A Survival Guide for Parents of Teenagers

But You and Dad Drink...

Jodi Dworkin, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Department of Family Social Science and University of Minnesota Extension

You were a teenager once, but times have changed.

It is important to try to understand what it is like to be a teenager today. Kids are discovering alcohol a lot earlier. Recent studies show that approximately 75 percent of high school students have tried alcohol, and over 25 percent of high school students are binge drinkers. While this might increase the fears you have of what your teens might get into, it also increases the fears teens have and the social pressure they face.

Can I use my experiences to help my teen?

We all experienced struggles growing up. Use your own experiences and mistakes to offer advice to your teen, not to lecture them. They already know you are not perfect. Teens are able to recognize a contradiction when you yell at them for doing the same things you once did. Be honest, and your child will respect you more, no matter what you did when you were their age.

How do I know what to say?

To talk with your kids about alcohol, you must have the information to answer their questions accurately, and provide them with practical advice on how to deal with the issues important to them. It is not enough just to tell your teen, “You better not drink!”

Tips for talking with your teenager about alcohol:

• Find the facts. Check out the books and websites listed on back for more information, and answer your child’s questions as soon as possible.
• Listen carefully to their concerns and feelings, and respect their views.
• Let them know it is okay to act independently from the group and that it is okay to say, “No, I don’t drink.”
• Establish a clear family position on alcohol use. For example, “Once you’re 21, it is okay to have a drink with friends. It is not okay to drink to solve problems.”
• Behave in a way that is consistent with your family rules. How do you use and talk about alcohol in front of your kids? Kids learn by watching you. If you suspect a severe problem, seek outside help.

“Just say no” isn’t good enough!

Telling your teenagers to just say no isn’t going to be enough to prevent them from drinking when all their friends are drinking, playing drinking games, having fun, and offering them drinks. Practice how to say no in different situations with your teens. Give your teenagers options for saying no and let them choose which they feel the most comfortable using.
Alternatives to “Just say no”:

- It is okay to say, “I just don’t want to.”
- Suggest another activity like basketball, shopping, eating, or change the subject.
- It is okay to avoid situations where there might be drinking or to hang out with friends who don’t drink.
- Encourage your child to use you as an excuse. Tell them it is okay to say things like “My mom won’t let me go,” or “My dad would kill me if he ever caught me drinking.”
- It is okay to be at a party and not drink or to pretend that you are drinking. It is not okay to get in a car with someone who has been drinking.

How does my alcohol use affect my teen?

Teens learn what it means to be a person who drinks by watching you. If you drink when you’re upset your teen will learn that drinking is a way to solve problems. If you push people to drink after they say no, tease people who don’t drink, or center your activities around alcohol, your teen will learn that drinking is the way to fit in and have fun. If you drink and drive, you teen will learn that this is an okay risk.

If someone in your family has a problem with alcohol, don’t try to hide it from your teen. Teens know when there is a problem, and they may feel responsible for the alcoholic’s drinking. Services like Al-Anon and Alateen can help.

How do I know if my teen has a problem with alcohol?

Here are some of the warning signs:

- Using alcohol on a regular basis.
- Drinking alone.
- Depression or mood swings.
- Hangovers, bad breath and/or bloodshot eyes.
- Talking about alcohol frequently and in a positive way.
- Problems with school.
- Taking risks, such as driving after drinking.

Where to go for help:

If you suspect your teen has a problem with alcohol, you can contact your physician, school counselor, an independent drug counselor, or the resources listed below to get help for your teen and your family.

Where you can go for more information:

- University of Minnesota Extension
  www.parenting.umn.edu
- UMN Children, Youth & Family Consortium
  www.cyfc.umn.edu
- American Council for Drug Education
  http://www.acde.org/
- Family Guide: Keeping Youth Mentally Healthy & Drug Free
  http://www.family.samhsa.gov
- National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information
  1-800-729-6686
  http://ncadi.samhsa.gov
- National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism
  http://www.niaaa.nih.gov

You may also want to look at:


Adapted from University of Illinois Extension fact sheets written by the author.
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Relax Mom, It’s Only Pot!

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What is my teenager going to encounter?

Second to alcohol, marijuana is the most commonly used drug. Marijuana, also called pot, reefer, grass, weed, dope, ganja, mary jane, and sinsemilla, looks like dried parsley with stems and/or seeds. It can be smoked or eaten. Paraphernalia includes rolling papers and pipes. Pot increases the heart rate, causes bloodshot eyes, dry mouth and throat, increases the appetite, reduces short term memory, alters one’s sense of time, and reduces one’s concentration, coordination, and motivation.

My child would never try pot!

Many parents are unaware of what their child is doing. Recent studies show that over 40 percent of teens have tried pot, even though only 18 percent of parents think it is possible their child might have tried it. Sixty-two percent of teens say they have friends who use pot, even though only 21 percent of parents think their son or daughter might have friends who smoke pot. Although one-third of parents believe their teen thinks pot is harmful, less than 20 percent of teens actually do.

Why would my child want to try it?

Teenagers use substances for the same reasons as adults do, to relieve stress, relax, have fun, because everybody else is doing it, and because being high often feels good. Teens often say, “I would like to try pot just once to see what it is like,” “Everyone tries drugs sometimes,” and “Smoking marijuana is okay sometimes.” Teens are most likely to smoke pot on the weekends, with friends, and at parties.

But it’s illegal…

Even though drugs are illegal, about 40 percent of 8th graders and 70 percent of 10th graders say pot is fairly easy or very easy to find. While use of most drugs among teens has decreased slightly, it is still a problem.

What can I do to help my teen?

Recognize that your child is being exposed to drugs. Five times as many parents believe child drug use is a national problem than believe drug use is a problem in their child’s school. Drug use is lower among kids who learn about the risks at home. The number one risk kids associate with drug use is “My parents would feel really bad if they found out I was using drugs.”

Tips for talking with your teenager about drugs:

- Establish a clear family position on drug use.
- Be prepared; teens may have a lot of incorrect information they got from other kids and from the media.
- It is okay to say you don’t know, but be sure to find the answer.
- Listen carefully to her concerns and feelings, and respect her views.
- Let him know it is okay to act independently from the group.
- Be aware of how you use and talk about drugs in front of your kids. Kids learn by watching you.
- Discuss the difference between prescription and illegal drugs.
- If you suspect a severe problem, seek outside help.
“Just say no” isn’t good enough!

Telling your teenager to just say no isn’t going to be enough to prevent him from trying pot at a party when all his friends are getting high. Practice how to say no in different situations with your teen. Give your teenager options for saying no and let him choose which he feels the most comfortable using.

Alternatives to “Just say no”:

• It is okay to say, “I just don’t want to.”
• Suggest another activity like basketball, shopping, eating, or change the subject.
• It is okay to avoid situations where there might be drugs or to hang out with friends who don’t use drugs.
• Encourage your child to use you as an excuse. Tell them it is okay to say things like “My mom won’t let me go” or “My dad would kill me if he ever caught me smoking pot.”
• It is okay to be at a party and not try pot, even if it seems like everybody else is doing it.

How can I tell if my teen has a problem?

Here are some of the warning signs:

• Getting high on a regular basis or avoiding others to get high.
• Lying.
• Giving up activities they used to enjoy such as sports or hanging out with friends.
• Wearing clothes with drugs pictured on them or reading magazines on drugs.
• Getting into trouble with the law.
• Feeling run-down, depressed, or suicidal.
• Missing school, poor school performance, or suspension from school for a drug-related incident.

Where to go for help:

If you suspect your teen has a problem with drugs, you can contact your physician, school counselor, an independent drug counselor, or the resources listed below to get help for your teen and your family.

Where you can go for more information:

University of Minnesota Extension
www.parenting.umn.edu

UMN Children, Youth & Family Consortium
www.cyfc.umn.edu

The Facts About Marijuana
http://www.marijuana-info.org

Marijuana Anonymous
1-800-766-6779
http://www.marijuana-anonymous.org

National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information
1-800-729-6686
http://ncadi.samhsa.gov

National Institute on Drug Abuse
http://www.nida.nih.gov

Partnerships for a Drug-Free America
http://www.drugfree.org

You may also want to look at:


Adapted from University of Illinois Extension fact sheets written by the author.
I never see my teen anymore.

As your child becomes a teenager, she will start spending a lot more time with her friends and a lot less time with you. This is normal. Teens with friends are physically and emotionally healthier than those without friends. Friends may help teens solve some of the problems they will face.

I’m worried my teen’s friends are a bad influence.

Teens do not drink or use drugs only because their friends do. Abusing alcohol or drugs is a sign of a problem more serious than peer pressure. There are ways parents can help prevent their teen from drinking and using drugs. Research has found that when parents monitor their teen’s behavior, the teen is less likely to participate in problem behaviors, and more likely to choose friends who participate in behaviors parents approve of.

What does she see in her friends?

During the teenage years friends provide care, respect, and trust. Teens choose their friends because of similar interests or to make themselves more popular. Your child’s friends are going through the same kinds of things as your teen. They understand each other so they can talk about their problems and figure out ways to solve them together.

What would make him do that?

Teens make decisions based on two important questions: What do my friends think? Will it be fun? Behaviors that parents see as problems, such as staying out past curfew or trying pot once, may seem okay to your teen. Your teen’s idea of fun and her perceptions of the level of risk involved determine whether or not she will participate in risky behaviors. For example, your teen is probably well aware that getting drunk carries many risks. But to a teenager, having fun and being with friends at the coolest party on Saturday night is more important than the risks.

There is a trade-off between doing what one knows is right and being accepted by peers. Although your teen may have gotten drunk once or dyed his hair blue, keep in mind what he could be doing and what he has chosen not to do!

Should I stand back and just let him make stupid decisions?

- Teens decisions may not be irrational or stupid. Your teen might just be considering different options than you would in the same situation.
- You and your teen might identify different consequences of a behavior. For example, for you, having unprotected sex might potentially lead to pregnancy or a disease, while your teen may feel not having sex might mean losing her boyfriend.
- Your teen may place a different value on potential consequences than you do. Losing the boyfriend she is desperately in love with seems like the worst thing in the world.
- Teens may view the likelihood of a particular consequence differently than you do. Teens often feel very strongly that “It won’t happen to me.”
Tips for talking with your teenager about risk taking:

• Discuss what makes a reasonable risk. You and your teen may have different ideas of what is reasonable. Talk about what might happen if your teen decides to have a beer at a party.

• Ask your teen to consider, “What are the potential benefits and consequences of this behavior?” Role-play different possibilities recognizing kids’ and parents’ views. For example, you may see no benefits to teenage sex, while your daughter desperately wants her boyfriend to say he loves her.

• Keep in mind, risk taking can be a positive thing. It can give your teenager confidence in his abilities, teach him to trust his own judgment, and help him face failure and frustration.

What can I do to help my teen make better decisions?

At some point, every teenager is going to have to make decisions about alcohol, sex, and drugs. Talking with your teen lets her know how you feel about these issues and increases the likelihood that she will share your values. It is also a way to help her understand what the consequences of her actions are, and that these consequences are very real. Listen to your teen. She has questions and concerns that are different from yours. Talking lets you discuss both of your concerns and helps eliminate fighting.

Can decision making be taught?

You can teach your teenager to make good decisions on her own, by giving her the responsibility, information, and guidance to do this. The first step is recognizing how you solve problems and remembering that we all learn to solve problems by making mistakes. Here is one problem solving process you might try:

• Identify the problem.
• Figure out the cause of the problem.
• Decide on your goal.
• Identify what resources you could use to reach your goal.
• Identify as many possible solutions as you can. List the pros and cons of each.
• Choose your best option and carry it out.
• Think about the outcome and revise your plan for the next time.

Where you can go for more information:

University of Minnesota Extension
www.parenting.umn.edu

UMN Children, Youth & Family Consortium
www.cyfc.umn.edu

Kids Health
http://www.kidshealth.org

MVParents
http://www.mvparents.com

You may also want to look at:


Adapted from University of Illinois Extension fact sheets written by the author.
Organized sports provide teens with an excellent opportunity for learning important skills and values. However, many parents worry about how their children handle winning and losing. A healthy balance of competition, cooperation, and having fun is important whether the child is competing with himself or against others. Parents and caring adults need to work at creating an environment in which their teens can compete in a healthy manner.

**Selecting appropriate sports activities**

As a parent, the first step is finding the right sport and the right team or coach for your son or daughter. This means understanding what teens look for in organized sports. Keep in mind that the top three reasons kids give for wanting to be involved in organized sports are to have fun, be with friends, and improve their skills. Ask yourself these questions when trying to identify a positive activity for your teen:

- Does the sport offer all players (regardless of ability) a chance to succeed, to participate, and to develop their skills?
- Does it offer my son or daughter a chance to have fun and be with friends?
- What are the attitudes of the other parents and of the coach about winning?

**Benefits of participating in sports**

For teens, a critical part of learning the important skills and values that organized sports can teach is found in observing the ways adult role models, parents and coaches, behave in relation to the players and the sport. Sociologist and volunteer coach, Martin Miller identified ways that sports participation can influence a teen's attitudes, values and behaviors:

- When coaches and parents emphasize playing their best, never giving up, learning new skills, and having fun over scoring more points, youth can begin to develop positive values about winning and losing.
- By seeing adult role models encourage team members to do their best and support each other, while accepting each player’s abilities and limitations, teens can learn respect for others.
- When everyone’s contributions are recognized – not just those of a few “stars,” youth can learn cooperation.
- When having more points is not considered as important as being fair and truthful, teens learn the value of honesty.

When competition is balanced with cooperation and fun, a “we can all win” philosophy emerges and fosters a great way for all members of a team or club to achieve their goal together. When competition is based on the comparison of individual performance between competitors, an “I win, you lose” attitude takes over. If win/lose competition is the only kind of competition teens are involved in, they won’t learn the fun of competing in other ways.
How can our family make the most out of opportunities to participate in sports activities?

- Discuss the role competition plays in the lives of family members.
- Discuss how family members can set realistic goals.
- Encourage the idea that everyone who achieves their goal receives rewards.
- Consider the age and personality of each child. Families may need to increase efforts to manage competition and its impact on a youth’s development.
- Develop in your child a lifelong commitment to an active lifestyle. Encourage your child to play because he or she enjoys it. Intrinsic motivation is a key ingredient for lifelong commitment to physical fitness.
- Focus on teaching life skills, and allow your child to be involved in the decision making about sports participation. Reinforce and support your child’s decisions.
- Encourage your child to try various physical activities.
- Communicate with your child’s coaches. Be involved in the sports program and seek out coaches that have a positive philosophy focused on skill building.
- Do not instruct; let the coach instruct and teach.

Suggestions for ways to emphasize the importance of good sportsmanship in every type of competition.

- Applaud and cheer for everyone on the team, not just your child.
- Avoid insulting other team members and those of the opposing team.
- Talk to the parents of the other team members.
- Be respectful of the officials during the game. After the game, thank the officials.
- Focus on the positive. Compliment players, coaches and officials.
- Be positive and congratulate the winning team. Do not forget to congratulate the losing team on their efforts.

If we teach our kids that the only way to reach our full potential is through competition, they learn that the most important thing in life is winning. Sometimes this can lead to being dishonest to win. Some research indicates that excessive pressure to win can lead to more fights and violence among teens. Those who don’t win may feel like they failed. If youth feel that they have to constantly win, they often lose interest in learning and in the activity. Competition should be an opportunity for young people to learn to compete or participate for the sake of becoming good at a skill or ability, not just to get ahead of others.

Where you can go for more information:

University of Minnesota Extension
www.parenting.umn.edu

Afterschool Alliance
http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/home.html

The Forum for Youth Investment
http://www.forumforyouthinvestment.org/

Minnesota Commission on Out-of-School Time
http://www.mncost.org

Parents Making Youth Sports a Positive Experience: Role Models
http://pubs.cas.psu.edu/freepubs/pdfs/ui349.pdf

Parents Making Youth Sports a Positive Experience: Spectators
http://pubs.cas.psu.edu/freepubs/pdfs/ui350.pdf

You may also want to look at:


Adapted with permission from Positive Parenting of Teens, “Teens, Competition, and Sports” (University of Minnesota Extension Service, 1999).
Many teens hold jobs during the high school years. A job can have positive and negative consequences for teens. Working may increase responsibility, self-esteem, feelings of competence and independence. But sometimes first jobs can be routine and lead to negative interactions with adults. It is important to remember that teens are still developing physically, intellectually and emotionally and that their development can influence their skills and abilities on the job.

The benefits of work

Through employment, young people can learn ways to manage time and money, carry out instructions, adapt to rules and routines in the workplace and work effectively with others. They can develop valuable skills relating to future careers and may have contact with adult employers who can give positive recommendations. In fact, youth who work limited hours (less than 20 hours a week) are more likely to be employed after high school and have a better chance of earning higher wages after graduation. Employment can also allow savings toward future education. For some families, it may be necessary for teens to contribute to the family’s income or pay for their own needs.

The downside of work

When teenagers work more than 20 hours a week, negative effects may overshadow positive gains. Parents need to look at the tradeoffs for youth employment. Studies have found that teenagers who work more than 20 hours a week are more likely to experience detrimental effects in their school, family and personal lives. Adolescents who work half time or more report higher levels of emotional distress, substance abuse and earlier sexual activity. Other adverse consequences of working long hours include: fatigue, sleep deprivation, less exercise, less family time, poor school performance, and problems with the law.

Working long hours is not the only problem teens might experience as a result of holding a job. At times teens will spend earnings on frivolous items that contribute little to health or well being. Sometimes youth are exposed to older co-workers who may provide access to alcohol or drugs.

State and federal laws

State and federal labor laws set the minimum age standards for minors who work. State law often limits the number of hours per day and week as well as the times of day that minors can work. Typically, the number of hours minors may work on school days will be less than on no-school days.

The U.S. Department of Labor requires that in most cases youth must be at least 14 years old to work. Laws regulate the type of work a minor may perform. Often, teens under 18 are prohibited from holding certain jobs and from operating specific machinery due to safety risks. Keep in mind that most states establish the maximum (not the ideal) number of hours that minors may work. Caution is recommended in determining just how many
hours of paid work are healthy for your teen. School responsibilities should not be sacrificed. Youth who try to juggle both are often faced with 50, 60 or even 70 hour combined school and work weeks.

Whether or not your teen works and how many hours he or she works should be decided by considering age, maturity level, nature of the work and school performance. Consider carefully if a job will benefit a teen that is struggling in school, especially if the work is boring and doesn’t relate to his or her interests. Your teen already has a full-time job getting an education without letting work interfere.

Parents make a difference!

Parents play an important role in helping their teen have a positive working experience. They can help the teen select a safe, appropriate place of employment. Teens can benefit from participating in a variety of activities that includes family, peers, school, community and paid work.

- Talk with teens about why they want to get a job. Discuss issues such as how it will affect school performance and time away from other valuable activities. Give working a trial period to see how the teen manages. Establish standards that your teen should meet in order to keep working.
- Discuss job possibilities with your teen. Help think through opportunities for learning skills relating to future goals and work environment safety.
- Practice interviewing with your teen. Play the role of the employer and ask your teen questions about career goals, strengths and weaknesses.
- Talk with your teen about job offers. Will this job be challenging or boring? Will it bring your teen into contact with respected and skilled adults? Will the supervisor respect the need to work limited hours? What is the employer's policy on breaks, overtime pay and time off?
- Work with your teen to set up a plan for the money they earn. What should be saved and what can go for day-to-day needs and wants?
- Get information from your state's department of labor on rules regarding the type and hours of work for youth. Inquire about what equipment youth are restricted from operating.
- Keep track of the number of hours your teen works and monitor activity before and after work hours.
- Track how your teen is doing in school. School performance is too important to be sacrificed for work. Although work can be important to development, it should not undermine a young person’s education.

Where you can go for more information:

University of Minnesota Extension
www.parenting.umn.edu

Family Education
http://www.familyeducation.com

Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry and Labor Standards
http://www.doli.state.mn.us/laborlaw.html

U. S. Department of Labor Youth Rules
http://www.youthrules.dol.gov/

You may also want to look at:

Adapted with permission from Positive Parenting of Teens, "Teens, Competition, and Sports" (University of Minnesota Extension Service, 1999).
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There’s a Party, Can I Go?

Colleen Gengler, Family Relations Educator, University of Minnesota Extension

The thought of teen parties may strike fear in the hearts of some parents, but with planning and forethought, teen parties can be a safe and fun alternative to unsupervised activities.

Parties at your home

When home is an inviting place to a teen’s friends, parents can get to know their teen’s friends and monitor their teen’s activities. Home can be a place to hang out, have pizza and watch movies. It can also be a place for a full-blown party. Here are suggestions if your teen gives a party:

• Have your teen draw up a list of who is invited. Encourage a party with a limited number of guests as large parties can get out of hand.
• Help your teen think through the invitations. Make it clear who is invited to prevent an out-of-control open house.
• Timing is important. Inviting people too far ahead of time might mean too many guests. Too short a time doesn’t give parents time to plan ahead.
• Settle on a time the party will end beforehand. Open-ended invitations can let a party go later than you want.
• Work out limits for “gate crashers.” When teens can drive, uninvited guests can result in numbers getting out of hand. Some teens can be trusted to monitor numbers on their own or with the help of friends. Other teens might need a parent to help them monitor.
• Help your teen figure out the party activities. Is the entertainment a movie, dancing or just hanging out? Make suggestions for refreshments.
• Be clear that alcohol and other drugs are not allowed. Don’t let teens bring in beverages since “smuggling” can occur. To help, check keys, backpacks or other bags at the door.
• Tell your teen ahead of time that anyone caught with illegal substances will be asked to leave. Parents will need to be called.

Liability laws

Make sure that you check your state’s laws. In Minnesota, the Social Host Liability law says that anyone over 21 who knowingly serves alcohol to someone under 21 may be held civilly liable for any damages caused by the person under 21.
The key to teen home parties is to work with your teen ahead of time so there are no surprises. Talk with other parents about how they handle parties, but stick to the things that will keep a party safe for your teen and their friends.

**Parties away from home**

Your teen will also get invited to parties away from your home. If you have a good relationship with your teen, it will be easier to talk with him or her about parties. Plan how they will get there and back, ask who will be there, what they will do and the hours of the party. Sometimes teens leave out details, so do some checking.

Call the parents of the party-givers—even if your teen objects. Kate Kelly (1996) offers a clever way to do this. She says:

“Call, but call with an offer— ‘How nice of you to have the kids over Friday night. Could I drop off some soda ahead of time, or is there anything else I can do to help you out?’ If the party was a surprise for the parents, you’ve just blown the whistle in the nicest of ways. If the call goes well, you’ve also made a new contact.”

Create a network of parent contacts; getting to know the families of your teen’s friends will come in handy. Suggestions include:

- Stress to your teen that if plans change, they must let you know. Teens thrive on being spontaneous so encourage communication by cell phone or other means.
- Rehearse what your teen can do if they want to leave a party for any reason. Encourage them to call for a ride if they really need one, no matter where they are or what time it is.
- Remind your teen never to ride with anyone who has been drinking or using drugs.
- Stay up until your teen comes home or tell them to wake you when they come home. A wise parent once said they always give their teen a good night hug. Consider it a loving “check up.”
- Be suspicious if your teen frequently asks to sleep elsewhere after a party. This could be a sign that alcohol or drugs are available at the party.
- After a party, debrief with your teen. Talk about who was there, what they did, what was fun, and what wasn’t.

**When you are away**

We’ve all seen television programs or movies about what happens when teens give a party while parents are away. Parents need to carefully consider whether or not to leave teens home alone.

- Ask a close relative or neighbor to keep an eye on things. Let your teen know that person will be checking.
- Ask if your teen can stay with family, or with the family of a friend while you are gone.
- Reconsider plans. It may not be worth the risk if there is potential for an impromptu party.

Staying close to teens by being interested in their activities and friends will help keep communication lines open. By working continuously on building trust, parents will find it easier to set limits around parties at home and elsewhere, and teens will be more willing to share the details of their activities.

**Where you can go for more information:**

University of Minnesota Extension  
www.parenting.umn.edu

Minnesota Prevention Resource Center  
http://www.emprc.org

A Parent’s Guide to Sober Teen Celebrations  
http://www.madd.org/under21/0,1056,2710,00.html

You may also want to look at:


Although teen smoking has declined in recent years, 23% of high school students are smokers. Over 6.4 million youth under 18 today will eventually die from smoking-related disease unless we do something to change this trend. Parents can greatly influence teens’ decision about whether or not to smoke, even when parents smoke. It may not seem like teens are listening but parents’ voices are with them, even when parents are not.

Parents make a difference!

If parents do not talk with their teen and convey the clear message that they disapprove, tobacco use by teens is greater. When parents engage their teens in discussions about the problems of tobacco use, teens are less likely to use tobacco.

The most effective conversations between parents and teens focus on issues that are important and relevant to the teen. The following are some suggestions to help guide your conversations.

Because youth often think tobacco use will not affect them until they are older, when talking with your teen about tobacco, emphasize the immediate consequences.

- Physical consequences. Using tobacco causes bad breath, yellow teeth, smelly clothes and hair, stained fingers, phlegm, and a gross sounding cough.
- Tobacco’s impact on performance. Even among competitively trained young people, both performance and endurance are hindered by smoking. Young smokers have resting heart rates that are two to three beats per minute faster than nonsmokers.
- Chemicals in cigarettes. Cigarette smoke contains ammonia (used to clean toilets), cyanide (used to kill rats), and formaldehyde (used to preserve dead bodies).
- Addiction caused by nicotine. Explain that teens get addicted to nicotine just like adults and when trying to quit will go through withdrawal symptoms.

Most people could avoid becoming addicted to tobacco by staying free of tobacco use during adolescence.

- Most teens don’t smoke. Smoking is about the least popular thing to do if you want to hang out with other teenagers. Most consider smoking or chewing tobacco a foul, unattractive habit.
- Dispel the myths. Teens may think that smoking is viewed as sexy, and might even help them lose weight. These are myths. Make sure your teen has the facts about tobacco use.

It doesn’t happen to everyone, so why me?

The long-term health risks of tobacco use.

Most teens have heard about tobacco’s health risks, but are usually unconcerned because the consequences seem so far into the future. Younger teens especially may be unable to understand or evaluate the long-term hazards such as lung cancer; they often feel that is something only older people should be worried about.
Smoking is an adult decision.

Teens are looking for ways to appear more adult and sophisticated and if using tobacco fits this image, teens may be more likely to smoke or chew tobacco. Teenagers who are rebellious often believe they should be able to do whatever adults do. The “adult decision” argument is one the tobacco industry uses to its benefit. Remember, the majority of adult smokers become addicted to tobacco as teenagers, so very few adults actually make the decision to start smoking.

In America, cigarette smoking is the cause of about one death in every five each year. Since teenagers become addicted to nicotine quickly, they are often targeted by advertisements with false images that smoking is attractive.

Facts to consider:
• Nicotine addiction from any type of tobacco is the most common form of drug addiction and one of the most difficult to overcome.
• Nicotine use can become a “gateway” to drugs such as marijuana.
• A person who has not started smoking as a teenager is unlikely to ever smoke.
• Tobacco use is the single most preventable cause of death in America, resulting in more casualties than AIDS, alcohol, car accidents, murders, suicides, and illegal drugs combined.
• Young people’s addiction to nicotine is not limited to smoking. Many youth also use smokeless tobaccos such as snuff and chewing tobacco. Smokeless tobacco can cause oral cancer and gum disease.
• Tobacco companies distribute free merchandise like baseball caps and sunglasses that appeal to young people.
• The best way to prevent tobacco use is when teens spend time with friends who are against it. Peer pressure to avoid tobacco use can be more powerful than any other form of prevention.

Setting family rules

If you don’t want your teen to use tobacco, don’t make it a choice. Teens are not allowed to decide if they want to attend school or if they want to drive a vehicle without a license. When tobacco use is presented as something youth can and should decide for themselves, it implies the decision is not important to parents. Establish a clear and firm no-tobacco-use policy for your teen, and consequences if the rules are broken. Parents who tolerate, look the other way, or approve of underage tobacco use are more likely to have children who use tobacco. When parents model the behaviors they hope their teen will adopt and share their attitudes and opinions about their teen using tobacco, they can reduce the chances their teen will smoke.

Where you can go for more information:
University of Minnesota Extension
www.parenting.umn.edu

Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids
http://tobaccofreekids.org/

Minnesota Department of Health - Tobacco Prevention and Control
http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/hpcd/tpc

Minnesota Smoke Free Coalition
http://www.smokefreecoalition.org

National Institute on Drug Abuse
http://www.drugabuse.gov/DrugPages/Nicotine.html

Parents. The Anti-Drug
http://www.theantidrug.com/

Adapted with permission from Positive Parenting of Teens, “Teens and Tobacco” (University of Minnesota Extension Service, 1999).
Almost a third of your child's life is spent in school. Other than family, school is the most important influence on your child's life. And one of the most powerful impacts on teens' school performance is the connection they feel to their school. Feeling connected means that students have a sense of belonging and feel close to people, including teachers. Attachment to school is associated with reduced alcohol, cigarette, and marijuana use, lower rates of sexual activity, fewer thoughts about or attempts at suicide, and lower levels of violent behavior.

Parents make a difference!
Research shows children do better in school and have more positive attitudes about it when their parents are involved in school life. Many parents become less involved with school activities as their children move on to high school, yet teenagers benefit when their parents show interest. There are many ways for you to get involved.

• **Communicate.** Keep in touch with your teen's teachers and other school staff such as principals or counselors. Knowing teachers' names and subject areas is an important first step. Make the family-teacher connection early in the school year, before any problems arise. Take advantage of school open houses or parent-teacher conferences. Ask teachers specific questions about curriculum, their expectations of students, what you can do to support both the teacher and your child, and the opportunities you will have for future communication. Ask if your school uses email or voicemail to communicate with parents. Build a partnership with teachers so your teen sees you working with teachers, not against them.

• **Student activities.** Students become connected and committed to school by taking part in extracurricular activities and sports. Many young people find they have talents in areas outside of the classroom and need support to develop them. Encourage your child to join school activities. Ask your teen's teachers to encourage involvement. If your teen is already involved, show your support by attending school events.

• **Expect success.** When parents set high expectations for their children's school performances, teens are more likely to meet those expectations. When teens work toward their "personal best" (this does not mean perfection) in school, they are less likely to become depressed or involved in harmful violent, sexual, or drug-related behaviors. Teens whose parents expect them to make school a priority are much more likely to do well in school. Students whose parents expect them to attend college are more likely to do so.
• **Volunteer in the school.** Schools need chaperones for field trips and other outings or tutors for students who need extra help. Parents can assist at school sporting events and other activities or become a resource for career classes talking to students about their jobs. Parents can also join committees for special projects, help select educational materials or assist in budget matters. Other opportunities exist in parent groups like PTA/PTO or as music or athletic boosters. But before volunteering, ask your teen how this would make him or her feel. Don’t be surprised if your teen is not too excited about the idea.

• **Involve both parents.** Research shows that youth do better when both parents, if possible, are involved. In fact, young people are more likely to earn “A’s,” participate in extracurricular activities, and enjoy school if their fathers participate in their school life.

• **Encourage involvement in leadership opportunities.** Many schools offer programs for older students to serve as tutors or mentors to younger children. Being a “big buddy” to an elementary student may help a teen feel valued.

**What parents can do**

• Set high expectations for school success. Help your teen set reasonable goals and work toward them. Tell teens that you believe in their abilities and that is why you expect success.

• Recognize your teen’s academic accomplishments. Don’t assume that because your teen is maturing, he or she doesn’t need or want attention from you. Sometimes, teens are pressured not to excel by peers, or to “just get by.” You can offset negative expectations with positive recognition.

• Create a positive home environment that encourages learning. Keep learning resources handy. These can be as simple as a dictionary and educational books from the library, and as elaborate as a computer with an encyclopedia software program. If possible, designate a comfortable, well-lit study place.

• Establish quiet time every night for studying, reading, or writing. Keep the time period consistent (for example from 7 to 8 p.m.). Have everyone in your family participate to show the value you place on lifelong learning.

• Be especially supportive of your teen during transitional times, like when entering middle/junior or senior high school. Visit the school with your teen and meet with teachers.

• Talk with your teen about school and his classes and monitor his school attendance.

• Keep a calendar that lists school events, projects, and activities as well as dates of family events.

• Use TV wisely. Limit teens’ viewing and monitor video game and computer use.

• Know how and where your kids spend free time (especially after school). Encourage your teen to be involved in productive activities when not in school, rather than “hanging out.”

**Where you can go for more information:**

University of Minnesota Extension
www.parenting.umn.edu

Check & Connect School Engagement Program
http://www.ici.umn.edu/checkandconnect/

National Dropout Prevention Centers
http://www.dropoutprevention.org

National Education Association
http://www.nea.org/parents/

National PTA
http://www.pta.org/

You may also want to look at:


*Adapted with permission from Positive Parenting of Teens, “Teens and School Success” (University of Minnesota Extension Service, 1999).*
Remember the first time you fell in love? It was all you could think about and you thought it would last forever. Combine that with what you know about all the physical and emotional changes your teen is going through, and it’s easy to see why teen relationships can become so intense.

Teens physically mature long before they have a complete understanding of the emotions involved in an intimate relationship. This is why parents need to be prepared to help teens set guidelines on when they are ready to date and help them understand when a relationship is getting too intense or unhealthy. Teens should be encouraged to keep their early dating simple.

**When are teens ready to date?**

When a teen is ready to date is a question each family must answer based on their own values.

Interest in dating usually develops in stages. Teens typically move from same sex groups, to mixed sex groups, to one-on-one relationships.

One recent Parent Soup web poll asked 538 parents, “What’s the best age to begin dating?” About 61% said 16 or 17 was the right age for youth to start dating while 30% said 14 to 15 years of age was best. Only 6% thought youth should be 18 years of age or older and last 3% said 12 to 13-year-olds were old enough to date.

Most of these parents made a distinction between one-on-one dates and group dating. Several parents stated that kids who were younger than 16 should be allowed to go out in groups. Many parents said they’d allow young teens—even as young as 13 years old to date if there was a parent chaperone.

Although these first dating relationships typically do not last, do not dismiss them as unimportant. Teens need the freedom to move in and out of relationships, learning more about themselves and others. These relationships can be intense and can cause emotional upset when a break up occurs. Your child may need reassurance if this happens.

**What about dating rules?**

Teen dating is not only a new experience for teens but for parents as well. Here are some guidelines to help parents set rules about dating:

- Know who your teen is dating.
- Know where your teen is going on a date and what they plan to do.
- Have guidelines for where, when, and how often your teen dates.
- Don’t jump to conclusions on what dating means for your teen.
- Keep in mind, there is a fine line between interest and intrusion. Many teens talk with their parents about their feelings, but a parent should not press or demand that a teen tell every detail of every date. That is intrusion.
Setting teen curfews

Whose job is it to decide what time a teen should be home from a date: the city’s, the parent’s, or the teen’s?

According to a survey of 13 to 17-year-olds, 71% live in a household with curfews. The big surprise in this poll of 1,000 teens was that three-quarters of the teens agreed with their family rules.

When it comes to curfews keep these points in mind:

• Teens do want limits. Boundaries are reassuring because it says you care.
• Curfews need to be determined after considering multiple things: How much sleep does your teen need? What other responsibilities does your teen have? What are the average curfews for his or her friends? Are these reasonable in your view?
• Let your teen know that abiding by a curfew shows responsibility and maturity. The more of this you see the more lenient you become in the future.
• Finally, do not be sexist. Give girls fair curfews, too. Sometimes we allow boys more leeway. This sends a message to girls that they are less competent and trustworthy.

Is dating good or bad?

Dating can affect a teen in both positive and negative ways. And teens can learn from both. Dating can help build self-esteem, help a teen discover who he or she is, and help build social and relationship skills. Learning how to be part of a healthy relationship is an important skill to develop. Parents should try to help teens understand that healthy relationships are based on trust and caring.

But dating can also hurt one’s self esteem, reinforce stereotypical gender roles, or cause a teen to have unrealistic expectations about relationships.

Dating that becomes hurtful

Watch for warning signs of an abusive relationship. Far too many teens are hurt in abusive and exploitative relationships, sometimes with life-long consequences.

Signs of an abusive relationship include:

• The abusive partner is very controlling about what their partner does and who they do it with. Abusive partners usually show a lot of jealousy or possessiveness. Parents may notice that their teen no longer hangs out with his or her friends.
• Abusive partners have short tempers.
• Abusive partners will often belittle or put down their partner.
• Abusive relationships don’t start with a black eye on the first date. Abuse is much more subtle. There is a lot of emotional abuse that occurs before the first slap, push, or grab.

Teens are often confused and scared when abuse or sexual assault occurs in a relationship. They aren’t sure how to tell a parent. Parents may have to ask teens directly if they have been hurt.

If teens disclose abuse, believe them. Make sure teens know that abuse or sexual assault is not their fault. Contact a local sexual assault or domestic abuse program for help.

Where you can go for more information:

University of Minnesota Extension
www.parenting.umn.edu

Love Doesn’t Have to Hurt Teens
http://www.apa.org/pi/pii/teen/

National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy
http://www.teenpregnancy.org

National Survey of Teens: Teens Talk About Dating, Intimacy, and Their Sexual Experiences
http://www.kff.org/youthhivstds/1373-datingrep.cfm

You may also want to look at:


Adapted with permission from Positive Parenting of Teens, “Teens and Dating” (University of Minnesota Extension Service, 1999).
Most people can remember some experience with a bully while growing up. Bullying occurs when one or several youths use physical, emotional or verbal abuse to make life miserable for another. Unfortunately, bullies cause psychological and physical damage to other kids. Because youth typically do not bully others in front of adults, teachers and parents seem unaware of bullying and rarely step in to stop bullies or to help children cope with being bullied. Bullying is not normal childhood behavior and should not be dismissed as “kids will be kids.”

What the research says

Studies say that children who show chronic patterns of aggression by age eight are more likely to be involved in criminal behavior and family violence later in life. They are also more likely to physically punish or abuse their own kids.

- In schools 24% of 6th graders reported being bullied compared to 7% of 12th graders.
- Among students ages 12-18, 14% reported they had been bullied at school in the previous 6 months.
- Bullying occurs most frequently in sixth through eighth grades, with little variation between urban, suburban, town, and rural areas.
- Among 8- to 11-year olds, 74% say teasing and bullying occur at their school.
- Teens rate teasing and bullying as “big problems” that rank higher than racism, AIDS and the pressure to have sex or try alcohol or drugs.
- Academic problems due to bullying are reported by 22% of fourth- through eighth-graders.
- Youth who are bullied are at greater risk of anxiety, depression, loneliness, unhappiness and low self-esteem.
- A child who is a bully is more likely to engage in other negative behavior such as stealing and using drugs.

Gender differences

Research has found that although males were both more likely to bully or to be victims of bullying than females, females more frequently said they were bullied verbally and psychologically (through sexual comments or rumors). Males were more likely to say they had been bullied physically (being hit, slapped, or pushed).

A very significant bullying problem involves controlling or manipulating another person by damaging or threatening to damage valued relationships. Teen girl bullies will do this by intentionally spreading rumors about another person or using body language or nonverbal actions.

This type of bullying is much harder for parents to get a handle on because it is often sneaky, quiet, or underhanded. It is harder to see and explain and it is one person’s word against another.

The bystander

Some experts suggest that changing attitudes and involvement of kids who witness but are not victims of bullying may have the greatest impact on bullies.

Since bullies love an audience, a bystander’s encouragement or toleration of the bully will make the bully stronger. Training through role-playing can help youth recognize a potentially harmful situation and assertively do something positive. By simply saying, “That’s not cool,” a bystander can stop a bully’s activities.
Youth need to know that taking a stand for what is right can be very effective. Learn how to turn your teen into a catalyst for change.

Explain the difference between tattling and telling. Tattling is when you report something just to get someone in trouble. Telling is when you report that you or someone else is in danger.

**What you can do if your teen is the victim of a bully**

Typically, assertive, self-confident children do not become victims of bullying. Surprisingly, youth who are overweight, wear glasses, or are smart are no more likely to be bullied than others. Youth usually are singled out because of psychological traits such as extreme passivity, sensitivity to criticism, or low self-esteem.

- Listen to your teen’s reports of being bullied and take it seriously.
- Recognize the symptoms: Lost or torn clothing, unexplained bruises, fearfulness or anxiety, moodiness, withdrawn behavior, a drop in grades, lack of friends, loss of appetite, unexplained reluctance to go to school, or sleep disturbances.
- Ask questions. Be suspicious if your teen needs extra school supplies or extra lunch money. Ask how he or she is spending lunch break, time before and after school. Ask what it’s like riding the bus or walking to school. Ask if there are peers who are bullies without asking whether your teen is being bullied. Encourage speaking out.
- Teach your teen how to avoid the situations that expose him or her to bullying. Direct your teen toward experiences tailored to improve his or her social skills.
- Teach your teen how to respond to aggression. With bullies, they should be assertive and leave the scene without violence. Role-play with your teen how to react and respond in non-aggressive ways.
- Do not tell youth to strike back. This gives the message that the only way to fight violence is by using more violence. It makes them feel that parents and teachers don’t care enough to help.
- Report all incidents to school authorities. Keep a written record of who was injured and those you reported it to.
- Eliminate violent games, TV shows, and movies as much as possible.

**What to do if your teen is a bully**

- Objectively evaluate your teen’s behavior.
- Teach youth to recognize and express emotions non-violently.
- Teach conflict-management and conflict-resolution skills.
- Emphasize talking out the issue rather than hitting.
- Promote empathy by pointing out the consequences for others of verbal and physical actions.
- Don’t put down a bully. Bullies are intolerant of any insult to their self-concept.
- Model the behavior you want your teen to exhibit.

Adults must make it clear that aggressive behavior is not acceptable and will not be tolerated. When aggression is tolerated, everyone loses — the bullies, the victims, and the bystanders.

**Where you can go for more information:**

University of Minnesota Extension  
www.parenting.umn.edu

Bullying Research  
http://www.bullyingresearch.com

Stop Bullying Now  
http://www.stopbullyingnow.com

Stop Bullying Now: Lend a Hand, Take a Stand  
http://www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov

You may also want to look at:


Adapted from *Positive Parenting of Teens, “Bullying Makes Life Miserable for Many Kids” (University of Minnesota Extension Service, 1999).*
Have You Talked with Your Teen Today?

Jodi Dworkin, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Department of Family Social Science and University of Minnesota Extension

Does my child care what I think?

Your child probably cares a great deal about what you think. You play an important role in shaping your teenager’s behavior. Teens who say their parents warned them about drug use and set clear rules are less likely to use drugs. Parents’ and teenagers’ morals, future aspirations, and self-control are typically quite similar. Talking encourages family togetherness and increases the likelihood teens will share parents’ values.

What kinds of things do teenagers want to talk about?

Generally, teenagers are interested in the following conversations:

- **Family issues**: Teens want to participate in decisions and be told about family problems.
- **Controversial issues**: Teens have questions like “What does sex feel like?” or “What does it mean to get high?”
- **Emotional concerns**: Teens want to know how you really feel about things.
- **The big whys**: Teens begin to have philosophical questions about issues like war and religion.
- **The future**: Teens are curious and concerned about what they can expect from the future.
- **Current events**: Teens have questions about what is going on in the world and in their community.
- **Personal interests**: Teens really want you to show interest in their activities, music, sports, and friends.
- **Parents’ lives**: Teens are curious about what things were like when you were their age, including emotions you had and mistakes you made.

How can I talk with my teen?

All she wants to do is go out with her friends and spend time alone in her room. How can I talk with my teen?

- Don’t lecture, talk for hours, or ambush your teen.
- If your teen tells you a secret, keep it.
- Listen carefully to her concerns and feelings, and respect her views. Teens are often afraid of being lectured, punished, or not understood.
- Stress that your teenager can and should make choices about his behaviors, and is responsible for these decisions.
- Offer praise. Make a date to spend one-on-one time with your teen. Find something you both like to do.
- Tell your teen you love him. With all the changes he’s going through, he needs to hear it now more than ever.
Are you really listening to your teen?

Your messages to your teen may not be as clear as you think. To make sure you and your child are having the same conversation, communication should be interactive. Ask your teen what she wants to talk about. Teenagers often feel their parents aren’t listening and dominate conversations. Many parents believe they are talking to their kids about drugs; unfortunately, the majority of kids don’t remember these conversations. Parents need to be ready to talk when teens are, and not just when it is convenient for them.

Choose your battles.

Research shows only about 1 in 15 families have serious conflict that is harmful to the parent-teenager relationship. Typically, parents and teenagers argue over chores, curfew, and appearance—issues that are really not that important. Parents need to choose their battles and decide what is worth fighting about. What would really happen if your child didn’t make his bed one morning? Wouldn’t your energy be better directed towards issues like school, sex, drugs or alcohol?

I know all parents and teens fight. How can we resolve these conflicts?

Your goal as a parent should be to solve conflict in a positive way. Teens are more agreeable when they think you are considering their needs and when they are part of the resolution process. Here are some tips for good problem solving:

- Establish ground rules so it’s a fair fight.
- Agree to treat each other with respect and listen to each other’s point of view.
- Reach a mutual understanding. You should both have the opportunity to say what you think. Make sure the other person really gets what you’re saying. Be polite and clear. Use I statements, such as “I feel _____ when you _____.”
- Brainstorm together as many possible solutions as you can.
- Pick the options you like best, see where your interests coincide, and negotiate a solution you both think is acceptable.
- Keep in mind that arguments are very common in families with teens. However, most studies show that teens love their parents and value these relationships.

Where you can go for more information:

University of Minnesota Extension
www.parenting.umn.edu

UMN Children, Youth & Family Consortium
www.cyfc.umn.edu

Kids Health
http://kidshealth.org

National Middle School Association
http://www.nmsa.org

Talking with Kids About Tough Issues
http://www.talkwithkids.org

You may also want to look at:


Adapted from University of Illinois Extension fact sheets written by the author.
I actually have to talk with my teen about sex?

It’s important to talk with your teen about sex because recent studies show that nearly half of high school students have had sex, 6.2 percent before age 13, and 14 percent have had four or more partners. Parents need to share their values about sex with their children, because teens will also get information from other kids and the media. Avoiding the issue does not mean your child will avoid sexual activity.

But it is such an awkward subject…

It is okay to let your child know it makes you uncomfortable to discuss sex with them. They will probably feel the same. They will respect your honesty. Admitting it is awkward may make it more comfortable for both of you.

Can I pass my values to my teen?

What you believe about sexuality is important to your teen. How do you feel about your own sexuality and your teen’s sexuality? Be willing to talk with your teen about what you think is right and wrong. Be prepared for your teen to disagree with you. Listen to his or her disagreements, but state your beliefs firmly, and be honest and clear about the values you hope your teen will adopt.

Tips for talking with your teenager about sex:

- Know what you are talking about. Make sure you are dispelling the myths about sex and sexually transmitted diseases, and giving your teen the facts.
- It is okay to say you don’t know right now, but be sure to find the answer and tell your teen later. Check out the resources on the back of this publication for more information.
- Listen carefully to your teen’s concerns and feelings, and respect his views. Be sure to answer the question he is asking. This will help prevent you from giving information your teen might not be ready for.
- Let your teen know love is not the same thing as sex (teenagers fall in love frequently and intensely) and that everybody is not “doing it.”
- Emphasize that your teen has a choice about whether or not to have sex, and role-play how to say no without becoming a social outcast. There are a lot of safe, intimate things teens can do without having sex.
- Don’t lecture or threaten your teen. This will discourage your teen from talking to you in the future.
- You can’t control your teen’s sexual activities once she leaves your house. It is possible to explain your values to her in hopes of influencing her decisions.
What should I say to my teen about sex?

Deciding what to say to your teen about sex is a personal decision. Regardless of what you say, be sure the information is age appropriate. You may want to look at the resources below so you are ready to answer their questions. In general, younger teenagers (7th grade) are concerned with biology, the definition of slang terms, and intercourse. Older teens (10th grade) are more interested in learning about birth control, health risks, and communication in relationships. In general, boys are more interested in slang terms and intercourse. Girls want information on health risks and communication in relationships.

How can I prepare myself to talk with my teen about sex?

You can never be totally prepared to talk with your teen about sex. You can be prepared to tell them what you think and to answer some of their questions. Ask yourself what you would do if:

• You suspect your daughter is getting serious with her boyfriend?
• You find your son and his girlfriend home alone in his room?
• You found condoms or birth control pills in your teen’s room?
• You found out your daughter was pregnant?

Where you can go for more information:

University of Minnesota Extension
www.parenting.umn.edu

UMN Children, Youth & Family Consortium
www.cyfc.umn.edu

Healthy Teen Network
http://www.healthyteennetwork.org

Minnesota Department of Health- STDs and HIV
http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/stdhivsection.html

Minnesota Organization on Adolescent Pregnancy, Prevention & Parenting
http://www.moappp.org

Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States
http://www.siecus.org

You may also want to look at:


Contact your church or local health department, or speak with your physician. You can also get free information on many issues from Planned Parenthood.

Adapted from University of Illinois Extension fact sheets written by the author.