

Questions and

## ANSWERS

### What is a Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI)?

An STI or sexually transmitted infection is passed on during sex. Condoms can protect you from infections such as chlamydia and gonorrhoea and viruses such as HIV. STIs can be painful and can also lead to infertility, cancer and other chronic diseases. Sometimes they cause a discharge, itching or bleeding, or they may be completely painless, with no symptoms.

To be effective, condoms must be used correctly, and used every time a person has sex.

### Will talking to my teenager about using condoms make them more likely to have sex?

No, talking to teenagers about condoms does not make it more likely that they will have sex, or have more sex. However, it does increase the likelihood that they will use condoms when they do have sex, and therefore protect themselves from STIs.

### How many teenagers are having sex?

In the 2007 Youth Health Survey of secondary school students, 38% of male and 35% of female students reported they had had sexual intercourse.<sup>1</sup>

### Why aren't you promoting abstinence?

Teenagers who have made the choice to delay sex or abstain from sex should be supported in this decision. Those who are sexually active need protection to reduce their risk from STIs.

Comprehensive sexuality education is an effective strategy to help young people delay their involvement in sexual intercourse. The combination of an abstinence message coupled with information about contraception and other sexuality issues is a highly effective approach that typically reduces sexual activity and/or increases contraceptive use.<sup>2</sup>

### Isn't it the parents' role to teach children about sexual health?

Parents have a vital role in teaching young people about sexual health, but we know that young people also get information from other sources including school (where sexuality education is part of the school curriculum), friends and the internet. Effective sexual health education requires a combination of education from parents, schools and the community.

<sup>1</sup> Adolescent Health Research Group. (2008). *The Health and Wellbeing of Secondary School Students in New Zealand: Initial Findings*. Auckland: The University of Auckland.

<sup>2</sup> Stover, D. (2007). *Should we be teaching sex education or sexual abstinence?* Education Digest.

Provide further

## INFORMATION

There are a number of resources on sex and sexuality developed specifically for teenagers. These also cover sexually transmitted infections and safer sex.

Contact your local Family Planning Association clinic or Sexual Health Service. The Family Planning Association has several useful resources for young people and parents, including:

**Parents – talking with your kids about sex** – a booklet for families on how to communicate with 8 to 14 year olds about sexuality.

**The Word** – for all teenagers, contains facts and answers some questions that young people are asking about sex, feelings and relationships.

**Your Choice** – for older teenagers, looks at what young people from all around NZ said when asked questions about sex, relationships, pressure, drugs and alcohol.

### For further information:

Check your phone book for local listings:

- Family Planning Association – [www.familyplanning.org.nz](http://www.familyplanning.org.nz)
- Parentline – 0800 800 2222
- Presbyterian Support Services – [www.ps.org.nz](http://www.ps.org.nz)
- Relationship Services – [www.relate.org.nz](http://www.relate.org.nz)



New Zealand Government

This resource is available from [www.healthed.govt.nz](http://www.healthed.govt.nz) or the Authorised Provider at your local DHB.  
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## You and your TEENAGER

**Being a parent brings a lot of joy but let's face it, it's not always an easy job. Bringing up teenagers also has its challenges and at times can be very scary. Sometimes you're left wondering whether your child is making the right choices and mixing with the right crowd.**

Young people today may find themselves confused about the messages they receive about sexuality from the media, youth culture, peers, their families and churches. Often these messages are in conflict with each other and some parents find it difficult to discuss these issues openly with their son or daughter.

**We have developed this resource to assist parents/guardians with the task of informing young people about how they can keep themselves safe.**



It's difficult to discuss some issues with your child, especially when it comes to talking about sex. We were not raised to openly discuss this with our parents because of our upbringing. The reality though is many young people are going through this experience early and are not making the best choices.

Sometimes young people just need time and space to think about their own values around life which can include sex and sexuality and what they feel personally comfortable with before they get into a sexual situation.

Teenagers need to know that it's OK to say 'no' to sex and that choosing to wait until they are ready is perfectly fine. But they also need to know how to protect themselves if they do have sex.

If young people do choose to have sex and they don't use protection, they are putting themselves at risk of an unplanned pregnancy or of contracting a sexually transmitted infection (STI).

- **Young people aged 15–19 have higher rates of STIs than older age groups**
- **Young people have the highest rates of being diagnosed with two or more STIs at the same time**

Talking about safer sex is important in stopping the increase of STIs among our youth in New Zealand. The aim of this pamphlet is to give you some points on how you might start talking with your teenager or where you can go to get information about safer sex to protect against unintended pregnancy and STIs.

Why it's important to

## TALK ABOUT IT

- **STIs, especially chlamydia and gonorrhoea infection, are increasing among young people.**
- **Rates of these infections in New Zealand are many times higher than rates reported in Australia and the UK.**
- **STIs can lead to infertility (being unable to have children) or cause complications during and after pregnancy.**
- **STIs can be painful, cause a discharge, itching and bleeding. They can also have no symptoms and be unnoticed.**
- **The risk of getting an STI, including HIV, is greatly reduced by using a condom during sex.**

How you can help your teenager

## PROTECT THEMSELVES

### Explore your own attitudes

Talking to your son or daughter about sex is not easy. If you feel comfortable talking about sex with your teenager there are many resources available to help you. If you don't, discuss your feelings with a trusted friend, relative, doctor, or church leader.

### Discuss the wider issues

Does your teenager know your feelings about sex before marriage or teen pregnancy? What do you think your teenager will do in this situation? Do they know about safer sex? There are so many questions around this.

They may know that you support them in getting a good education and career but what about a relationship that could lead to sexual activity.

While our teenagers need to know the biological facts about STIs and the need for safer sex, it's also important to help them understand that sexual relationships involve caring, concern and responsibility. By discussing the emotional aspect of a sexual relationship with your teenager they will be better informed to make decisions later on and protect themselves.