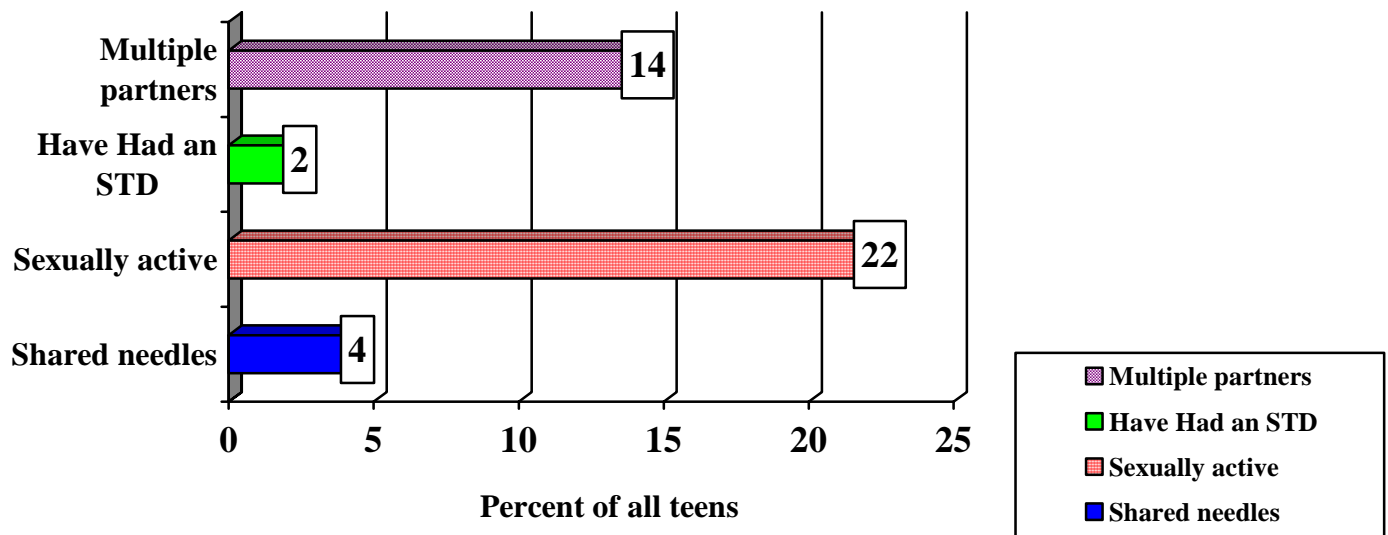


TEENS REPORT BEHAVIORS CONSISTENT WITH RISK FACTORS

Risky Behaviors of Southwest Wisconsin Teens



Two percent (2%) of teens in Southwest Wisconsin report having had a sexually transmitted disease and another 3% worry about contracting an STD. Fourteen percent (14%) of teens report having had sexual intercourse with more than one partner. Three percent (3%) of teens report having shared needles (for using drugs, taking steroids or diabetes medication, ear piercing or tattoos) at least once.

Those are among the findings of the Southwest Wisconsin Youth Survey (SWYS) survey conducted by 15 school districts in the Cooperative Educational Service Agency (CESA) District 3 as reported by UW-Extension. The school districts of Argyle, Belmont, Benton, Black Hawk, Cassville, Cuba City, Darlington, Fennimore, Iowa-Grant, Ithaca, Lancaster, Platteville, Potosi, River Ridge, and Seneca, surveyed more than 3,700 students in September of 2005. UW-Extension faculty in Crawford, Grant, Lafayette, and Richland counties are involved in processing and presenting the findings. The survey was funded by participating school districts and the Grant County Drug-Free Coalition.

“A small percentage (2%) of teens in southwest Wisconsin report having a sexually transmitted disease,” says Bev Doll, Grant County Family Living Agent. “The findings are positive, however the survey also shows that 3% of teens report worrying about contracting an STD. Adequate information and someone to talk to are critical in helping to reduce those worries and reducing or eliminating behaviors that are consistent with reducing the number of HIV risk factors.”

“Having open, honest communication between parents and teens plays a role in reducing those risks also,” states Tom Schmitz, Grant County Youth Development Educator. “Forty-two percent (42%) of teens who worry about contracting an STD report “rarely” having good talks with their fathers, and 29% report “rarely” having good talks with their mothers. Compare this to 12% of the teens who worry about contracting an STD having “many” talks with their mother, and only 9% with their fathers.”

According to Richland County 4-H Youth Development Agent, Pam Hobson, “The goal is to reduce the risk factors of contracting an STD. One of those risk factors is the sharing of needles. Often it is an assumption that it is only a factor if someone is using drugs, or taking steroids; however the sharing of needles for ear piercing and tattoos are also a concern especially with the increasing popularity. Four percent (4%) of teens report sharing needles or a sharp object at least once.”

“Twenty-four percent (24%) of sexually active teens reporting that they “rarely” or “never” use birth control also is a concern,” reports Amy Mitchell, Crawford County 4-H Youth Development Agent. Sixteen percent (16%) of sexually active teens report using forms of birth control other than a condom. Even though methods other than condoms may help to prevent pregnancy they do not provide a protective barrier to prevent contracting or spreading a sexually transmitted disease. Even riskier is the 16% of teens who report never using some form of birth control.”

“The number of partners can also be factored in when looking at risk behaviors,” says Jessie Potterton, Lafayette County 4-H Youth Development Educator. “Fourteen percent (14%) of all teens reported having multiple partners. However, the biggest concern is that of the teens who are sexually active, over half (57%) have had multiple partners, and 18% have had more than five sexual partners increasing the risk of STD’s even more.”

The study found that overall 7% of teens report engaging in oral sex without engaging in sexual intercourse and another 18% report engaging in oral sex and intercourse. Engaging in oral sex increases the risk of contracting a sexually transmitted disease and infection.

A full report on the SWYS survey results is due out this summer. Hobson, Schmitz, Doll, Mitchell, and Potterton are also giving community presentations on the data. For more information on the survey contact your local school district, Schmitz and Doll at 608-723-2125, Potterton at 608-776-4820, Mitchell at 608-326-0223, or Hobson at 608-647-6148.

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