

Counted the Cost?

Did you know that for every choice there is a consequence? Teen sexual activity is no different. Anyone who is considering becoming sexually active should also consider the price to be paid for his or her decision. Take a look at the physical, emotional, economic and social consequences of teen sexual activity:

Physical:

- Common medical problems among adolescent mothers include poor weight gain, pregnancy-induced hypertension, anemia, and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Later in life, adolescent mothers tend to be at greater risk for obesity and hypertension than women who were not teenagers when they had their first child. *Brown, S., & Eisenberg, L. (Eds). (1995). The Best Intentions: Unintended Pregnancy and the Well-Being of Children and Families. Washington, DC: The National Academy Press.*
- The rate of low birth weight children born to teen mothers under 15 is 58.75% higher than the proportion of mothers age 20-24. *Ventura, S.J. Martin, J.A. Curtin, S.C. and Matthews, T.J (2004). Births: Final data for 2003. National Vital Statistics Reports.*



Emotional

- Having sex involves every aspect of your identity including your emotions. If having sexual intercourse results in a broken relationship, you are more likely to suffer the heartache of being rejected, feeling used or unwanted.
- Giving of yourself physically usually means that you have a measure of trust in your partner. Unfortunately, your partner

may not be ready to handle that trust. When a trust is betrayed, it initiates an array of emotions including anger, disappointment, hurt, and resentment.

- Believe it or not, sex changes the nature of the relationship. When people have sex, it can hinder your ability to maintain a true friendship.
- Guilt, regret, fear, and betrayal are all negative emotions that can occur as a result of having sex too soon.
- Every sexual encounter brings the risk of pregnancy and disease. While most teens believe that these unfortunate occurrences will not happen to them, it is typically after sexual intercourse takes place that they begin to worry about the possible consequences of their actions.

Economic

- Teen pregnancy is closely linked to poverty and single parenthood. A 1990 study showed that almost one-half of all teenage mothers and over three-quarters of unmarried teen mothers began receiving welfare within five years of the birth of their first child. (*National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy*)
- The growth in single-parent families remains the single most important reason for increased poverty among children over the last twenty years. In the 1998 Economic Report of the President, the out-of-wedlock childbearing (as opposed to divorce) is currently the driving force behind the growth in the number of single parents, and half of first out-of-wedlock births are to teens. Therefore, reducing teen pregnancy and childbearing is an obvious place to anchor serious efforts to reduce poverty in future generations. (*National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy*)
- Teen pregnancy costs society billions of dollars a year. There are nearly half a million children born to teen mothers each year. Most of these mothers are unmarried, and many will end up poor and on welfare. Each year the federal government alone spends about \$7 billion to help families

that began with a teenage birth. (*National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy*)

Social:

- Testing positive for a STD or becoming pregnant can have a significant impact on your social life. Contacting previous sexual partners to discuss positive test results is unpleasant, but necessary in order to limit the spread of the disease.
- Parenting a child requires a commitment to care for the child, which will mean sacrificing time with friends, movies, and overnight trips.
- Most teens have to obtain part-time or full-time employment in order to pay for the essential needs of the child, health care expenses and childcare.
- While most teens attempt to stay in school, many teens are forced to drop out of school to take care of their child. Dropping out of school disconnects you from your friends and prevents you from sharing the same school experiences.