



Girls Inc. Guide Female Health

Are most girls sexually active? If so, do they use protection to prevent pregnancy and disease?

The majority of girls are not sexually active, but of the 30.1% of sexually active high school girls surveyed in the 2015 National Youth Risk Behavior Survey, **only 56.9% used a condom in the last three months.**¹

How common is teen pregnancy in the United States?

Regardless of similar levels of sexual activity, the United States continues to have **one of the highest rates of teen pregnancy in the developed world**—more than three times as high as in Canada.² Each year, approximately 750,000 young women aged 15-19 become pregnant.³

How common is teen pregnancy in Indiana?

In 2014, the birth rate for 15-19 year olds was 28.0 out of 1,000 girls, down 8% from 2013⁴. This rate was more than twice as high as the state with the lowest teen pregnancy rate at 12.1⁵

Are sexually active girls at-risk for contracting STDs?

Yes. On average, 1 in 4 sexually active adolescent females have an STD. Half of these cases are HPV infections, the primary cause of cervical cancer.⁶

How common is HPV among youth?

35% of sexually active 14 to 19-year-olds are HPV-positive.⁷

Should young women be worried about HIV/AIDS?

Yes. Women account for a growing share of new HIV/AIDS case in the United States. In 2014, 19% of HIV/AIDS new diagnoses belonged to women of all ages, compared to just 8% in 1985. **In young people, the share is even larger. In 2014, 22% of the total diagnoses for HIV/AIDS belonged to 13 to 24-year-olds.**⁸

“When parents communicate honestly and openly with their teenage son or daughter about sex, relationships, and the prevention of HIV, STDs, and pregnancy, they can help promote their teen’s health and reduce the chances that their teen will engage in behaviors that place them at risk.”

Talking with Your Teens about Sex: Going Beyond “the Talk”
Centers for Disease and Control Prevention
2014

Are schools required to teach sex education?

Sex education is a “states’ rights” issue—there is no federal law or policy that requires schools to teach it. Although the Indiana Department of Education *recommends* that sex education be taught, local school districts are still not required to do so as of March 2016.⁹

How can families encourage abstinence and other healthy decisions about sex and relationships?

Talk to your girl! More than ever, parents are talking with their teens about sex, relationships and health. Eighty percent of parents overall have talked to their children about these topics.¹⁰ Use teachable moments in your everyday life, such as scenarios on TV, and be sure to make it a dialogue rather than a monologue. **Positive and honest communication has been proven to reduce engagement of risky behaviors.**¹¹

- ✓ **Honesty is the best policy.** If you don’t know the answer to a question, say so. Then say that you’ll find out or that the two of you can find out together. Likewise, if a question makes you feel uncomfortable or embarrassed, say so. It’s fine to say, “I’m a little embarrassed by that question, but I’m glad you asked, and I’ll try to answer it.” This lets your child know that it’s OK to talk about sex even if the question is embarrassing.
- ✓ **Be sure to talk about your own feelings and attitudes.** It’s your right and responsibility to share your values and expectations with your children. Tell them what you believe and what you want for them. This doesn’t mean that they will accept all of your values. Especially during adolescence, daughters begin to reject some of their parents’ values as they search for more independence. However, if you tell them what you believe and what you expect, they’ll have a basic foundation of values to draw upon when faced with peer pressure.
- ✓ **Be a good listener.** When your children approach you with a question, find out what they’re thinking about before you answer. If you’re not sure what your child is really thinking, you might say, “Tell me what you think about that.”
- ✓ **Answer questions in simple, clear terms.** Tailor your answer to your child’s age or developmental level. Avoid giving overly complex or sophisticated answers.
- ✓ **Check to see if your answer was adequate.** After responding to a question, you might ask, “Have I answered your question?” or “Do you understand?” Leave your child with the feeling that you’re always available to answer additional questions in the future.
- ✓ **Build your child’s comfort level for coming to you with questions and concerns.** Hear her out before voicing your opinions and avoid making assumptions about what she “must” be doing based on her questions. Treat her questions as a part of normal, everyday life. While it’s important to be an “ask able” parent, don’t always wait for her to ask questions about sexuality.¹²

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Selected Health Risk Behaviors and Health Outcomes by Sex: National YRBS 2015

² Miriello, Nicholas. "Even At Lowest, U.S. Teen Birth Rate Far Higher Than W. Europe." *The Huffington Post*. TheHuffingtonPost.com, 30 Dec. 2010. Web. 14 Oct. 2015.

³ "11 Facts About Teen Pregnancy." *11 Facts About Teen Pregnancy*. N.p., n.d. Web. 14 Oct. 2015.

⁴ "Teen Pregnancy Prevention." *National Conference of State Legislatures*. Ncls.org, 29 Apr. 2016. Web. 17 Jan. 2017.

⁵ "The Office of Adolescent Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services." *Office of Adolescent Health*. N.p., n.d. Web. 14 Oct. 2015.

⁶ "STDs in Adolescents and Young Adults." *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 16 Dec. 2014. Web. 14 Oct. 2015.

⁷ The Kaiser Family Foundation, "Sexual Health of Adolescents and Young Adults in the United States", [http://www.hivlawandpolicy.org/sites/www.hivlawandpolicy.org/files/Sexual%20Health%20of%20Adolescents%20and%20Young%20Adults%20in%20the%20United%20States%20\(Kaiser%20Family%20Foundation\).pdf](http://www.hivlawandpolicy.org/sites/www.hivlawandpolicy.org/files/Sexual%20Health%20of%20Adolescents%20and%20Young%20Adults%20in%20the%20United%20States%20(Kaiser%20Family%20Foundation).pdf)

⁸ The Kaiser Family Foundation, "The HIV/AIDS Epidemic in the United States", <http://kff.org/hivaids/fact-sheet/the-hivaids-epidemic-in-the-united-states/>

Center for Disease Control and Prevention, "HIV Among Youth", <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/youth/index.htm>

⁹ National Conference of State Legislatures. "State policies on sex education in schools." 2016. <http://www.ncsl.org/research/health/state-policies-on-sex-education-in-schools.aspx#2>

¹⁰ Centers for Disease and Control Prevention. "Talking with Your Teens about Sex: Going Beyond 'the Talk'." 2014.

¹¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Talking with Your Teens about Sex: Going Beyond 'the Talk'." 2014.

¹² Girls Incorporated®, "Tips for Answering Your Child’s Questions About Sexuality". <http://www.girlsinc.org/resources/tips/p3-3-2.html>