

Be Aware

- More than 70 million Americans currently have an STD; 19 million new cases occur each year. Half of those infected are under age 25.
- Although 15- to 24-year-olds represent only one-quarter of the sexually active population, they account for nearly half of new STD cases each year.
- The majority (59 percent) of sexually experienced teen females had a first sexual partner who was 1-3 years their senior.
- Condoms may have a good record of protecting from pregnancy, but they offer insufficient protection from STDs.
- Oral sex, while protecting against pregnancy, carries the risk of STD transmission.



Be Resourceful

Organizations that offer information about sexually transmitted diseases and abstinence programs:

Healthy Futures

www.healthyfutures.org

The Medical Institute for Sexual Health

www.medinstitute.org

Meg Meeker, M.D.

www.megmeekermid.com

National Abstinence Clearinghouse

www.abstinence.net

Silver Ring Thing

www.silverringthing.com

Kaiser Family Foundation

www.kff.org

Focus on the Family

www.family.org

Massachusetts Family Institute has additional resources on sexually transmitted diseases and abstinence for parents on our website: www.mafamily.org.



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Back to School

A Parents' Guide to Teen Sexuality and Sexually-Transmitted Disease



Massachusetts Family Institute

Dedicated to Strengthening the Family

Be Prepared

Know the facts about the teenage STD epidemic

From music that celebrates sexual activity to promiscuous reality television to sexually explicit websites, teenagers live in a sexually saturated world, and their behavior is increasingly influenced by these media. Every parent should know that risks of early sexual activity go far beyond unplanned pregnancy and broken hearts.

- There are currently 25-30 sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).
- Twenty-five percent of all teenage girls have at least one STD.
- Eighty-five percent of infected teenagers show no symptoms.

The diseases range from syphilis to human papilloma viruses (HPV) to genital herpes and can cause everything from a treatable rash to sterility and even death. The Centers for Disease Control has referred to sexually transmitted diseases as a public health epidemic. Beyond the potentially deadly physical consequences of teenage sexual activity are the often hidden emotional consequences:

- Sexually active teenage boys are twice as likely to be depressed as their abstinent classmates.
- Sexually active teenage girls are three times as likely to suffer from depression as their abstinent classmates.
- Sexually active boys are eight times—and sexually active girls, three times—more likely than abstinent classmates to attempt suicide.

Be Proactive

Ensure your teen is properly informed at home and school

Parents are the best educators of their children when it comes to values. Articulate your principles and expect your teen to listen. Teens whose parents express disapproval of non-marital sex and contraceptive use are less likely than their peers to have sex.

- Set out clear expectations and boundaries for dating behavior.
- Clearly explain that the consequences of teen sex can prevent teens from having a normal, healthy life, marriage and children.
- Be blunt about the effects of unplanned pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases and include the gruesome details.



Understand that in many Massachusetts schools, sexuality education instructors supply condoms rather than emphasize abstinence.

- Find out when sexuality education is being taught and request to see the curriculum.
- If the curriculum contradicts the message you are giving your teen, you may opt your child out of the sex ed class. This is your legal right.

Be Engaged

Support abstinence education and “opt-in” legislation

Know the facts about sexuality education programs and proposed legislation. Meet with members of your school committee and other public officials. Be specific about what you want and do not want and be polite.

SUPPORT ABSTINENCE EDUCATION

The health curriculum is currently established on the district level with only suggestions from the state. Contact the middle and high schools, and find out what curriculum they use and whether an abstinence option is available. Encourage them to offer one like Healthy Futures, a medically accurate program that empowers students to make healthy relationship choices.

SUPPORT THE “OPT-IN” BILL

This proposed state legislation provides parents with the opportunity to opt their child in to classes dealing with human sexuality, treating them as electives, as opposed to the current system in which parents must act to opt their children out of these classes. Currently, if a parent does not expressly contact school officials, children are automatically included in such classes.

