

Teen Pregnancy in the United States

In 2009, a total of 409,840 infants were born to 15–19 year olds, for a live birth rate of 39.1 per 1,000 women in this age group.¹ Nearly two-thirds of births to women younger than age 18 and more than half of those among 18–19 year olds are unintended.² The US teen birth rate fell by more than one-third from 1991 through 2005, but then increased by 5 percent over two consecutive years. Data for 2008 and 2009, however, indicate that the long-term downward trend has resumed. The U.S. teen pregnancy and birth, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and abortion rates are substantially higher than those of other western industrialized nations.

The Importance of Prevention

Teen pregnancy and childbearing bring substantial social and economic costs through immediate and long-term impacts on teen parents and their children.

- Teen pregnancy accounts for more than \$9 billion per year in costs to U.S. taxpayers for increased health care and foster care, increased incarceration rates among children of teen parents, and lost tax revenue because of lower educational attainment and income among teen mothers.
- Pregnancy and birth are significant contributors to high school drop out rates among girls. Only about 50% of teen mothers receive a high school diploma by age 22, versus nearly 90% of women who had not given birth during adolescence.
- The children of teenage mothers are more likely to have lower school achievement and drop out of high school, have more health problems, be incarcerated at some time during adolescence, give birth as a teenager, and face unemployment as a young adult.

These effects remain for the teen mother and her child even after adjusting for those factors that increased the teenager's risk for pregnancy; such as, growing up in poverty, having parents with low levels of education, growing up in a single-parent family, and having low attachment to and performance in school.

Help your teen make healthy choices about sex.

Sexual development is a normal part of the teen years. Your teen needs your help in understanding his or her feelings, peer pressure, and how to say no if he or she does not want to have sex. If your teen starts having sex, he or she needs to know how to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. Teens want to talk with their parents about sex and relationships.

Parents have a strong impact on whether a teenager makes healthy decisions for himself or herself. This goes for making healthy decisions about sex, as well.

Research shows that teens who talk with their parents about sex, relationships, birth control and pregnancy—

- Begin to have sex at later age.
- Use condoms and birth control more often if they do have sex.
- Have better communication with romantic partners.
- Have sex less often.

Here are some resources—specifically for parents—where you can find information and tips to help you talk with your teen about sex, birth control, relationships, pregnancy, and other related topics.

[CDC's Parent Portal](#)

Information from across all of CDC for parents, covering everything from safety at home and in the community to immunization schedules and developmental milestones for ages 0–19 years.

[Advocates for Youth: Parents Sex Ed Center](#)

A resource for parents with Frequently Asked Questions, information on the importance of parents as sex educators, and tips on talking with teens.

[American Academy of Pediatrics \(AAP\) Healthy Children: Teen Dating and Sex](#)

Information designed especially for parents about information on all stages of child and adolescent development. This teen section provides information from pediatricians on talking with teens about numerous topics related to sex, sexuality, healthy relationships, and birth control.

[National Campaign To Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy: Parent's Portal](#)

Tips and resources for talking with teen sons and daughters about sex and relationships, discussion guides, blogs, and videos.

[Planned Parenthood Tools for Parents](#)

Tools and information for parents on positive communication with teens to help them make healthy decisions about sex.