

**EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE UNTIL:
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**New KFF/YM Magazine National Survey of Teens on Dating, Intimacy,
and Sexual Experiences:**

**TEENS TODAY, EVEN YOUNGEST, DEAL WITH DIFFICULT SEXUAL ISSUES:
PRESSURE, PREGNANCY, HIV/AIDS AND OTHER STDs**

By the Time Teens Have Sex for First Time, Many Still Not Prepared

Teens Also Say: It's Okay to be a "Virgin"

MENLO PARK, CA -- Most teens will have sexual intercourse by their eighteenth birthday. While more teens are using contraception, pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) remain major problems. A new survey by the Kaiser Family Foundation and *YM*, a leading teen magazine, finds that teens today, even those as young as 13 and 14 years old, struggle with complex sexual situations, involving pressure, drinking and drug use, or relationships that are moving too fast, which they are often not prepared to handle. They also report worrying a lot about pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs):

- More than a third (36%) of *all* teens -- or *close to half* (47%) of those who have been in an intimate situation -- say they have done something sexual, or felt pressure to do something sexual, they did not feel they were ready to do;
- One in two teens have been in a situation when they *could* have had sexual intercourse with someone they liked but decided not to at the time; and
- Most 13 to 18 year olds, the majority of whom have *not* had sexual intercourse, also say they are extremely worried about the possibility of facing an unintended pregnancy, or getting a sexually transmitted disease. They are especially concerned about HIV/AIDS.

By the time a teen has sex for the first time, the survey also finds that many are still not adequately prepared: a majority (58%) of those who are sexually experienced report not using contraception *every time* they have sex, and more than a third have *never* talked with a sexual partner about preventing pregnancy (34%) or disease (40%). About one in five of those who talked about either contraception or STDs did so only *after* having sex.

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“Teens need to know much more than the ‘birds and bees,’ they need information about how to use contraception and the risks of STDs, and also they need to be better prepared to deal with the difficult situations they are facing,” said Felicia H. Stewart, MD, Director of Reproductive Health Programs, Kaiser Family Foundation.

The findings from this survey are reported on in the May issue of *YM* in a special section of the magazine that provides a guide to sexual decision-making, including sections on “crucial contraception clues” and “sexy alternatives to sex,” as well as a Q&A that asks “Are you sure you’re ready for sex?” According to this and previous surveys, magazines such as *YM* are an important resource for teens: in fact, three in five teenage girls say they have gotten information about how to talk about sexual health issues from magazines such as *YM*.

“The findings of the Kaiser Family Foundation/*YM* study provide terrific insight to the views teens have today on sexual issues. As an editor of a teen magazine, surveys such as these are invaluable tools which we can use to relate to our readers effectively,” said Lesley Jane Seymour, Editor-in-Chief of *YM*. “Also, with the recent attention on teens and pregnancy it was encouraging for us to discover that virginity has a place of importance in a teen’s life.”

Teens Say: It’s Okay to be a Virgin. While intimacy -- including for some sexual intercourse -- appears to play a significant role in teens’ relationships today, a decision to wait to become sexually-involved is viewed positively by most teens:

- Three-quarters of teens (74%) say it is considered a “good thing to make a conscious decision not to have sex until some later time,” and
- 76 percent say someone they know has made such a choice.

Teens’ Fears: Pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, and STDs. Whether or not they are sexually experienced, most teens say their peers are extremely worried about pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, and other STDs; very few say these are issues that do not concern them:

- Three out of five (58%) say the girls they know are *very concerned* about getting pregnant, and 39 percent say the boys they know are as worried about pregnancy;
- HIV/AIDS is one of the biggest sexual health concerns facing teens: 61 percent say the girls they know are *very concerned* about the disease, and 51 percent say the boys they know are as concerned;
- More than half (53%) say the girls they know are *very concerned* about other STDs, as are the boys they know (43%).

What's "Normal?" Many teens feel that they are less experienced than their peers -- and, as a result, may feel pressure to play catch up -- until they themselves have had sexual intercourse:

- Only half of teens (49%), whether they date or not, think their level of sexual experience is typical;
- A third (35%) think they have done less sexually -- including "kissing, making out, fooling around, and possibly, but not necessarily, sexual intercourse" -- than their friends;
- And, 13 percent think they are more experienced.

Methodology

The Kaiser Family Foundation/YM Magazine National Survey of Teens is a random-sample national survey of 650 teens, ages 13-18 years old. (Approximately a third of *all* teens in this survey -- 31 percent of 13-18 year olds -- have had sexual intercourse, a finding consistent with other national statistics.) The survey was designed by staff at the Foundation, YM, and Princeton Survey Research Associates (PSRA). It was conducted by telephone by PSRA between October 9-November 3, 1997. The margin of sampling error is plus or minus 4 percent. The margin of sampling error may be higher for some of the sub-sets in this analysis. Parental permission was obtained prior to interviewing the teens.

The Kaiser Family Foundation, based in Menlo Park, California, is an independent national health care philanthropy and not associated with Kaiser Permanente or Kaiser Industries. The Foundation's work is focused on four main areas: health policy, reproductive health, and HIV in the United States, and health and development in South Africa.

A summary of findings, including the questionnaire and top line data, is available by calling the Kaiser Family Foundation's publication request line at 1-800-656-4533 (Ask for #1373).