



FLM-FS-16-99-R10

Parental Involvement Can Reduce the Risk of Teen Pregnancy

- *Each year, almost 750,000 women aged 15–19 become pregnant.*
- *A sexually active teen who does not use contraceptives has a 90% chance of becoming pregnant within a year.*

Trends

According to the Guttmacher Institute, teenage pregnancy rates slowly declined beginning in the early 1990s. They reached their lowest point in the late 1990s since they were first measured in the early 1970s. The majority of the decline in teen pregnancy rates was due to more consistent contraceptive use; the rest is due to higher proportions of teens choosing to delay sexual activity. However, for the first time since the early 1990s, overall teen pregnancy rates increased in 2006, rising 3%. It is too soon to tell whether this reversal is simply a short-term fluctuation or the beginning of a long-term increase.

In previous reports, the Guttmacher Institute stated that the best strategy for decreasing teenage pregnancy is a multi-faceted approach. Programs should aim

at encouraging teenagers—especially the youngest ages—to postpone sexual activity and support youth who become sexually active during their teens to prevent pregnancy if and when they do become sexually active. In other words, abstinence should be encouraged but if your teen decides to be sexually active, support pregnancy prevention methods based upon the values of you and your teenager.

The Talk

Some parents are uncomfortable or afraid to talk with their child about sexual activity. Other parents believe that talking about sex acts as permission or encourages sexual activity in their children. These are myths. Research shows that talking with your children about sex does *not* encourage them to become sexually active.

Another important thing for parents to remember is role modeling. A parent's behavior should match their words. The “do as I say, not as I do” approach will have a great impact on teenagers who are careful and constant observers of the adults in their lives.

Ten Tips for Parents

1. Be clear about your own values and attitudes.
2. Talk with your children early and often and be specific.
3. Establish rules, curfews, and expectations of behavior.
4. Know your youth's friends and their families.
5. Encourage group activities and limit one-on-one dating at an early age.
6. Set limits of two- or three-year age difference while your child is a teen.
7. Talk with your teenager about the goals for the future.
8. Encourage high and achievable expectations for school performance.
9. Know what your teen is watching, reading, and listening to.
10. Strive for a positive relationship with your teen.

References

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