



sex

Are you concerned about a child or teen troubled about his or her sexuality, sexual hygiene, a pregnancy, sexually transmitted disease (STD) or HIV/AIDS?

what are the sexual issues facing the child or teen I care about?

If the child or teen you care about is troubled about his or her **sexuality, sexual hygiene, a pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) or HIV/AIDS**, this is the place to talk to someone who can help.

sexuality raises a lot of issues for teenagers. Am I sexy? Am I gay or straight? Am I ready to have sex? How do I cope with a sexually transmitted disease (STD)?

Covenant House believes that human sexuality is an enriching and important part of our human experience. In keeping with our Judeo-Christian values, we believe that the exercise of our sexuality should be within the context of a life-long relationship and commitment in marriage.

sexual abstinence - not having vaginal, anal or oral sex – is one of the most effective ways young people can protect themselves against pregnancy, sexually transmitted disease (STD) and HIV/AIDS.

Abstinence requires a lot of self-control and self-motivation as well as support from friends and family. Some young people postpone having sex until they reach a certain age or commit to a relationship. Some of them are motivated by religious reasons, others by concern about getting pregnant, contracting HIV/AIDS or other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Others are motivated by the desire to accomplish goals like finishing high school or college, getting a good job or finding a life partner before they begin a sexual relationship. Abstinence doesn't mean one can't be close, affectionate or intimate with their partner. It's never too late – even if one's had sex before - one can decide to abstain from sex in the future.

avoiding certain behaviors can reduce the risk of getting an **STD** including HIV/AIDS if they are is determined to be sexually active. It is important that the child or teen know that they increase their chances of catching sexually transmitted diseases by having unprotected sex. Having many sex partners also increases one's risk of infection. And if one's sex partner has other sex partners one can contract an STD from them. There are no vaccines against STDs – many of which are incurable – but symptoms can be treated to make one more comfortable and stop the spread of the disease. If you think the child or teen you are concerned about has an STD, they should see a doctor as soon as possible and notify their partner(s) to prevent the spread of the disease.

pregnancy is another consequence of having sex. Pregnancy does not just change one physically but emotionally as well – and it affects one's family, partner and the child brought into the world. Not having sex is the only 100% sure way of not getting pregnant. And, when their baby is born, they will have to deal with the emotional and



financial demands of being a parent. Setting a good example for the unborn child by waiting to have sex until one is ready to be a good parent is important.

AIDS or Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome is caused by HIV (the human immunodeficiency virus). It kills your immune system making you more likely to get other infections and diseases like Tuberculosis (TB) and Kaposi's Sarcoma (a deadly cancer). There is no cure for AIDS but one can learn how to protect oneself from getting it and how to stay healthy and stop the spread of the disease to other people if they already have it.



what are the warning signs of a problem?

It is not common that a teen will approach an adult regarding sexuality, especially if that teen is already sexually active. Many teens that are sexually active by choice do not view it as a problem and the ones who do are much too embarrassed to talk about it. Raising the issue of premarital sex often comes up after addressing other areas such as depression, guilt, low self-esteem, problems in school or at home, etc. If you suspect the teen you care about is sexually active it is important to ask questions and make a comfortable space for them to feel safe to ask questions.

Some questions to ask your teen are:

1. Are you sexually active?
2. Do you have more than one partner?
3. Do you have sexual intercourse?
4. When was the first time you had sexual intercourse?
5. How often do you have sexual intercourse?
6. Have you taken precautions against pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases?
7. Where do you usually have sex?
8. Do you enjoy sex, or is it something you feel obligated to do?
9. Is there anyone you talk to about it?
10. Why do you think you have sex?
11. Do you want to quit? If so, have you tried to quit?
12. Talking with teens about sex can be extremely difficult. There are many reasons why a talk about sexual intercourse may go astray when talking with an adolescent.
13. Your failure to listen
14. You have a judging tone of voice or attitude
15. You provide inaccurate information just to force through your personal agenda with abstinence or desire to help
16. You display shock or pry too much for personal details
17. You give answers too quickly and too easily that the teen may feel are unrealistic for them to follow through with

Once you've attempted to talk with your teen about sexual relationships, follow up, continually display interest and concern and be available for questions.



what can I say or do to help the child or teen I care about?

Call the **Covenant House Nineline** at 1-800-999-9999; TTY: 1-800-999-9915 or follow this link to the **Nineline Forum on sex**. The Nineline staff is ready to talk with you any time of day. You talk. We listen.

Other resources we recommend include:

The Covenant House **NINELINE 1-800-999-9999** (TTY: 1-800-999-9915) is ready to talk with you any time you call.

The Gay and Lesbian National Hotline, 1-888-THE-GLNH (1-888-843-4564)

National STD Hotline, 800-227-8922

National AIDS Hotline, (24 hours) 800-342-AIDS (2437)

AIDS Hotline/Espanol, 800-7432

AIDS Hotline/hearing-impaired, (TDD) 800-243-7889