



**Remember:**

Talking about sex does  
not make it happen.

# Parents

Tips for Talking to Older Teenagers about Relationships & Sex

## Parents, welcome!

The Crisis Pregnancy Agency 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 Agency has also produced a website on relationships and sexuality for teenagers, their parents, teachers and youth workers [www.b4udecide.ie](http://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.

**Mary Harney T.D.**  
Minister for Health and Children

Up to  $\frac{1}{3}$  of boys  
and  $\frac{1}{5}$  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.



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

# 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.



Don't assume they know it all and start early – ideally with pre-teenage children.



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. 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.



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 STIs. 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:

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.



# The Science Bit...

## 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](http://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](http://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.
- 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](http://www.thinkcontraception.ie).
- **Over 90% of young people use contraception when they have sex for the first time.**



For more information about contraception, visit [www.thinkcontraception.ie](http://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.

It can be taken up to 72 hours after intercourse. It is most effective when taken within 24 hours. It needs to be prescribed by a GP/doctor.



### Remember:

Knowing what's going on in your child's life, knowing where they are, knowing who their friends are and supervising them while they are online all have a protective effect.

## 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 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 on STIs, visit [www.thinkcontraception.ie](http://www.thinkcontraception.ie)



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

# 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. 90% of 18–24 year olds use contraception consistently. True or False?

- a. False
- b. True

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

- a. More likely to use contraception
- b. Less likely to use contraception

## 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 a sexually transmitted infection 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 the Emergency Contraception (morning after pill) effective?

- a. 48 hours
- b. 72 hours
- c. 5 days
- 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

If a young person has sex before age 17, they are less likely to use contraception.

#### 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 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 can be effective up to 72 hours after unprotected sex, but it is most effective if it is taken within the first 24 hours.

# Parents' Questions Answered

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

In an Irish survey of 863 children aged between 9 and 16 years, about 33% of children reported visiting pornographic websites accidentally and 20% have visited these websites on purpose. Of those children who saw a pornographic website, 33% ignored it, 45% told their friends about it and less than one in ten told their mother or father about it. If you are concerned about your child looking at pornographic material, you can install a net nanny, 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.

## Can other people look at my child's social networking site?

Although teenagers can choose to have a private setting on their page, this does not mean that it is private in any real sense of the word. It might be useful for you to sit down with them and put their name in to a search engine to see if their page comes up. They might be surprised that it is so easy for people to find their page. Ask them to think about other members of the family, neighbours or teachers reading their page. Anyone who knows their name can see photographs and find out information that they might prefer to keep private.



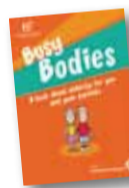
Parentline offers support, guidance and information on all aspects of being a parent. Visit [www.parentline.ie](http://www.parentline.ie) or call 1890 927 927.

## Free DVDs, booklets, advice @ training for parents



The Facts without the Lecture

[www.b4udecide.ie](http://www.b4udecide.ie) has been developed for older 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 the Crisis Pregnancy Agency 01 814 6292.



**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. Freetext 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 freetext 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. Freetext FACTS, followed by your name and address to 50444 for a free copy.



### National Parents Council – Primary

The National Parents Council runs workshops for parents on talking to your child about relationships and sex. Call 01 887 4475 or 01 887 4481 for more information.



To order a free pack containing all of the resources above or to bulk order any resource, call the Crisis Pregnancy Agency 01 814 6292

The Crisis Pregnancy Agency developed this supplement in consultation with parents and experts on sexual health in Ireland. The Crisis Pregnancy Agency is responsible for developing and implementing a national strategy to reduce crisis pregnancy. [www.crisispregnancy.ie](http://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.

crisispregnancyagency



## 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.

