



Why you should talk to your child about contraception

Like most parents, you may find it daunting to think that the child that you nurtured through his or her formative years is now old enough to be considering a sexual relationship. Certainly, one of the most natural parental reactions is to avoid the issue and pretend that it is not happening, but it is important to remember that although he/she is growing up quickly, your child may need you now more than ever.

Having sex for the first time can be an intimidating prospect for anybody, and for many people, it symbolises the transformation into adulthood. It is important for you to remember that although your child will no doubt hear about sex and contraception through the media, school, the internet, or friends, research suggests that teenagers still want supportive advice, information and guidance from their parents.¹ You can play an important role in guiding your child through the difficult period of adolescence and early adulthood, and by providing impartial and factual advice which allows your child to make informed decisions about contraception and safe sex, you will help to minimise the chances of an unwanted pregnancy or a sexually transmitted disease (STI). The level of unintended pregnancy is high amongst teenagers, each year approximately 13 million girls under the age of 20 become pregnant worldwide,² and the prevalence of STIs is on the increase.^{3,4}

Even if you initially feel uncomfortable broaching the subject of contraception, it is in your child's best interests that you do so.

References

1. The ideal parent list. Updated September 2006. Source: www.sexualityandu.ca
2. Save The Children: Children Having Children – State of the World's Mothers. 2004
3. Panchaud C, Singh S, Feivelson D, Darroch JE. Sexually transmitted diseases among adolescents in developed countries. *Int Fam Plan Perspect* 2000;32:24-32.
4. Weinstock H, Berman S, Cates W Jr. Sexually transmitted infections among American youth: incidence and prevalence estimates. *Perspect Sex Reprod Health* 2004;36:6-10.