

The Catholic Doctor is In: Pre-marital abstinence: Good medical advice for your Adolescent

Many parents are not excited about discussing “the birds and the bees” with their unpredictable adolescent children. Unfortunately, our social media-driven culture ostracizes parents from their teenagers, convincing both that friends, celebrities and pop-culture know more about sex than one’s parents.

Our vulnerable and malleable teens get their information from those biased sources instead of their parents. The mainstream media’s view on sex is also influencing school-based sex education and your physician’s version of sex education as well. Primary care physicians (family physicians, pediatricians, gynecologists) are ingrained with a sexual freedom ideology; most doctors assume that sexual activity begins as early as nine to 10 years old and discuss “safe sex” practices at these early ages primarily to prevent any unwanted pregnancies and STI (sexually transmitted infections).

If this isn’t alarming to parents, it should be. The time of the parent assuming your child’s physician has similar morals in mind when meeting with your pre-teen is long gone. Our current medical culture embraces the “risk reduction” strategy by endorsing liberal sexual behavior and relying on technology (condoms, artificial birth control, abortions, free STI testing) to reduce negative outcomes for the individual (unwanted pregnancy, STIs cervical cancer).

Our faith and reason as Catholic Christians endorses a “risk avoidance” strategy against teenage pregnancy, STIs and sexual abuse. Our methodology attempts to change behavior (sexual promiscuity), which lies at the heart of these troubling epidemics and ultimately, improve the quality of life not just for each individual but for the society at large. Our mission must promote a message of chastity until marriage so that our adolescents can discover a truly beautiful sexual intimacy and identity as God intended it to be between a man and woman.

How do we engage our pre-teens and adolescents amidst an overwhelming social (and even medical) influence? It begins with us, as parents and as a family. We need to understand our faith's rich study of the human body and sexuality founded in God's unfailing love for us. Resources like "Theology of the Body" (for parents, teens, young adults) are a great place to start. If we are not ready to answer their questions and provide a solid foundation for sexual purity and modesty, then our teens will be easily persuaded by the misguided "safe sex" culture.

God never intended that our faith be separated from reason. Research is demonstrating the detrimental effects of early sexual activity on the young adult, often with lifelong adverse consequences. To name a few, earlier onset of sexual activity leads to more partners prior to marriage. Multiple partners leads to more STI exposure. HPV (human papilloma virus) is rampant amongst our sexually active teens. Although it can be cleared by the body's immune system in adulthood, many women will develop cervical cancer because of HPV. Gonorrhea and Chlamydia make up nearly 30 percent of STIs in teens, and, if untreated, they cause a severe pelvic infection (PID) and jeopardize a woman's future fertility by scarring her reproductive organs.

With new legislation, our pre-teens, as young as nine years old, have been reported to have accessed free SI testing and "the morning after pill" without parental consent. This victory of the "risk reduction" ideology exposes our teens to the dangers of birth control and abortion. The WHO (World Health Organization) has labeled COCs (combined oral contraceptives) as Class I carcinogens. "Induced termination" (abortion) has been linked to breast cancer, as well as psychological damage leading to depression and PTSD (post traumatic stress disorder). Adolescents with multiple sexual partners are found to be involved in other high risk behaviors, such as underage drinking, illegal drug use and are cited to be victims of sexual/physical abuse at a higher rate than their non-sexually active counterparts. Pornography abusers admit to disordered sexual intimacy or experiences that happened during their teenage years as a factor driving their addiction. Data shows that those who engage in pre-marital sex have a significantly high rate of divorce. The decisions that our teenagers are making don't just affect their adolescence, but also damage their future relationships.

Our best medical advice should be abstinence until marriage. If you are concerned that your child's physician may not feel this way, be prepared for those "sexual awareness" conversations to happen not just in the doctor's office but in their classrooms as well.

Our Catholic faith, supported by reason, should encourage us to be the primary education of children—if we do not play an active role in the character and moral development of our teens, the world will happily and quickly do it for us.

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