



Talking With

TEENS *is Good* for Their HEALTH

Do you know that teens actually want to talk with their parents?

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, children are less likely to experiment with alcohol, tobacco, or illegal drugs when they have a closer relationship with a parent.

And the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy indicates that 87 percent of teens say it would be easier to put off the start of sexual activity if they were able to talk with their parents about it.

Help your kids make informed decisions

Positive communication between parents and children helps establish family and individual values, enabling young people to make healthier, safer, and better-informed decisions about their physical, emotional, and sexual health.

Although it's not always easy to have comfortable, ongoing conversations with your children about challenging topics, as the primary educator of your child, keep trying.

How to make a connection

- **Remember that children want to hear from their parents.** Remind your children that you care about them and want to help them make safe, healthy choices. Rather than viewing a conversation as a one-time event, think of it as an ongoing process through the years of adolescence.
- **Find a comfortable time and space for discussions.** Avoid putting your child on the spot. Talk to him or her while you're in the car, cooking, or walking together—not when your child is preoccupied or on the run.
- **Talk less, listen more.** Ask questions that open the door for discussion. Then listen.
- **Avoid lecturing or judging.** Approach your conversations as sharing ideas. Be open-minded and respect that your child's values or experience may differ from your own.
- **Be honest.** Communicate your feelings and values honestly. Let your child know your rules and desires, and the consequences of breaking those rules.
- **Be prepared.** Learn about the information you want to discuss. Identify resources, such as Web sites, books, and professionals. Respect your child's right to have accurate and honest information.

For more information

These resources may help get a conversation started with your child.

- National Institute on Drug Abuse
<http://teens.drugabuse.gov/parents/index.asp>
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
www.healthfinder.gov
- Safe Teens (how to be safe online)
www.safeteens.com
- Child and Family Web Guide
www.cfw.tufts.edu
- New York University Child Study Center
www.aboutourkids.org