



THE
NATIONAL
CAMPAIGN TO
PREVENT TEEN PREGNANCY

CELEBRATING A DECADE OF PROGRESS
IN IMPROVING THE LIVES OF CHILDREN,
YOUTH AND FAMILIES

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Preventing Teen Pregnancy: Five Things Parents Should Know

Parenting is one of life's most rewarding and challenging responsibilities. As parents make clear, however, helping young people navigate the passage to adulthood can be daunting. The good news is that research makes clear—and teens themselves underscore—that parents can do much to help. Here are five things that parents should know about how they can help their children avoid too-early pregnancy and parenthood.

1. **You're more influential than you think.** Teens continue to say that parents *most* influence their decisions about sex. Not the media. Not their friends. Not their boyfriend or girlfriend. Parents, however, mistakenly believe that peers and popular culture matter more. As teens frequently say, "we really care what you think, even if we don't always act like it."
2. **Forget "the talk."** Start talking with your kids about sex, love, and relationships when they're young and keep the conversation going as your kids get older. Realize also that simply talking with your teens about the risks of early sex without being more deeply involved in their lives and close to them is unlikely to decrease the risk of teen pregnancy.
3. **Teens need you just as much as toddlers.** Teens are not independent operators. New research on adolescent development makes clear that teens need guidance, supervision, and love just as much as toddlers do. Don't underestimate the great need that children of all ages feel for their parents' guidance, approval, and support.
4. **Your teens are watching.** Behave honorably in your own adult relationships. Children and teenagers observe what you do very carefully—action speaks louder than words.
5. **Relationships matter.** Teens who are close to their parents and feel supported by them are more likely to wait until they are older to begin having sex, have fewer sexual partners, and use contraception more consistently when they do become sexually active.