

Surviving Sex

Sex is a basic human drive. After all, if no one had sex, the human race would die out. So a healthy interest in sex is deeply programmed into our biology.

But here's something that may be news to you: your sex drive doesn't care if you as an individual live or die.

Most of our basic urges—hunger, thirst, pain, fear, etc.—are designed to help each of us survive as *individuals*. The purpose of the sex drive, on the other hand, is the survival of *the human species*.

Since it's a few hundred million years behind the times, the sex drive assumes that most of us will die before we're old enough to reproduce. Therefore, in order to ensure that humankind survives, it has to push people to mate.

More About Teen Pregnancy

www.intheknowzone.com/pregnancy



Love? Romance? Fulfillment? Joy? It never heard of them. Rape? Incest? Unwanted pregnancy? Shattered lives? It couldn't care less. Death in childbirth? Infant death? Sexually transmitted diseases? Acceptable losses.

In other words, left to its own devices, your sex drive can get you in serious trouble, sometimes with tragic results. It doesn't always have your best interests—like a healthy relationship or a college education for instance—at heart. Luckily for us, humans have brains as well. If we actually use them, we can avoid problems—like teen pregnancy—that our sex drives can cause.

Sex can be a wonderful part of a committed relationship between two people who love and trust each other. But even then, it comes with risks—and responsibilities.

your future

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.
Get In the Know!

Preventing Teen Pregnancy

your responsibility



in the know

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Preventing Pregnancy

Since the goal of the sex drive is to make sure every female gets pregnant as often as possible, you need to be responsible and use your brain to prevent teen pregnancy.

Of course, there's only one absolutely fool-proof birth control method: don't have sex. Which, by the way, is the option *most* teens are choosing today.

If you decide to join the sexually active minority, preventing pregnancy becomes a really big issue. Over the course of a single year, 85 percent of sexually active teenage girls will become pregnant unless they use some form of birth control *regularly and correctly*. There are a number of options, each with its own advantages and disadvantages:

- **Condoms.** A thin latex sheath worn over the penis during sex to keep sperm from reaching the egg. Used by about 37 percent of sexually active teens, this is the *only* method that also provides protection against sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Condoms are widely available, cheap and easy to use. The one-year failure rate among teenage users is 14 to 50 percent because of inconsistent use.

- **Birth control pills.** Pills taken by the girl most days of the month. They contain hormones that prevent the release of eggs from the ovaries. Birth-control pills require a physical exam and a doctor's prescription. They are used by 44 percent of teens. Failure rate: about five percent.
- **Birth control shot (Depo-Provera).** A hormone shot administered every three months by a doctor. Used by about 10 percent of teens. If administered on time, the failure rate is less than three percent.
- **Withdrawal.** The male withdraws his penis prior to the release of sperm. Used by about four percent of teens, despite a high failure rate of about 27 percent.
- **Emergency contraceptive pill (ECP).** A hormone pill designed to prevent pregnancy when taken within 72 hours after having unprotected sex. Usually prescribed by a doctor. Failure rate: up to 25 percent.

- **Spermicide.** Creams, gels, foams and suppositories inserted into the vagina to kill sperm before they can reach the egg. Must be applied 15 minutes or less before intercourse. Spermicides are widely available and require no prescription. Failure rate: about 29 percent.

- **Douching. Not a true birth control method.** Squirting a chemical, often mixed with water, into the vagina to flush out sperm following sex. Failure rate: about 40 percent.

- **Fertility Awareness (Rhythm method).** Attempting to avoid pregnancy by not having sex during the period in which the egg is released from the ovaries. Failure rate: about 25 percent.

There are other contraceptive methods, including diaphragms, intrauterine devices, cervical caps, spermicidal sponges, and birth control rings and patches that are rarely used by teens.

More About Contraception

www.intheknowzone.com/pregnancy/prevent

Preventing STDs

The *only* available means of blocking STDs is the condom. There are some STDs that condoms cannot fully protect against because the viruses that cause them can be spread from skin not covered by the condom, or by means other than genital contact. However, condoms are effective against HIV (the AIDS virus), gonorrhea (the most easily transmitted STD) and most others.

The best strategy for preventing STDs? Don't have sex unless you're in a committed relationship with an uninfected partner.

Preventing Emotional Damage

Research has shown that sexually active teens—guys and girls—have much higher levels of depression and more suicide attempts than their classmates who abstain. Whether their sexual activity is a cause or a result of their emotional problems is still being debated. It doesn't have to be either.

Sexual relationships should be entered into only after very careful soul-searching and frank discussions with your partner about what is drawing you toward the relationship, and what you expect from it. When you consider the risks—pregnancy, STDs, and heartache—the best advice may be the old saying, "Good things come to those who wait."