

# Are All Teens *Doing It*?

You overhear Mrs. Washer talk about how she and her husband make sure that their son carries condoms. Then Ms. Turner adds that she makes sure her daughter is on birth control. You start to think of your teenager, who you have been encouraging not to have sex. Now you begin wondering if you should consider purchasing something for them, you know, “just in case”. Why? Because there is an epidemic of sexual activity in high schools - everyone is doing it! Right? Or are they?

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has released their latest survey which states that less than 50% of high school students have ever had sexual intercourse.

<http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/sexualbehaviors/>

Do you want your teenager to be in this healthy majority? **Talk to them and encourage risk elimination, over risk reduction.** As a parent, you would hate to hear that your teen has started smoking or using drugs. You would most likely tell them how harmful those things are and that using illegal drugs or drugs not prescribed specifically for them can hurt them and potentially ruin their lives. You warn them of the danger that comes with picking up a cigarette or being with kids that use drugs because you want to eliminate risky activities. You don't teach them to reduce their risk by encouraging a “safer” way to smoke using low-tar cigarettes or supply them with clean needles and syringes “just in case”. In the same way, early sexual activity for your teen isn't healthy. Every day teens are traumatized emotionally, physically, socially and mentally by early sex. High school has enough drama and stress as it is, why add more? The best way to avoid the problems that come with being sexually active at a young age is to eliminate the chances altogether. As a parent you obviously cannot control your teenager's body, but you can influence the decisions they make.



- Encourage your kids to delay sexual activity until they're in a long term, committed relationship.
- Encourage them to protect their heart and avoid getting themselves in a relationship they may not be ready for physically or emotionally.
- Remind them how priceless they are. **Let them know that anyone who is worth their love and affection should care about the decisions they make and what concerns them. Pressure to have sex is NOT love.**
- Encourage them to avoid drugs and alcohol, especially at parties. Drinking and using drugs can hinder one's ability to make healthy decisions.

When you talk to your teen about sex, be honest. If you're uncomfortable, admit that. Share that you felt talking with them about sex was more important than your own comfort.

Talk to them in a clear way cut way. Do not substitute the name of things. They aren't babies. On the contrary, they are at an age where they can bring a baby home. So having a mature conversation with them is important. Be prepared to answer questions. Remember, its 2015. The world is much more sexualized than it was when you were a teen. Today there are new words for a lot of things, so if you're unsure about what your teen is talking about, ask them. Finally, remember that just because your teen asks a question about something DOES NOT mean they are doing it.

You may think that all of this is the job of the school's counselors and teachers, but the truth is it's your job. Your child isn't old enough or mature enough to have their own apartment. They come home to you, their parent/guardian. Don't let your child's high school experience pass by without talking to them about sex. If you do, the "real world" will be happy to fill them in.