

## DOES ABSTINENCE EDUCATION REALLY WORK?

### Question:

What are the factors that have been associated with delaying sexual activity?

### Answer:

1. Parent-family connectedness and shared activities
2. Parental disapproval of sexual activity for teens
3. Parental disapproval of their child's use of contraception
4. Adolescent pledge to remain a virgin until marriage
5. High level of importance placed on religion and prayer

(Protecting Adolescents from Harm, *The Journal of the American Medical Assoc.*, 9/10/97, vol. 278, #10)  
(Family Planning Perspectives, 28:159-165, 185, 1996)

### Question:

How well has the abstinence pledge worked?

**Answer:** Teens who make virginity pledges have substantially improved life outcomes:

1. They are 2/3 less likely to experience teen pregnancy by age 18.
2. 70% were still virgins at age 18 compared to 37% of teens not making a pledge.
3. They were 1/3 less likely to give birth as teens or young adults.
4. They were 50% less likely to give birth out-of-wedlock.
5. 17% of pledgers had risky, unprotected sex compared to 28% of non-pledgers.
6. Ones who did have sex before marriage had fewer sex partners and the majority of those who were sexually active were engaged in sex with their future spouses.
7. Between the ages of 19-25, 53% of pledgers had had sexual intercourse during the prior year compared to 87% of non-pledgers. Abstinence programs are not available to teens after high school.
8. There were NO NEGATIVE risk factors associated with taking a pledge of virginity and pledgers were not less likely to use contraception than non-pledgers.
9. Pledgers were 12 times more likely to be virgins on their wedding night.

(Research by Robert Rector and Kirk Johnson, The Heritage Foundation taken from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, 2004)

### Question:

Does abstinence education really work?

### Answer: YES.

1. The increase in abstinence is the major cause of the declining birth rates, pregnancy rates and abortions among single teenage girls. This study is the most extensive study done on birth and pregnancy rates of single and married teens 15-19 years old. The research showed that **67%** of the decline in pregnancy is due to a reduction in the proportion of sexually active girls, not to the increased use of contraception. The decrease in births dropped **51%** due to abstinence. (*Adolescent and Family Health Journal*, April, 2003)
2. From 1990-1997 there was a 21.4% decrease in the proportion of adolescent males who have had sex in the past three months, a 34.1% decline in those males having four or more partners, and a 19.6% decline in the males who have ever had sex. ("The Declines in Adolescent Pregnancy, Birth and Abortion Rates in the 1990's: What Factors Are Responsible?", The Consortium of State Physicians Resource Councils, 1/7/99)
3. In 2001, 54% of US high school students reported never having had sexual intercourse, up from 46% in 1991.

**Question:** Has condom education proven effective?

**Answer: NO**

1. Out-of-wedlock birthrates to sexually experienced female teens increased 40.9% from 1982 to 1995, despite their increase in the use of condoms by 76%. There was a 41.8% increase in out-of-wedlock birthrates to sexually experienced females ages 15-19 from 1976-1995 despite comprehensive sex education being funded and abstinence until marriage not being funded.
2. The Center for Disease Control's "Programs That Work" initiative features five interventions that the CDC claims are quite effective, but not one of the five has data measuring a reduction in teen pregnancy or STD rates, even though the programs were developed for those purposes.
3. A study of 16 programs for parenting and pregnant teens that encouraged the use of contraceptives showed the following results: only 1 succeeded in increasing contraceptive use, 6 reported a decrease in pregnancies, 5 had no change and 2 had more pregnancies among girls in the programs than girls not in them.  
(*"Improving Services for Pregnant and Parenting Teens," Brindis and Philliber, PhDs., The Prevention Researcher, vol. 10, 9/03*)

**Question:**

What risk factors are associated with teens being sexually active?

**Answer:**

1. Young women who have abortions experience elevated rates of suicidal behaviors, depression, substance abuse, anxiety and other mental health problems. (*"The Duty to Screen: Clinical, Legal and Ethical Implications of Predictive Risk Factors of Post-Abortion Maladjustment." The Journal of Contemporary Health and Law and Policy, 2003 Winter; 20(1): 33-114*)
2. Early sexual activity seriously undermines the ability of girls to form stable marriages as adults.
3. According to the CDC, the most common sexually transmitted disease called human papilloma virus is not being stopped by condoms. HPV is the leading cause of cervical cancer in females and can cause cancer in men's genitalia as well. Chlamydia and herpes only have a 50% rate of protection with correct condom use during every sexual act.
4. One fourth of teenage girls who are sexually active report that they are depressed all, most or a lot of the time. This is three times greater than depression in non-sexually active teens. Sexually active teenage boys are more than twice as likely to be depressed. (*"Sexually Active Teenagers Are More Likely to Be Depressed and to Attempt Suicide," Robert Rector, Kirk Johnson, PhD. Lauren Noves, June 2, 2003*)
5. Sexually active girls are 3 times more likely to attempt suicide than abstinent teenage girls. Sexually active males are 8 times more likely to attempt suicide. Suicide rates have doubled to teens between 1960-2001. (*"Sexually Active Teenagers Are More Likely to Be Depressed and to Attempt Suicide," Robert Rector, Kirk Johnson, PhD. Lauren Noves, June 2, 2003*)
6. Sexually active females are 5 times more likely to be victimized by dating violence than girls who are not sexually active. ([www.webmd.com](http://www.webmd.com), 8/2/04; *Pediatrics*, 8/04)
7. Nearly two-thirds of teens who have had sex (63%) wished they had waited longer and nearly 8 out of 10 agreed that teens should not be sexually active. (National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2004)
8. Over 1 in every 100 deaths in the US is caused by sexual behavior. ([bmj.com](http://bmj.com), 2/05/05)
9. Teens who are sexually active are much more likely to take drugs and drink alcohol. (Columbia Univ. National Center on Addiction and Substance abuse, 2004)

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