



Parents Make A Difference!

Teens and Sexuality

November 2006

The transition from childhood to adulthood begins most visibly with the onset of puberty. During puberty, the sexual organs develop and teens begin to experience sexual attraction and sexual arousal. They begin to feel ready for sex, when in fact they most likely are not.

Parents play a critical role in the sex education of their children. It is parents who instill values and morals, and ultimately it is parents who make sure their children have the information they need about sexual development and sexuality.

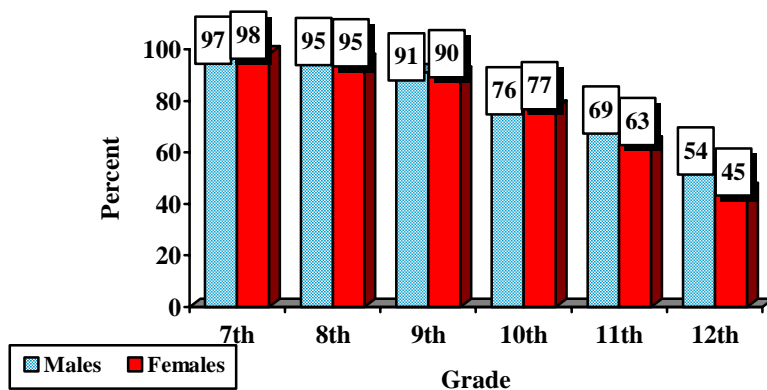
How do I teach my teen about sex?

- Clarify what values you want to pass on to your teen concerning sex.
- Review what your teens are learning at school so you can discuss this at home.
- Answer your teen's questions and share your views honestly and non-judgmentally, giving them the opportunity to share what they think with you.
- Don't worry about not having all the answers. Your family physician, the school nurse, public health nurses, reproductive health clinics, libraries, reputable health related websites, and places of worship can all be good sources of information.

The majority of 7th through 12th graders in Southwest Wisconsin have **not** engaged in sexual intercourse, according to the recent

Southwest Wisconsin Youth Survey (SWYS) which surveyed 3,727-7th through 12th graders. (Fig. 1)

Percent of Teens Who Have Not Had Sex (Fig. 1)

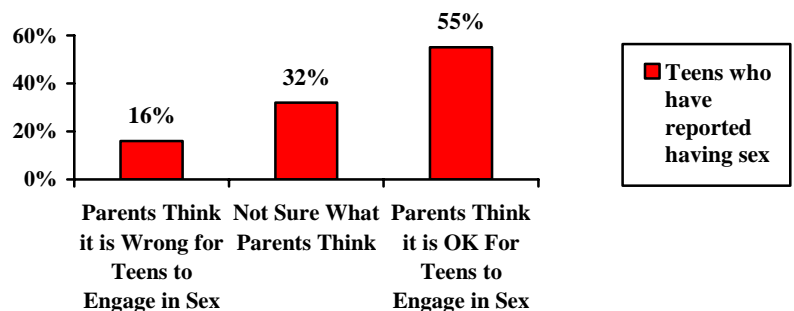


Overall, 78% of students surveyed report they have **not** engaged in sexual intercourse. Figure 1 shows that younger teens are much more likely to say they have **not** had sex than older teens. By 12th grade, 54% of males and 45% of females have not had intercourse. **Of sexually active teens**, 43% report having only one partner and 25% report having four or more partners. Teens with greater numbers of sexual partners are more likely to report that they do not feel love and support from their families, are more likely to report having low self-esteem, and are more likely to report feeling "highly dissatisfied" with school.

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Teens are more likely to abstain from sex if they believe their parents think it is wrong for teens their age to have sex. Of those teens who have reported having sex, 55% say their parents think it is "OK" for teens their age to have sex. Of those teens who have reported having sex, 16% say their parents think it is wrong for teens to engage in sex. (Fig. 2) Parents who monitor their children's activities closely, have dinner with their children at least three times per week and who have clear rules that are consistently enforced have children who are less likely to report having had sexual intercourse.

Parental Attitude vs. Teen Sexual Behavior (Fig. 2)



Teens' Perceptions and Attitudes about Homosexuality

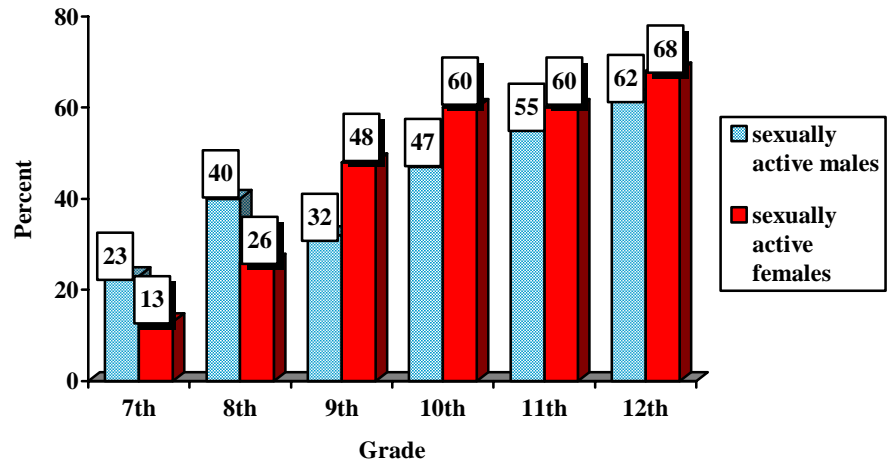
- 47% of teens believe gay, lesbian, and bisexual behaviors are wrong but would treat people who engage in these behaviors just like anyone else.
- 22% of teens believe gay, lesbian, and bisexual behaviors are wrong and would treat people who engage in these activities differently (in 2001, only 19% of teens reported that they would treat these people differently).
- 6 % of teens believe gay, lesbian, and bisexual behaviors are wrong and that people who engage in these behaviors should be punished.
- Teens who worry about being confused about their sexual orientation are much more likely to report suicidal feelings.

The only 100% sure way to prevent unplanned pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease is to not have sex.

Teen Pregnancy and Birth Control

Overall, 55% of sexually active males and females say they “always” use birth control. This survey found that younger teens that are sexually active are far less likely to report that they “*always*” use birth control than older sexually active teens. (Fig. 3)

Sexually Active Teens Who "Always" Use Birth Control (Fig. 3)



Eighteen percent (18%) of sexually active males and 12% of sexually active females report that they “*never*” use birth control. Of note, sexually active teens who report that they “*often*” talk to their parents about sex, birth control, and sexually transmitted diseases are more likely to say they “*always*” use birth control. Sexually active teens who say they “*never*” talk to their parents about these issues are more likely to say they “*never*” use birth control.

Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Three percent (3%) of teens who have had sex report that they have had a sexually transmitted disease (STD) in the past. Except for 10th grade females, the percent of students who worry about contracting an STD from 9th through 12th grades is fairly consistent (1% to 3%). For 10th grade females, 10% worry about contracting an STD. Teens who report worrying about catching an STD are more likely to have good talks with their mothers than fathers. Fifty-five percent (55%) of sexually active teens report they “*always*” use some form of birth control. Sixteen percent (16%) of sexually active males and 15% of sexually active females report they “*never*” use birth control.

Remember: Parents make a difference!

“Parents Make a Difference” is a product of the Southwest Wisconsin Youth Survey (SWYS), a program of the University of Wisconsin-Extension, local school districts and UW-Platteville. This newsletter is adapted from the UW-Extension newsletters “Whose Kids?...Our Kids!” Teens and Sexuality by Huser, et.al. and Parents Make a Difference. Teens and Sexuality by Kenney, et.al. This issue of “Parents Make a Difference” was written by Jessie Potterton, UW-Extension Lafayette County and edited by Bev Doll, UW-Extension Grant County, Pam Hobson, UW-Extension Richland County, Tom Schmitz, UW-Extension Grant County, and Amy Mitchell, UW-Extension Crawford County. Thanks are extended to the 3,727 7th to 12th graders from southwest Wisconsin who participated in the 2005 SWYS survey. Contact UW-Extension for further information: Grant County (608) 723-2125; Lafayette County (608) 776-4820; Crawford County (608) 326-0223; and Richland County (608) 647-6148. Or visit <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/county/grant/tap>.