

# Teen Pregnancy

## Basic Stats

- Each year, 10% of all women aged 15-19 become pregnant.
- Every year, 1 in 5 women aged 15-19 who have had sex become pregnant.
- 78% of teen pregnancies are unintended.
- Teen pregnancies account for about 1/4 of all accidental pregnancies annually.
- 13% of all U.S. births are to teens.
- Steep decreases in the pregnancy rate among teens in the early-to-mid 1990s was from decreased sexual activity and more effective contraceptive practices.

Source: "Teen Sex and Pregnancy," Facts in Brief, AGI, 1999

- Teenagers in both age-groups had high pregnancy rates in 1996, but the rate among women aged 18-19 (153 pregnancies per 1,000 women) was 2.5 times that among 15-17-year-olds (62 per 1,000). Most of the difference reflects that a lower proportion of younger teenagers than of 18-19-year-olds have ever had intercourse (39% vs. 71%).

Source: Singh S and Darroch JE, Trends in sexual activity among adolescent American women: 1982-1995, Family Planning Perspectives, 1999, 31(5):212-219, Table 2; and Darroch JE and Singh S, Why Is Teenage Pregnancy Declining? The Roles of Abstinence, Sexual Activity and Contraceptive Use, Occasional Report, New York: The Alan Guttmacher Institute (AGI), 1999, No. 1.

- Teen pregnancy rates are much higher in the United States than in many other developed countries--twice as high as in England and Wales or Canada, and nine times as high as in the Netherlands or Japan.

Source: Alan Guttmacher Institute "Teen Sex and Pregnancy" Ibid <http://agi-usa.org/pubs/1>

- Teenage pregnancy remains a significant health and social problem in the United States despite decreases in incidence over the past decade. Almost a million teenagers become pregnant each year, resulting in almost 500,000 births, 125,000 miscarriages and 264,000 abortions

Source: Darroch, J., & Singh, S. (1999). Why is teenage pregnancy declining? The roles of abstinence, sexual activity and contraceptive use. New York: Alan Guttmacher Institute.

- High fertility and low rates of contraceptive use put sexually active adolescent females at high risk for pregnancy. A sexually active teen who does not use contraception has a 90% chance of becoming pregnant within 1 year

Source: Alan Guttmacher Institute. (1999). Facts in brief: Teen sex and pregnancy. Retrieved July 25, 2002 from <http://www.agi-usa.org>

- A study of 7000 females found that girls aged 15 to 19 were more likely than older women to use contraception intermittently (18%–21% vs 2%–9%) or not at

all (5%–8% vs 2%–4%). Teens also have been shown to use less effective methods of contraception, such as withdrawal and spermicides

Source: Glei, D. (1999). Measuring contraceptive use patterns among teenage and adult women. *Family Planning Perspectives*, 31, 73–80.

- Increased use of contraception accounts for 75% of the decline in teen pregnancy rates, but many teens do not use contraception consistently and correctly. More than 30% of adolescents do not use any contraception the first time they have intercourse.

Source: Darroch, J., & Singh, S. (1999). *Why is teenage pregnancy declining? The roles of abstinence, sexual activity and contraceptive use*. New York: Alan Guttmacher Institute.

## **Teen Fathers**

- The majority of boyfriends leave when their girlfriend has a baby. 78% of births to teens occur outside of marriage.
- The fathers of babies born to teenage mothers are likely to be older than the women.
- About 1 in 5 infants born to unmarried minors are fathered by men 5 or more years older than the mother.

Source: "Teen Sex and Pregnancy," *Facts in Brief*, AGI, 1999

- The least amount of father involvement in U.S. society has been observed in two groups of fathers: poor, unmarried teenage fathers and upper-class fathers in traditional nuclear families. Teen dads in U.S. society are often undereducated and underemployed. Therefore, they cannot make a meaningful contribution to the economic security of their children. Poor teen fathers do not have meaningful benefits to offer their child's mother. As the reciprocity hypothesis would predict, these fathers are often minimally involved in the lives of their children.

Source: Erikson, R. J., & Gecas, V. (1991). Social class and fatherhood. In F. W. Bozett & S. M. H. Hanson (Eds.), *Focus on men: Vol. 6. Fatherhood and families in cultural context* (pp. 114–137). New York: Springer

## **Teens simply not ready?**

- Although an adolescent girl's body may be ready for reproductive activity in a functional sense, there can be a marked delay in the incorporation of physical changes into her psychological and emotional awareness. An increasing number of young people are confronted by sexual feelings and opportunities for sexual experimentation for which they are not cognitively or psychosocially prepared; this lack of preparation increases the vulnerability of American teenagers to the harmful consequences of early sexual experimentation, pregnancy, and sexually transmitted disease.

Sources: Woodward, V. (1995). Psychosocial factors influencing teenage sexual activity, use of contraception, and unplanned pregnancy. *Midwifery*, 11, 210-216.;Stevens-Simon, C. (1993). Clinical applications of adolescent female sexual development. *Nurse Practitioner*, 18, 18-27

- External influences make up an important factor contributing to early onset of sexual behavior among adolescents and to teenage pregnancy. The suggestive and persuasive nature of television, magazines, films, videos, and the actions of older children or siblings in the immediate environment cannot be overstated. Teenagers can "become fertile long before they understand their own bodies, and this may increase in them a physical awareness of sexuality long before emotional maturity has had time to develop".

Source: Cook, V. (1995). An inner urban funded maternity programme: Maternity projects: teenage pregnancies. *Midwives*, 108, 76-79

### **Health Considerations**

- Although many teen pregnancies result in poor health for both mother and baby, good nutrition and prenatal care results in better pregnancy outcomes than those of older women.

Source: Hatcher et al, *Contraceptive Technology*, 1994

### **Abortions on the Decline**

- In the USA the abortion rate among teenagers declined substantially from 40.6 per 1 000 women aged 15-19 years in 1990 to 29.2 in 1996

Source: Ventura SJ. Declines in teenage birth rates 1995-1998: updates of national and state patterns. *Natl Vital Stat Rep* 1999; 47:1-12.{14

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