

CAN U?

Every year thousands of teens engage in sexual intercourse without truly considering if they are ready to handle the responsibilities and potential consequences associated with their decision. There are multiple factors to consider when deciding to become sexually active. Ask yourself, can you...



- **Handle the risk of sexual activity and its impact on your body?**
 1. Of all of the infections reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are the most commonly reported. (American Society of Health Assoc./Kaiser Foundation)
 2. Of the 15 million STDs are reported to CDC each year, four million occur in teenagers between 15-19 years of age. (American Society of Health Assoc./Kaiser Foundation)
 3. Over six million STDs are reported to occur within those 20-24 years of age
CDC reports adolescents (ages 10-19) are at higher risk of acquiring STDs than adults because of: (American Society of Health Assoc./Kaiser Foundation)
 - a. Multiple sex partners
 - b. High risk partners
 - c. More susceptible to infection
 4. No birth control method is 100% effective
 5. Teens have a higher pregnancy rates with birth control methods compared to adults.
 6. No hormone-containing methods of birth control (pills, injections, implants) protect against STDs.
 7. Condoms have the highest pregnancy rate of the leading birth control methods (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention).
 8. Condoms are not perfect because they...
 - a. Don't cover all areas of the body that can be infected with an STD
 - b. Can slip off or break during intercourse
 - c. Does not protect your feelings

9. People are not perfect because they....
 - a. Do not use the condom consistently
 - b. Do not use the condom correctly, especially before any genital contact

- **Handle the financial commitment of caring for a child?**

Babies require lots of love and hard work. While they are too young to earn any money, they certainly have no problem spending it. Prenatal doctor's visits and the cost associated with delivery can easily cost several thousand dollars. Once the child is born, immunizations, regular check ups and common illnesses can be expensive if you do not have adequate health insurance. If you are able to continue your education, childcare and baby sitters will be a necessary part of your daily routine. In 2002 most childcare providers charged on average \$122 per week for children under 5 years of age.



Babies depend on their parents to provide the food and clothing, which becomes more expensive as they get older. Visit your local grocery store and price the cost of pampers, milk, wipes, bottles, and cereal just to see how much these basic items cost.

Most teens have no idea of the "*incidental costs*" of parenting. Consider the cost associated with purchasing a child safety seat, high chair, stroller, baby carrier, crib, blanket, and baby travel bag are just a few of the items needed at birth.

- **Sacrifice your goals and dreams for the sake of one sexual encounter?**

Consider this:

Girls can get pregnant after having sex one time and many teen parents live in poverty.

While it is not impossible to continue your education with a child, it is certainly more difficult and requires tremendous discipline and family support.

Teens are often guilty of romanticizing the relationship and the probable consequences of sexual activity. The problem is romance is based upon feelings not facts and it rarely deals with the tough issues of housing, health care, and finances.

In a recent poll, 67 percent of teens that have had sexual intercourse said they wish they had waited. More than one-half of teen boys (60 percent) and nearly three of fourteen girls (77 percent) surveyed said they wish they had waited longer to have sex. Sixty-four percent of teens also said the advice they'd give a younger sibling or friend would be: "Don't have sex until you're at least out of high school, but, if you do, be sure to protect yourself against pregnancy and STDs." National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. (2000). *Not Just Another Thing to Do: Teens Talk About Sex, Regret, and the Influence of Their Parents*. Washington, DC: Author.

- **Take responsibility for your actions even if your parents are unwilling to help?**

Even if you have a strong support system, your goals and availability will be altered because of your primary responsibility of caring for the health and welfare of your child.

Ask yourself this question: If you were ready to participate in the conception of a child, are you equally ready to care for that child?

