



# The Media Project

A Program of Advocates for Youth

## Teens and Sex: Abstinence and Contraception

### DEVELOPMENT

Compared to a decade ago, teens today are less likely to be having sex. And, among those teens who are having sex, more teens today are using contraception compared to teens in the 1990s. Despite these encouraging trends, nearly 4 million teens will contract a sexually transmitted disease (STD) this year and about 800,000 teen females will become pregnant, making the United States the leader in teen pregnancy in the industrialized world.

### PRE-PRODUCTION: TEENS WANT TO KNOW ABOUT ...

- Preventing HIV/AIDS
- Preventing STDs
- Deciding when they're ready – or not ready – to 'do it'
- Using contraception
- Remaining abstinent

### DON'T WRITE THE WRONGS

- In the U.S., the typical age at first sexual intercourse is 17.2.
- Since 1991, U.S. teen pregnancy rates have declined. One study credited 75% of the decline to teens' better use of contraception and 25% to teens' increased abstinence while another study credited the two factors about equally.

### WRITE THE RIGHTS

- In 2001, 54% of high school students report never having had sexual intercourse, up from 46% in 1991.
- Of high school students having sex, 58% report using condoms during most recent sex. African American teens are more likely to use condoms (67%) compared to their white (57%) and Latino (54%) peers.
- 18% of sexually active high school students use birth control pills before most recent sex. White teens are more likely to use birth control pills (23%) compared to their Latino (10%) and African American (8%) peers.
- 85% of parents of 7th to 12th graders say it is important that their child learn about how to use condoms as part of sex education.

## WHAT'S THE BIG PRODUCTION?

***“If I give him oral sex, I’m still a virgin.”***

Youth ages 12 to 17 who had abstinence education defined “abstinence” to include many sexual behaviors while avoiding vaginal intercourse. In a study of college freshmen and sophomores, 37% described oral sex and 24% described anal sex as abstinent behaviors.

***“I can’t believe she gave me an STD. She looked so nice!”***

66% of teens said they would feel suspicious about their partner’s past if s/he suggested using a condom; 20% would feel insulted.

***“We’ll be okay without protection just this once.”***

69% of females ages 15 to 19 used contraception at most recent sex. BUT, MANY DO NOT USE IT EVERY TIME THEY HAVE SEX.

***“Baby, no glove, no love.”***

70% of females and 69% of males ages 15 to 19 report that they used a condom the first time they had sex.

***“I made a Virginity Pledge ... but I met The Right Guy and ‘it’ just happened.”***

Teens that make a virginity pledge delay initiation of sexual intercourse by 18 months. BUT, they are one-third *LESS LIKELY* to use contraception at first sex than are their non-pledging peers.

***“If my parents found out we were sleeping together, they’d kill me!”***

47% of sexually active females under age 18 say that mandatory parental notification would cause them to stop using family planning services.

***“He can’t be gay ... he’s only a teenager!”***

In one study, only 14% of gay, lesbian, and bisexual students had never had sex, compared to 52% of their heterosexual peers.

## THE WRAP

Armed with knowledge about sex, contraception, and STDs, teens are empowered and protected; without it, they may put themselves at risk. Many teens get their information about sex from television. It is more important than ever that television provides them with good, accurate information to help them get the facts straight.

## REFERENCES & ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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