

Talk about sexuality - - early and often!

It is best to begin about 2 years before you think your teen will need the information. Raising the subject will not "give permission" to your teen to have sex. Instead, it will provide information needed to make wise choices - including the choice to say no.

Be prepared!

Do not just know the physical facts of reproduction, birth control and disease prevention. Your teen need to know about healthy relationships and intimacy - topics not covered in health class. Think about your attitudes and values - and why you hold them.

Questions might be:

- How old do I think a teen should be to date? Why?
- What standards of behavior would I want my teen to follow on a date?
- What standards would I want my teen's date to follow?
- If I had sex as a teen, was I glad, or did I regret it? Why?
- What are beliefs about birth control? Why?
- What is the difference between sex and love?
- What makes a healthy relationship?



If you are uncomfortable, say so.

This can be one way to start the conversation! Explain that it is so important for your teen to have the facts about sexuality; you are willing to be uncomfortable.

Acknowledge the pressures to have sex.

- TV, music and magazines are full of references to casual sex - references that often have little to do with real life. The sex means little to those involved, and rarely results in pregnancy or sexually transmitted disease (STDs).
- Friend often exaggerate when they talk about their sexual experiences. Tell your teen that most teens are not "doing it."
- Dates can also pressure your teen to have sex. For example, anyone who says, "If you really love me, you will" does not really love or respect you.

Discuss the risks of sex.

These include:

- feeling bad about having sex too young - or for having sex without intimacy or love
- Pregnancy
- STDs, such as HIV (the virus that causes AIDS), hepatitis and genital herpes.

Share information on staying safe.

You can:

- Explain that abstinence is the only sure way to prevent pregnancy and getting STDs through sex.
- Talk about birth control. Share your values.

Talk about intimacy and loving relationships.

- Share your life and your values.



Do not let this be the way your teen learns about sexuality.