



APR - JUNE 2011

HALDIMAND-NORFOLK HEALTH UNIT

# Sexual CONNECTION

## CHOOSING to Wait

**Not everyone is 'doing it'.** Many teens and the adults that support them do not realize that many teens are choosing not to have sex. Teens are choosing to delay sexual intercourse and intimate sexual involvement. According to [www.sexualityandu.ca](http://www.sexualityandu.ca) in 2002, 70% of teens had had sex (sex defined as penis in vagina), in 2009, the rate is 65%. That means the number of abstainers has increased! Abstinence is defined as 'Not having sexual intercourse and not engaging in other sexual activity. Avoiding all types of intimate genital contact, including anal and oral sex.'

Teens will give many reasons for delaying sexual involvement with a partner:

- They don't feel ready.
- They know there is more to a healthy relationship than sex.
- They want to have power and control over their **OWN** body.

As educators and professionals that provide services to youth, we need to start to promote abstinence as a viable method. For abstinence programs to be truly effective, many people need to be on board. We need to talk with teens about the risks of early sexual involvement.

- Risk of pregnancy.
- Risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs).
- Increased risk of cervical cancer.

We need to build abstinence into the curriculum and classroom and during counselling sessions. However, we need to be mindful that telling teens all about the nasty consequences of sexual intercourse may not delay intercourse. All need to focus on the positives of choosing to wait.

- Having control over one's own body.
- Honouring religious/faith/moral beliefs.



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- Knowing there are other ways to be close in a relationship.
- Waiting until marriage.
- Choosing to make own choices and not allowing the media to tell them how to live and act.

We need to engage youth and acknowledge that abstinence is a difficult lifestyle choice. Teens need strategies and ideas on how not to have sex. Teens need to know alternatives to having sex.

We also need to be more open about the role that media/tv plays in the teens life. Very seldom does a soap opera star have an STI. We never hear about Hollywood's Elite being treated for Chlamydia or gonorrhoea. The media glamorizes sexual activity. Our teens are impacted by provocative clothing and the amount of skin showing in the media. 'Dream world'- a social commentary discusses how women are depicted in music videos. Across the media culture—in movies, television, advertising, and more—stories that link women's identities with their bodies and sexuality are everywhere. However, these stories are especially prevalent,

and intense, in music videos. Since MTV debuted in 1981, music videos have become a central part of our popular culture. They are now found on multiple television channels, in many different media, and across most genres of music. The images and stylistic conventions of music video have influenced other types of film, television, and advertising. Music videos essentially function as advertising for the recording industry and, like other forms advertising, have long relied on provocative images of female sexuality to attract viewer attention.

Teens may not be engaging in 'vaginal-penile' sex, however, there is a trend that oral sex is increasing in our teen population. Research out of British Columbia found that 11% of 14 year olds were having oral sex and 13% were having sexual intercourse. This research shows that oral sex is clearly linked to sexual intercourse. Oral sex is the stepping-stone to more intimate genital involvement. Those engaging in oral sex, will be engaging in vaginal sex also, in a very short time. Many youth do not perceive oral sex as 'having sex'. They engage in oral sex, because 'you can't get pregnant'. They are not aware that they can contract infections and diseases by giving or receiving oral sex.

Often youth perceive themselves as invincible, infallible and infertile. "It won't happen to me" are often the words that teens will say. The dream is a real shock when it does happen to them, an infection that is not curable, an unplanned pregnancy.

Talking about abstinence and addressing why it is a difficult lifestyle choice is important. Our youth need the tools to make abstinence an easier and safer choice. Research shows that the rate of pregnancy would be dramatically reduced, cut in half, if we had less harassment, unwelcomed touching, pinching and words.

Teens also need to accept sexual responsibility. They need to be accountable for their own behaviours and choices.

### **What needs to happen?**

- We need to give control of their bodies back to the teen, take it away from media.
- We need to increase each teen's self-esteem and self worth.
- We need to increase teen's communication skills.
- We need to rid our hallways of harassment, unwelcomed touches and words.
- We need them to know what it is like to be in healthy, positive relationships.

Once a teen has chosen not to abstain, it is crucial that we link youth with resources to assist them in making healthier sexual behaviours; access to birth control and condoms, access to emergency contraceptive pills and access to STI testing and treatment.

# Quiz A:

## Sex Smart for Teens

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

True or False? Be prepared to defend your answer.

| T or F | Question   |
|--------|--|
|        | 1. Once you have had sex, you can never choose abstinence.   |
|        | 2. It is important that you justify to others your decision to remain abstinent.   |
|        | 3. Abstinence is the only 100% sure method of preventing STIs and pregnancy.   |
|        | 4. Studies have shown that married people have sex most often and get the most satisfaction from it.   |
|        | 5. To be abstinent means you do not have any feelings about sex.   |
|        | 6. Oral sex is still considered sex.   |
|        | 7. You cannot get an STI from oral sex.  |
|        | 8. All STIs can be cured with antibiotics or some other medication.  |
|        | 9. The fastest growing population of HIV-infected people is heterosexuals under 25.  |
|        | 10. One in 10 sexually active teenage women will become pregnant before she reaches the age of 20.   |
|        | 11. Teens with low self-esteem are more easily pressured into having sex.  |
|        | 12. The way the media portrays sex can influence our feelings and beliefs about it.  |
|        | 13. The media always represents sexual decision-making and the consequences of those decisions in a realistic and true-to-life way, especially when it comes to teens. |
|        | 14. Peer pressure is always a bad thing.   |
|        | 15. Teens who drink alcohol are more likely to have sex.   |
|        | 16. Asking questions, reasoning, or using excuses are examples of clear ways to say no to sex.   |
|        | 17. If you have never talked with your parents about sex, there is no point in starting when you're a teen.  |
|        | 18. On the back, list at least four reasons why a teen might choose abstinence.  |

# Quiz A:

## ANSWER KEY

| T or F  | Question   |
|---|--|
| <b>FALSE</b>  | 1. Once you have had sex, you can never choose abstinence.   |
| <b>FALSE</b>  | 2. It is important that you justify to others your decision to remain abstinent.   |
| <b>TRUE</b>   | 3. Abstinence is the only 100% sure method of preventing STIs and pregnancy.   |
| <b>TRUE</b>   | 4. Studies have shown that married people have sex most often and get the most satisfaction from it.   |
| <b>FALSE</b>  | 5. To be abstinent means you do not have any feelings about sex.   |
| <b>TRUE</b>   | 6. Oral sex is still considered sex.   |
| <b>FALSE</b>  | 7. You cannot get an STI from oral sex.  |
| <b>FALSE</b>  | 8. All STIs can be cured with antibiotics or some other medication.  |
| <b>TRUE</b>   | 9. The fastest growing population of HIV-infected people is heterosexuals under 25.  |
| <b>FALSE</b>  | 10. One in 10 sexually active teenage women will become pregnant before she reaches the age of 20.   |
| <b>TRUE</b>   | 11. Teens with low self-esteem are more easily pressured into having sex.  |
| <b>TRUE</b>   | 12. The way the media portrays sex can influence our feelings and beliefs about it.  |
| <b>FALSE</b>  | 13. The media always represents sexual decision-making and the consequences of those decisions in a realistic and true-to-life way, especially when it comes to teens. |
| <b>FALSE</b>  | 14. Peer pressure is always a bad thing.   |
| <b>TRUE</b>   | 15. Teens who drink alcohol are more likely to have sex.   |
| <b>FALSE</b>  | 16. Asking questions, reasoning, or using excuses are examples of clear ways to say no to sex.   |
| <b>FALSE</b>  | 17. If you have never talked with your parents about sex, there is no point in starting when you're a teen.  |
| <b>Answers may include:</b> waiting until marriage, staying disease-free, avoiding pregnancy, better emotional health, and/or staying true to one's values. | 18. On the back, list at least four reasons why a teen might choose abstinence.  |

# Quiz B:

## Sex Smart for Teens

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Directions: Fill in the blanks in the story below by choosing the best word or phrase from the list below.

There are more words than blanks!

|            |                |                |                 |
|------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Abstinence | Justify        | Renewed virgin | Values          |
| Emotional  | Refusal skills | STD/STI        | Double standard |
| Pregnancy  | Smart date     | Consequences   | Peers           |
| Sex        | Communicate    | Media          | Set limits      |
| Alcohol    | Marriage       | Self-esteem    | Virginity       |

It has been said that nothing in life is free. If everything does have a price, the same is true of sex—it has \_\_\_\_\_, too.

Some of the more obvious ones include the risk of \_\_\_\_\_ and contracting an \_\_\_\_\_.

In addition to these physical concerns, there are also \_\_\_\_\_ reasons not to have sex.

It is important to think about how you might feel if you choose to have sex with someone, and to remember that \_\_\_\_\_ and decisions about sex are related.

Teens who feel good about themselves the way they are less likely to have sex in order to feel more loved and appreciated.

Another important reason why teens choose abstinence is because of their \_\_\_\_\_.

For many, their parents, their faith, or their personal beliefs give them good reasons to wait to have sex until \_\_\_\_\_ or with a committed lifelong partner. Whatever your reasons, remember that even if you have already had sex, you can choose abstinence today and be a \_\_\_\_\_.

Sticking to abstinence or renewed virginity is not always easy when you are dealing with pressure from \_\_\_\_\_ or the \_\_\_\_\_, which doesn't necessarily portray sex in a realistic way.

Before you start dating, it is important to \_\_\_\_\_ regarding what you will and will not do and then clearly \_\_\_\_\_ them in your relationships right from the start.

Having good \_\_\_\_\_ is also important; you can avoid a lot of problems by being clear and firm.

When choosing \_\_\_\_\_, it is important to watch out for yourself by making other healthy choices. For instance, going to a party with drugs or alcohol is not an example of a \_\_\_\_\_, and it's illegal for teens!



# Quiz B:

## ANSWER KEY

Directions: Fill in the blanks in the story below by choosing the best word or phrase from the list below.

There are more words than blanks!

|            |                |                |                 |
|------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Abstinence | Justify        | Renewed virgin | Values          |
| Emotional  | Refusal skills | STD/STI        | Double standard |
| Pregnancy  | Smart date     | Consequences   | Peers           |
| Sex        | Communicate    | Media          | Set limits      |
| Alcohol    | Marriage       | Self-esteem    | Virginity       |

It has been said that nothing in life is free. If everything does have a price, the same is true of sex—it has **consequences**, too.

Some of the more obvious ones include the risk of **pregnancy** and contracting an **STD/STI**.

In addition to these physical concerns, there are also **emotional** reasons not to have sex.

It is important to think about how you might feel if you choose to have sex with someone, and to remember that **self-esteem** and decisions about sex are related.

Teens who feel good about themselves the way they are less likely to have sex in order to feel more loved and appreciated.

Another important reason why teens choose abstinence is because of their **values**.

For many, their parents, their faith, or their personal beliefs give them good reasons to wait to have sex until **marriage** or with a committed lifelong partner. Whatever your reasons, remember that even if you have already had sex, you can choose abstinence today and be a **renewed virgin**.

Sticking to abstinence or renewed virginity is not always easy when you are dealing with pressure from **peers** or the **media**, which doesn't necessarily portray sex in a realistic way.

Before you start dating, it is important to **set limits** regarding what you will and will not do and then clearly **communicate** them in your relationships right from the start.

Having good **refusal skills** is also important; you can avoid a lot of problems by being clear and firm.

When choosing **abstinence**, it is important to watch out for yourself by making other healthy choices. For instance, going to a party with drugs or alcohol is not an example of a **smart date**, and it's illegal for teens!

# MAKE A DECISION: Values Worksheet

## Sex Smart for Teens: Abstinence

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** This worksheet is designed to help you sort out your beliefs and values about sex and abstinence. Respond to the following as completely and honestly as possible.

1. The values I hold strong, including how I was brought up and my personal and/or spiritual beliefs, are leading me to choose / not choose abstinence, and this is why:
2. I believe that having sex with someone will / will not make me feel good about myself, and this is why:
3. Knowing that abstinence is the only 100% sure way to prevent pregnancy and protect myself from an STD makes me want / not want to choose abstinence, and this is why:
4. Knowing that sex feels good and is a natural part of being human makes me want / not want to choose abstinence, and this is why:
5. Knowing what I want for my future makes me want / not want to choose abstinence, and this is why:
6. This is how I feel about abstinence now:

## Fast FACTS



- Young people turn to parents and guardians as a primary source of sexual health education.
- A survey among grade nine students in Canada revealed that school was most frequently cited as the main source of information on human sexuality/puberty/birth control and HIV/AIDS.
- Over 85% of parents agree that sexual health education should be provided in schools, as do 92% of high school youth.
- The term sexually transmitted infection (STI) is now commonly used in place of sexually transmitted disease (STD) in order to include infections that may be asymptomatic.
- The average age both male and female Canadians have sex for the first time is 16.5 years.
- There are more than 25 classifications of STIs.
- STIs can lead to genital warts, blisters, infertility, spontaneous abortion, cancer and death.
- While many STIs are curable, several are not, including Hepatitis B, genital herpes, Human Papillomavirus (HPV) and the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV).

## Public Health Nurses in your School

The following Public Health Nurses are in your school once a week:

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| <b>Marilyn Antkiw</b>   | Valley Heights Secondary School                              |
| <b>Sabine Murphy</b>    | Delhi Secondary School - Waterford District Secondary School |
| <b>Angie Swick</b>      | Simcoe Composite School - Holy Trinity Catholic School       |
| <b>Lynda Burville</b>   | Port Dover Composite School - Cayuga Secondary School        |
| <b>Frances DeBoer</b>   | Dunnville Secondary School                                   |
| <b>Angie Campbell</b>   | Hagersville Secondary School                                 |
| <b>Ashley DePoorter</b> | McKinnon Park Secondary School                               |

### References:

2003 InJoy Productions Inc. - Sex Smart for Teens: Abstinence, Sexuality and you

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