

## not-so-safe sex...

There are a lot of risks involved when people begin to have sex: including emotional risks and health risks—not to mention the possibility of an unplanned pregnancy. Nine out of 10 sexually active teenagers who don't use contraception will get pregnant within one year.

**Q:** I heard some friends talking about a kid who has something called an STD. I didn't want to ask them, but what is it?

**A:** STDs (or sexually transmitted diseases) are diseases, infections, or illnesses that can spread from one person to another from sexual contact. They are also called STIs (sexually transmitted infections) or VD (venereal disease). STDs that go untreated can cause serious ongoing health problems, including infertility (not being able to get pregnant, ever), and life-threatening illnesses.

Some names for STDs are:

- chlamydia
- gonorrhea
- genital warts
- herpes
- pubic lice (crabs)
- HIV (the virus associated with AIDS)

Every year about one in four sexually active teens gets an STD before they graduate high school. You and your boyfriend or girlfriend can have an STD without even knowing it. You can have an STD, but not see or feel anything unusual. If you've had sex, talk to your doctor about being screened for an STD.



**Q:** Sometimes my older sister goes to the doctor for a special exam. What's that all about?

**A:** If girls have had sex, or start to think seriously about having sex, they need to see a health care provider to talk about birth control and sexually transmitted diseases, even if they feel OK. Part of this visit may be a pelvic exam (examining your vagina and areas around it, inside and out). You may need a pelvic exam or urine test for sexually transmitted diseases. Some sexually transmitted diseases such as chlamydia may not have any symptoms.

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**Q:** I think something is wrong. It's sore and smells weird down there. I thought it would go away, but it's not. What should I do?

**A:** See your doctor right away if you are having any of the following symptoms. They could be signs that you have an STD (even if it's not an STD, it's still important to get checked):

- Sores or swelling on or near your penis or vagina
- Rash on or near your penis or vagina
- Itching on or near your penis or vagina
- Pain while peeing
- Weird "stuff" coming out of your penis or vagina
- Weird smell coming from your penis or vagina
- Lower abdominal pain (especially in girls)

Even if only one of you is infected, you and your boyfriend or girlfriend both must get treated so that you won't keep re-infecting one another.

For more information, see the resource list on the back cover.

### True and False

False: "A girl can't get pregnant the first time she has sex."

False: "If a guy pulls out before he comes, then the girl can't get pregnant."

False: "If a girl douches (way of cleaning the vagina) after sex, then she won't get pregnant or get an STD."

False: "A girl can't get pregnant while she's having her period."

False: "It's still safe sex if a guy remembers to put on a condom after he has already gone inside."

Truth: None of these methods prevents pregnancy or STDs. The only thing that will give you a 100 percent guarantee against pregnancy and STDs is abstinence (not having sex).

# protection

Now you know the risks that come with sex. Some of those risks can be reduced by using birth control (contraception). But—and this is a big but—no kind of birth control works 100 percent of the time.

There are many forms of birth control. Some are cheaper than others, some work better than others, some are easier to use, some are used by the guy, some are used by the girl, some need a prescription, some you can get at the drug store. Some prevent only pregnancy. Some prevent both pregnancy and STDs.

Remember, no birth control will protect your emotions. Having sex is very personal and intimate. Having sex might make it harder to break up with your boyfriend or girlfriend, and that's going to hurt.



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## For guys

Condoms (rubbers) are used by lots of people. Condoms protect against pregnancy AND STDs. It's sort of like a one-fingered glove that fits over the guy's penis and catches the semen so it never enters your partner's body. Condoms don't always work, though, no matter what brand you buy.



For more information, see the resource list at the back of this booklet.

## For girls

Except for condoms, most birth control methods are used by the girl. Birth control pills, diaphragms, IUDs (intra uterine devices), the Nuva Ring<sup>®</sup>, implants and Depo-Provera<sup>®</sup> all require a clinic visit. Foam and female condoms are available at drug stores. Even if the girl uses one of these methods to reduce the risk of pregnancy (except the female condom), the guy still needs to use a condom to prevent STDs.

It's a good idea to talk with a parent or trusted adult about these kinds of birth control and this big decision. Remember, you can also have a confidential discussion with your doctor.

Girls who have had, or are thinking of having, sex should take a multivitamin pill with 400 micrograms (mcg) of folate (folic acid). If a girl becomes pregnant, folic acid greatly decreases the chance of a baby being born with a birth defect that affects the brain and spinal cord. This defect can result in physical handicaps or even death for the baby.