



What to say
to help them
delay early sex

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Remember:

Irish research shows
that talking to
teenagers about sex
does not encourage
them to have sex.

Advice for

Mams @ Dads

Talking to Teenagers about Relationships @ Sex

The HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme has produced this supplement to help parents and their older teenagers talk about relationships and sex.

All young people have the right to comprehensive relationships and sexual health education. Over 90% of the Irish population support sex education for young people. Age-appropriate information and education helps young people to make informed choices for themselves and to resist engaging in risky behaviour.

The Programme has also produced a website on relationships and sexuality for teenagers, their parents, teachers and youth workers www.b4udecide.ie. The website provides helpful information on how to say no to pressure and how to make responsible decisions. In addition to the website, there is a resource pack available to teachers and youth workers to assist them in their important work of educating young people about relationships and sexual health.

Up to $\frac{1}{3}$ of boys
and $\frac{1}{4}$ of girls have
sex before age 17.

Young people who
have sex before age 17
are less likely to use
contraception, and more
likely to have a crisis
pregnancy or sexually
transmitted infection at
some stage in life.

Did
You
Know?

Young people
who have had sex
before 17 are more
likely to say that
they regret it.

The age of sexual
consent in Ireland
is 17. This means
that it is against
the law to have
sex with someone
under 17.



The Science Bit...

If your teenager – boy or girl – needs crisis pregnancy counselling and support, freetext LIST to 50444 or visit www.positiveoptions.ie

POSITIVE OPTIONS
CRISIS PREGNANCY SERVICES
Help. Support. Understanding.

Fertility

- A woman is fertile from the month before her first period begins until the menopause.
- A man is fertile from adolescence throughout his whole life.
- Women have menstrual cycles of different lengths – some women have short cycles (a period every three weeks) other women have long cycles (a period every five weeks).
- Regardless of the length of a woman's cycle, women will usually ovulate (release an egg) 12-16 days before her next period is due. The egg can survive for 24 hours. Because sperm can last for up to a week in a woman's body, a woman could also become pregnant if she has sex the week before she ovulates.
- It is difficult to know for certain when a woman is most likely to become pregnant because stress, illness and travel can have an effect on ovulation. It is very difficult to predict fertility in the teenage years because many teenagers have irregular cycles.



Check out the fertility video on www.thinkcontraception.ie

Contraception

- Research has found that when mothers talk to their daughters and fathers talk to their sons about contraception it increases the chance that the young person will use contraception when they have sex for the first time.
- You know your child best and it's up to you to decide whether or not to talk to them about contraception.
- You can find out about different methods of contraception at www.thinkcontraception.ie or pick up leaflets in your pharmacy/family planning clinic or GP surgery.
- If your teenager is sexually active, using condoms as well as the pill is the best way to prevent a crisis pregnancy or a sexually transmitted infection.
- If your daughter is on the pill make sure she knows that antibiotics, vomiting and diarrhoea can make the pill ineffective.
- Remember there are long acting methods of contraception available that do not require you to take a pill every day – e.g. the injection, the implant. These methods can be less expensive in the long run.
- Young people can be unsure as to how to use a condom. There is a demonstration of how to use a condom correctly on www.thinkcontraception.ie.
- **Approximately 90% of young people used contraception when they had sex for the first time.**



For more information about contraception, visit www.thinkcontraception.ie

Emergency Contraception

Emergency Contraception (the "morning after pill") is a secondary method of contraception. It can be used to prevent a pregnancy when the first method of contraception (condoms or the pill) may have failed or where no contraception has been used. It should never replace the primary method of contraception.

Emergency contraception is more effective the sooner it is taken after having unprotected sex. It is available through private consultation with a pharmacist or a GP/ Family Planning Clinic. Emergency contraception does not provide any protection from sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

Did You Know?

- Since 2001 there has been a 44% decrease in the number teenagers giving birth.
- The majority of young people wait until they are 17, 18 or 19 before they have sex for the first time.
- Irish research has shown that those who received sex education at home or in school were 1.5 times more likely to use contraception the first time they had sex, when compared with those who had received sex education from other sources.
- The majority of young people (approximately 90%) use contraception the first time they have sex.
- Young people who used contraception at first sex were more likely to report using contraception consistently in the last year.

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)

- STIs can be passed from one person to another through sexual contact – including oral sex and anal sex. Some STIs are transmitted through skin to skin contact.
- If your teenager complains of irritation, rashes or lumps around the genitals or anus they may have an STI.
- Condoms can protect against most (but not all) sexually transmitted infections. Hormonal methods of contraception, such as the pill, give no protection against STIs.
- If your teenager has had unprotected sex with someone, make sure that they get checked out by a GP/doctor or at an STI/GUM clinic.
- Some STIs, such as Chlamydia, may have no symptoms. If Chlamydia is left untreated, it can cause infertility in women.



For more information about STIs and a list of STI services, visit www.thinkcontraception.ie

Remember:

Research shows that knowing what's going on in your child's life, knowing where they are, knowing their friends and their friends parents all have a protective effect.



The age of sexual consent in Ireland is 17 years for boys and girls.

Tips for talking to teenagers

Mams and Dads! It's important that you both talk to your teenager about relationships and sex. Talk to each other about what you have spoken to your son or daughter about. It's important that your teenager gets the same messages from you.

Teenagers under pressure

Girls feel that they are expected to have a good reputation, but at the same time are under pressure from boys and from their peers to have sex. This can lead to a situation where your daughter has sex to please her boyfriend or to keep up with a group of friends.

Boys feel under pressure from their peer group to appear macho and ready for sex at all times. This can lead to a situation where your son has sex before he is ready. Therefore, he may be unprepared or unaware of the risks and how to prevent them and unaware of how to cope if things go wrong.



Use opportunities such as events on television or celebrity pregnancies to open up a discussion about romantic relationships. It is important that they understand the difference between healthy romantic relationships in real life and relationships that are presented in some TV programmes and celebrity magazines.



Start early by answering questions from pre-teenage children in an open and age appropriate way. This makes it more likely that they will talk to you when they're older teenagers.



Do things together like going for a walk or a drive, where you can talk privately without being interrupted or overheard.



Try to find out what they know and what they want to know. Ask them about what they are learning in school or if their friends have girlfriends or boyfriends.



Encourage your child to think about their own values and talk to them about your values. This helps them to develop their own limits and boundaries.



Talk to them about what they want to do in their lives. Ambitious plans and ideas for the future about education or work can deter young people from engaging in risky behaviour.

What to say to help them delay early sex



It is against the law to have sex under the age of 17.



It's better for your sexual health to wait until you are older. Teenagers who have sex at an early age are more likely to experience crisis pregnancy or sexually transmitted infections in their lifetime.



It's better to wait until you are older and in a secure relationship. Teenagers who had sex under age 17 are more likely to say later that they regretted it and that they were not in love at the time.



Having sex for the first time is a major step in life; something you will always remember. It's worth waiting for the right time and the right person.



Having sex does not prove anything. It does not prove that you are popular or attractive.



If someone really likes you, they won't put pressure on you. They will want you to be sure that you are ready before having sex for the first time and will not mind waiting until you are older.



If you do have sex, it's important to use contraception and protect yourself from sexually transmitted infections. Even if you do, there is still a chance of you / your girlfriend being pregnant or having an STI. Do you want this worry in your life? Are you ready to take these risks?

Remember:

Teenagers are heavily influenced by their friends. If your child is 16 or 17 years old, some of their friends may be sexually active.

Remember:

Just because your child has not mentioned a girlfriend or boyfriend, does not mean that they have not engaged in, or considered engaging in, some level of sexual contact.



Only total abstinence from all sexual contact offers 100% protection from pregnancy and STIs.



Test Yourself Quiz

1. What is the age of consent for sexual intercourse?

- a. 16
- b. 19
- c. 17
- d. 18

2. The majority of young people have sex for the first time:

- a. In their mid-twenties
- b. Around 17, 18, 19 years
- c. At 15 or 16 years
- d. When they get married

3. Almost 80% of 18-25 year olds use contraception consistently. True or False?

- a. False
- b. True

4. Is teenage pregnancy increasing or decreasing?

- a. Increasing
- b. Decreasing

5. If a young person has sex before 17 they are:

- a. More likely to have a crisis pregnancy
- b. More likely to get an STI
- c. Less likely to use contraception
- d. All of the above

6. A woman can become pregnant during her period if:

- a. She has a short menstrual cycle
- b. Has irregular periods
- c. Has been stressed, ill or has travelled
- d. All of the above

7. You can get pregnant or get an STI the first time you have sex. True or False?

- a. False
- b. True

8. You can get a sexually transmitted infection from oral sex or anal sex. True or False?

- a. True
- b. False

9. How long after having sexual intercourse is emergency contraception effective?

- a. 72 hours
- b. 5 days
- c. 1 week
- d. It is only effective the morning after sex.

Answers

Q1. c

The age of consent is 17. This means that it is against the law for anyone under 17 to have sex.

Q2. b

The majority of young people have sex at 17, 18, 19 years of age. Only a minority of young people have sex under the age of 17.

Q3. b

The vast majority of young people are very responsible and use contraception every time they have sex.

Q4. b

There has been a 44% decrease in the number of births to teenagers since 2001.

Q5. d

People who have sex at a young age are more likely to have a crisis pregnancy or an STI. They are less likely to use contraception than people who had first sex at an older age.

Q6. d

A woman can become pregnant during their period, if she has a short cycle, irregular periods, or if she has been ill, stressed or has travelled long distances. Having sex during a period is not safer sex.

Q7. b

You can get pregnant or get an STI the first time you have sex

Q8. a

You can get an STI from oral or anal sex, as well as vaginal sex.

Q9. b

Emergency contraception is more effective the sooner it is taken after having unprotected sex. It is most effective if taken within 12 hours of having unprotected sex however it can be effective up to 5 days depending on the emergency contraception option chosen.

Parents' Questions Answered

Is it common for teenagers to look at pornography on the internet?

*In an Irish survey of 994 children aged between 9 and 16 years, about one in five say they have seen obviously sexual images online or offline. Nearly half of 15-16 year olds have seen such images. The most common ways for children to see sexual images are on television, films or videos (14%) and on the internet (11%). Most children come across sexual images online accidentally through pop ups, though 13% of older teenagers have seen them on an adult/x-rated website. If you are concerned about your child looking at pornographic material, you can install a net nanny on your computer or on your child's mobile. Also ensure the computer is in a family room and supervise them while they are on the internet. It is really important to talk to them about the risks, so if they do come across inappropriate content they know they can tell you and talk to you.

What advice can I give my child to help them to stay safe when on social networking websites?

- Tell your child to keep their password secret and to change it every so often.
- Advise your son/daughter to keep their friendship groups to only the people they know 100 per cent – not just someone who seems friendly but they have not met.
- Encourage your son/daughter to lock their profile so others can't mess with it and advise them to not mess with other people's profiles.
- Let your child know that teachers, colleges and even future employers may check social networking sites to see what they have been up to.
- Advise your child to only put up posts, photos and comments that won't embarrass or humiliate them or their friends.
- Let your son/daughter know that even if they delete something that they regret doing earlier, someone may already have saved it elsewhere.
- Advise your son/daughter not to let someone coax them into doing or saying something online that they feel uncomfortable about. Encourage your child to report any problems or cyber bullies to site monitors.

What Relationships and Sexuality Education should my child be receiving in school?

All schools are required to have a Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) policy and to teach at least 6 classes of RSE in every year of school from 1st year to 6th year. If you would like information on the RSE programme in your child's school, talk to the principal or the SPHE co-ordinator. You have the right to remove your child from an RSE class if you so wish.



Parentline offers support, guidance and information on all aspects of being a parent. Visit www.parentline.ie or call 1890 927 927.

*O'Neill, Brian; Grehan, Simon; Ólafsson, Kjartan. 2011. Risks and safety for children on the internet: the Ireland report. European Union /London School of Economics and Political Science.

Free DVDs, booklets, advice @ training for parents



www.b4udecide.ie has been developed for teenagers, their parents, teachers and youth workers to assist in educating young people about relationships and sexuality. A resource pack is also available to teachers and youth workers from www.healthpromotion.ie



Busybodies – for parents of 10-14 year olds. Used in 5th, 6th class in school or in 1st year. Contains basic information on puberty and human reproduction. Freertext BUSY followed by your name and address to 50444 to get a free copy.



You Can Talk To Me – DVD and booklet – contains tips and advice for parents on talking to their children about relationships and sexual health. To order a copy freertext PARENT, followed by your name and address to 50444.



The Facts DVD – for parents, teachers and youth workers. It contains information on fertility, contraception, a condom demonstration, STIs and crisis pregnancy. Freertext FACTS, followed by your name and address to 50444 for a free copy.



National Parents Council – Primary

The National Parents Council runs a programme called 'Parenting – Supporting your child to build healthy friendships and relationships'. Call 01 887 4475 or 01 887 4481 or email training@npc.ie for more information.



To bulk order any of the resources outlined above visit www.healthpromotion.ie

The HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme developed this supplement in consultation with parents and experts on sexual health in Ireland. The HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme is responsible for developing and implementing a national strategy to reduce crisis pregnancy. www.crisispregnancy.ie

The information in this supplement is in no way to be considered medical advice. Specific medical advice should be obtained from a registered doctor or nurse.

