HOW TO BEGIN

Here are some ideas for getting started:

- **If you're embarrassed, say so.** Your teen will respect your honesty and may find it easier to be open with you.
- **Begin to discuss the facts** by asking if STD has been brought up in class at school.
- **Talk in general terms at first.** Try asking: "Do you think most teens protect themselves from STD?" or, "If you were in her situation, what would you do?"
- **Share your memories as a teen.** "I recall having a lot of questions about sex when I was your age."
- **Share an activity.** Shopping together, eating out or playing a sport can help you feel close. Then bringing up a tough subject can be easier.

communication

conversation

"My mom really listened to what I had to say. I'm glad we talked."

TALKING TIPS

Try to create an open atmosphere.

- **Express respect for your teen's ideas,** even when you don't agree. Show that you want to share rather than preach. Then your teen will feel free to ask questions.
- **Be clear, direct and matter of fact.** Tackling the issue head on can help diffuse embarrassment and fear about STD that can keep teens from protecting themselves.
- **Listen carefully and don't interrupt.** Look for clues to your teen's concerns or worries.
- **Be honest about what you don't know.** Finding answers together is a great way to learn and share.
- **Be prepared to talk again.** The facts and your messages about values will have greater impact if you repeat them often.

Choose a quiet, calm time for your talk. Be sure you can talk without being interrupted.

WHAT IS SAFER SEX?

These safer sex guidelines can help protect your teen from STD.

- **Don't let any of your partner's body fluids enter your body.** These include semen, blood, menstrual blood and vaginal fluids.
- **Always use a latex condom** with a water-based lubricant for vaginal, anal and oral sex. Both men and women should carry condoms and insist that they be used.
- **Don't use oil-based products** such as hand cream, massage oil or Vaseline. These can cause the condom to leak or break.
- **Don't have sex when you're drunk or high.** Drinking or using other drugs makes it harder to follow safer sex guidelines.

This brochure is not intended as a substitute for your health professional's opinion or care.

Written by Leslie Connor.

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STD

Talking with your Teen

Talking helps you teach FACTS & VALUES.

Teens can learn to PROTECT THEMSELVES.

How to begin and WHAT TO SAY.

Teens need to know about STD and what puts them at risk. You are one of the best sources of support and accurate information.

TALKING IS IMPORTANT

It gives you a chance to:

- **Share information** to help your teen make good decisions about sex.
- **Teach** your family's values.
- **Build a relationship** based on trust and communication.

communication

conversation

"Once we got started, we really enjoyed talking to each other."

TALKING CAN BE HARD

- It may feel strange to think of your teen as a sexual person—let alone discuss the risks of unprotected sex. But being direct about the issue will help your teen plan ahead.
- You may worry that your teen will take talking about STD and safer sex as permission to have sex. But, in fact, teens who have the least information are most likely to have unsafe sex.
- Your teen may not want to talk at first. Be patient and keep trying.
- Many teens secretly welcome a chance to learn about STD from their parents. They feel respected when you talk openly and directly.

KNOW THE FACTS

What does your teenager need to know?

- ***Anyone* can get an STD** from having sex with someone who has one. STDs can be passed by vaginal, oral or anal sex, and sometimes by genital touching.
- **Many STDs have no symptoms.** A person can have an STD and pass it to a sexual partner without knowing it.
- **Common STDs** include chlamydia, genital warts, gonorrhea, syphilis, herpes, vaginitis, hepatitis B and HIV (the virus that causes AIDS).
- **All STDs can be treated.** Many can be cured. Some have no cure. Untreated STDs can cause serious health problems.
- **People can protect themselves from STD.** Not having sex—abstinence—is safest. People who do have sex must follow safer sex guidelines.

BE PREPARED

Get ready.

- **Learn** about the different STDs. Find out how each is passed and how it can be prevented.
- **Contact** your local library, health clinic, private doctor or public health department to start.
- **Practice** with your spouse or a friend. This can help you be clear about what you want to say and get used to talking about a sensitive topic.
- **Ask** other parents for tips. Find out what helped them talk to their teens.

Be clear about the values you want to present.

- Will you focus on abstinence? Will this mean no sex until marriage or no sex until it's part of a mature, loving relationship?
- Will you tell your teen about safer sex and talk about safer sex guidelines?
- Think about your own teen years. How did your parents talk to you about sex? Will you do things the same or differently?

1 out of 4 teens gets an STD each year. Studies show that teens who talk with their parents are more responsible about sex.

communication

conversation

"I was nervous about talking. But I want my daughter to make smart, healthy choices about sex."

ABSTINENCE IS SAFEST

- **It's the best way** to prevent HIV.
- **It protects** against pregnancy.
- **It gives couples time** to get to know one another as friends.
- **It lets teens focus** on their changing lives and feelings without the complications that can go with sex.