

## TEENAGE SEX MYTHS

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According to the CDC, each year 3 million cases of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) occur among teenagers, and approximately 1 million teens become pregnant. Almost ½ of all STDs occur in persons aged 15 - 24. Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection is the 6th leading cause of death among persons aged 15 - 24 years of age in the United States.

It is my hope this article will open the eyes of young people and hopefully prevent someone from participating in teenage sex. If you have a female or a male child, grandchild or other loved one please take the time to review the following information with them.

Many teens feel pressured into sex due to their belief that everyone else is having sex. Only 44.5% of high school students report having had sex, according to the CDC, and only 34.6% remained sexually active. 62.6% of teens who are sexually active report using condoms.

Many teens feel the need to have sex with multiple partners as they feel this is something other teens are doing. Only 16% of high school students report having had sex with 4 or more partners during their lifetime.

Many teens feel that STD's are no big deal and if they get an STD they'll simply go to the doctor and get some medicine to clear it up. Actually, STD's carry severe consequences and are often undiagnosed. 20% of women with untreated chlamydia will become infertile. If a woman has chlamydia she is 5 times more likely to become infected with HIV, if exposed. Gonorrhea can cause infertility in both sexes. The presence of gonorrhea makes an individual 3 - 5 times more likely to acquire HIV, if exposed. Syphilis if untreated can lead to nerve, cardiovascular, organ damage and even death. The presence of syphilis makes an individual 2 - 5 times more likely to acquire HIV, if exposed.

Many young women have the misconception that becoming pregnant will cause a young man to marry them and they will have their own family, where they will be free of the rules of their parents. Statistics, however, prove this theory to be false. 99.2% of mothers aged 10 - 14 of age, 94.5% of mothers aged 15 - 17 and 82.4% of mothers aged 18 - 19 are unmarried.

The younger a mother is the less likely prenatal care will be received in the first trimester. 43.2% of mothers aged 10 - 14, 66.4% of mothers aged 15-17 and 71.4% of mothers aged 18 - 19 received prenatal care in their first trimester. If a mother has syphilis it can lead to stillbirth, death soon after birth, physical deformity and neurological complications in infants who survive.

According to Save the Children, among industrialized nations, America's newborn survival rate is better only than Latvia. America is tied with Hungary, Malta, Poland and Slovakia with a death rate of nearly 5 per 1,000 babies. Possible factors for these startling statistics include teen pregnancies, which increase the risk for premature births and low birth weights.

Research for this article was obtained with the assistance of the Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH) at [www.in.gov/isdh](http://www.in.gov/isdh) and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).