

Teens *and* Sexual Health



Most parents don't want to believe their teen is having sex, but according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, among high school students surveyed in 2021, 30% had already had sex, and 48% had not used a condom the last time they had sex. Talking with your teen about sex might be uncomfortable, but it's important. While sex education classes are often taught in school, you still need to be involved to ensure your teen has all the facts.

Sending the Right Message

Sometimes it can be difficult for parents to know when to start a conversation about sex, but maintaining an open relationship with your teen should make both of you feel more comfortable when the topic comes up. Mention to your teen that being able to openly communicate with you about sex does not mean you are encouraging sexual behavior. Make sure your teen knows he or she can come to you for anything. If your teen is uncomfortable talking with you, let them know of other options, such as talking to their doctor or another responsible adult whom you approve of. It is important for them to discuss and ask questions about their body, sex and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) with someone they feel at ease with.

Tips for Talking to Your Teen

Mayo Clinic gives the following ideas to help start a conversation on sex with your teen:

Seize the moment – Sometimes a TV program will raise an issue and offer an opportunity to talk. Use it as a springboard for discussion.

Be honest – If you're uncomfortable, it's OK to say so, but explain that it's important to keep talking.

Be direct – Clearly state your feelings about specific issues, such as abstinence and oral sex.

Consider your teen's point of view – Try to understand his or her pressures, challenges and concerns.

Move beyond the facts – Talk about feelings, ethics and religious beliefs related to sexual activity.

Invite more discussion – Let your teen know he or she can always come to you with any questions or concerns.

If Your Teen is Sexually Active

If your teen is already sexually active, keep the lines of communication open. State your feelings openly and honestly, and stress the importance of safe sex. Make sure your teen understands how to get and appropriately use contraception, not only to prevent pregnancy, but also to protect against STIs. With your support, your teen can mature into a sexually responsible adult.



Use a TV program as a springboard to talk to your teen about sex.

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