active can miss opportunities for education.

Why Timing Matters

Without early conversations, teens may be influenced by misinformation from peers or media.

Early education creates a foundation for safe choices.

Puberty

Body changes **start** happening—**lay the groundwork** for understanding

Dating

Romantic **relationships** may begin—discuss healthy **boundaries & consent**.

Early Teen Years

Teens are exposed to media and peers—time to **address misconceptions**.



Sexual Activity

Sexual activity starts for some—**knowledge** is critical



Reason	Benefit	Why Talk Now?
Puberty (Ages 9–12)	Body changes may cause curiosity and misinformation from peers.	Lay the groundwork with age-appropriate discussions about anatomy and body changes.
Protecting Against STIs	Social influences and media can introduce myths about relationships.	Provide accurate information to counter misconceptions and encourage open communication.
Dating (Ages 14–16)	Teens may face pressure to engage in sexual activity without understanding boundaries or consent.	Teach about healthy relationships, boundaries, and contraception options.
Building Trust	Teens may lack knowledge about contraception and STI prevention.	Offer clear guidance on contraception methods and STI prevention.

Tips for Tailoring Conversations



TIP 1

Start Early

During puberty, focus on body changes and basic anatomy.

TIP 2

Build Gradually

Start talking about relationships, consent, & contraception as they mature

TIP 3

Use Real-Life Examples

Explain scenarios teens might face. Make concepts relatable

TIP 4

Stay Open and Supportive:

Avoid judgment and encourage questions.



When your teen asks questions about their body



When dating becomes a topic.

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CONCLUSION Chapter

5



ACT NOW

As young people navigate their teen years, they face various health concerns, including those related to their sexual and reproductive health. It is an important time in their lives when they require accurate information, support, and resources to help them make good choices about their bodies and futures.¹



Additionally, without supportive adults who can answer questions with sensitivity and empathy, today's teens may be left feeling ashamed or embarrassed talking about these topics altogether.¹



Having the right information readily available, can empower teens to make informed decisions while reducing the risk of negative outcomes. This gives them a sense of independence and self-accountability while having a positive impact on their physical and mental well-being. These youth are our future, and they deserve a chance to put their best foot forward and live their healthiest life.¹

ACT NOW

SPARK: IGNITING SEXUAL HEALTH CONVERSATION

S

exual health: Understanding the
basics and it's important



P

uberty: Navigating the changes
during adolescence



swers: Addressing myths and
misconceptions with facts

A

R

esponsibility: Educating about
contraception and safe methods



K

Kickstarting conversations:
Remember parents discussing sexual
health is more than just information.
It's about trust, respect, and
empowering your teens to make
confident and informed choices.



Additional Resources Available for Parents and Children

1. [Center for Parent/Youth
Understanding](#)
2. [Planned Parenthood](#)
3. [American Sexual Health Association](#)
4. [Society for Adolescent Health and
Medicine](#)
5. [Talk With Your Kids](#)
6. [Partners in Sex Education](#)
7. [Community Health Foundation](#)



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