

100% Guaranteed!

There aren't many sure things in life, but here's one: If you don't have sex, you won't get pregnant.

But then you'll be missing out, right? In fact, most teens go through adolescence without having sex. "Everybody's having sex" is a myth. Increased abstinence—teens choosing to not have sex—accounts for most of the 28 percent decline in teen pregnancy since 1990.

And a majority of teens—guys and girls—who started having sex early say they wish they'd waited.

If you believe what you see in movies and on TV, you might think even casual sex is always wonderful. Well, they don't use live ammunition in movie weapons, and the hero and leading lady aren't really having sex. It's *fiction*! They put the car chases, gunfights and sex scenes in because they're exciting, not because they're realistic.



self-esteem



Sex is meant to be shared between people who have an emotional bond that creates a high level of caring and trust. In real life, casual sex—or sex before you're ready—can have a negative impact on self-esteem, for both parties involved. Not to mention the risks: pregnancy, and sexually transmitted diseases, some of which are fatal, incurable, or both.

Abstinence isn't about being *good*, it's about being *smart*. Most teenagers are smart enough to know that they aren't ready for the risks, commitments and probable heartbreak of being sexually active too soon.

More About Abstinence

www.intheknowzone.com/abstinence

For More Information

Go to www.intheknowzone.com for more information about preventing teen pregnancy, with citations and links. Test your understanding with a quick quiz.



Don't stay in the dark.
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in the know

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Preventing Teen Pregnancy

the perfect way



What could possibly go wrong?

If you're a girl, you could get pregnant. Think it won't happen to you? It happens, on average, to more than 100 teenage girls every hour in this country—nearly a million a year. And from that moment on, your life is changed forever.

- **The father will probably abandon you.** It happens 90 percent of the time.
- **You may have to tell your parents.** And won't that be fun for the whole family?
- **You could miscarry.** Fourteen percent of teen pregnancies end in miscarriages.
- **You'll have to decide whether to keep the baby, or put it up for adoption.** Another huge life decision you'll be forced to make under extreme stress.
- **The baby could have major health problems.** Babies born to very young mothers are more likely to be born prematurely, which puts them at greater risk for infant death, blindness, deafness, retardation, mental illness, cerebral palsy, dyslexia and hyperactivity.



More About Risks

www.intheknowzone.com/teenpregnancy/risks



- **If you keep the baby, you'll most likely live in poverty.** Two-thirds of families begun by young, unmarried mothers are poor.
- **You'll probably drop out of school.** Fewer than four in ten girls who become pregnant before graduating ever go on to earn a high school diploma. Less than two percent make it to college.
- **If you ever do marry, it probably won't last.** Seven out of ten marriages fail among women who have had a baby while still in their teens.
- **You'll have to decide whether to have an abortion.** No matter what you choose, you can't imagine how hard that decision will be. Thirty percent of teen pregnancies do end with abortions.

Not exactly the way you pictured your life, is it?

Wait! There's more!

There are sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Every year nearly four million teens become infected. Twenty-five percent of high school students will contract an STD before they graduate.

For 20,000 of them the infection is HIV—the virus that causes AIDS. People infected with HIV can now live longer by taking a complex assortment of very expensive drugs. But AIDS remains incurable—and fatal.

If you have sex just once with someone who is HIV positive, there's a one percent chance that you'll be infected. Fairly long odds? Not when we're talking about losing your life.

HIV isn't the only incurable STD. Genital herpes and human papilloma virus (the major cause of cervical cancer) have no known cure. Hepatitis B and C can cause permanent liver damage, and some cases are incurable.

About Condoms

Condoms are the only form of contraception that can protect against HIV and other STDs. They are highly effective against most, though not all STDs, *if they are used consistently and correctly*. The problem is that they aren't, especially among teenagers.

In one study of teen couples living together, using condoms for contraception, the rate of unplanned pregnancy was more than 50 percent in one year. For those not living together, the rate was 14 to 23 percent. Condoms don't fail that often. What fails is the commitment to use them correctly every time.

A girl can become pregnant only a few days out of every month, so failure rates that high indicate a very poor use of condoms among teens. And with STDs, that can be disastrous. After having unprotected sexual contact just once with someone who's infected, your chance of catching genital herpes is 30 percent. For gonorrhea, it's 50 percent.



Last, but not least . . .

Sexually active teens, as a group, are more unhappy than teens who abstain. A long-term national study found that sexually active girls were three times more likely to be depressed and to attempt suicide.

Things were no better for sexually active guys, who reported more than twice the normal rate of depression and *eight times* the rate of suicide attempts.

Nearly three-quarters of sexually active girls who were surveyed said they wish they had waited longer before having sex, and 55 percent of guys said the same thing.

So what are you missing by abstaining from sex? Unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, depression, attempted suicide and quite possibly, regret.

risks

regret