

Health News You Can Use - Teen Edition

TEEN PREGNANCY

"In my school teen pregnancy is the norm. But I think that if it wasn't so glorified, girls would be making a different choice." - BQLI summer intern/Teen Pregnancy researcher

THE FACTS:

- Sexuality is more pervasive in today's popular culture than ever before
- About one third of girls in the United States become pregnant before 20 years of age
- When placed on an international scale, the US has the highest rates of teen pregnancy and births, more than any other developed country
- Not only are teens in the US less likely to use contraception, but they are also along the same lines with developing nations when it comes to how early and how often they have sex
- Hitting closer to home, 65% more New York teens are sexually active compared to teens in more developing countries
- In 2006, of the infants born to moms ages of 15-20, more than 80% of these pregnancies were unplanned



Whose at Risk?

Research suggests that:

Teens are more likely to engage in sex when they do poorly in school and/or have no plans to pursue higher forms of education.

Teens who indulge in alcohol and drugs, may also engage in other "risk-taking" behaviors such as unprotected sex.

Teens who begin dating at an early age; have a large number of romantic partners; or have a romantic partner three or more years older are also more prone to early pregnancy.

Teenagers whose parents were teen parents run a higher risk of repeating the cycle.

Teens that are most likely to get pregnant often may have experienced sexual abuse; suffer molestation; face neglect, or lack progressive opportunities.

Mixed Messages and What Teens Say...

When it comes to sex and early pregnancy, are we sending separate messages to teen boys and girls?

65% of teens feel that parents "send one message to their sons and a different message to their daughters" when discussing sex.

Among experienced teens, 60% of them wished that they had waited longer before becoming active.

More teens think about the consequences of sex when a character in a show they watch has to deal with similar issues. Seventy-five percent of teens agree with this fact while 76% wish that shows talked more about it, especially about teen pregnancy.

Most teens (47%) say that "parents most influence their decision about sex" while friends only influence them at about 18% of the time.

What You Should Know...

A report conducted by the Guttmacher Institute in NYC, revealed that the teen pregnancy rate in this country is the lowest it's been in 30 years. This is attributed to an increase in abstinence and contraceptive practice. The report also states that:

1. *Within each ethnic group there has been a great decrease in teen pregnancy and for some very little change. The most dramatic decrease is among African American teens, with a drop of 40%, and Caucasian teen pregnancy has dropped 34% and Hispanic teen pregnancy has dropped 19%. The age range that has been affected from this issue are from 15 -17 years old.*

2. *Even with considerable decreases, teen pregnancy still remains a crucial issue.*

3. *24% of single expectant mothers are teens, from 133,138 births in 2005 to 138,920 births in 2006.*

4. *Teens who have children potentially face a decline in their future prospects which greatly affects their ability to care for themselves and a child.*

5. *Teen mothers are less likely to complete high school and more likely to live in poverty than others. Only about one-third of teen mothers obtain a high school diploma.*

6. *Pregnant teens 15-19 years are less likely to receive adequate prenatal care, which attributes greatly to poor birth outcomes.*

7. *Teen pregnancy affects young men also, and encourages an increased rate of alcohol and substance abuse, lower educational level, and reduced earning potential in teen fathers.*

While pregnancy can be devastating to a teenager, the affects of an STD or HIV/AIDS can be even worse. 19 million Sexually Transmitted Diseases are reported annually and 50% represent young people ages 15-24. Compared to the general population, young people within this same age range have the fastest increasing rates of HIV infection. An average of two young persons are infected with HIV every hour of the day.

How to Get Help

Regardless of how teen pregnancy is perceived in your community, school, or in your social circle, it is important to know that bringing a life into the world is never a casual thing. The glorification of pregnancy, especially among teens, is unrealistic and does nothing to help bring clarification to the many responsibilities and obstacles of raising a child.

If you or someone you know may be pregnant, there is help. Do not be afraid to speak to your parents, a guidance counselor or someone at the below institutions for advice and/or help.

For Girls:

- Theationalcampaign.org - To prevent teen and unplanned pregnancy
- Theationalcampaign.org/resources/10tips.aspx - "10 Tips for Parents To Help Children Advice Pregnancy"
- TeenPregnancy.org - about the national campaign to prevent teen pregnancy
- Alovingalternative.com - About adoption

For Boys

- Theationalcampaign.org/resources/pdf/guything.pdf - "Boys, young men and teen pregnancy prevention."
- Teenadvice.about.com/od/teenfathers/teenfathersFAQ.htm - "Frequently asked questions about the responsibilities of teen father."
- eHow.com - Info for boys facing teen pregnancy