



How do I talk to my child about condoms?

WHAT IS YOUR CHILD GOING THROUGH?

In recent years, sexually transmitted infections (STI) have been on the rise among teens. When these infections go undetected or untreated, they can lead to major complications, such as infertility.

In addition to abstinence, condoms are the most effective protection against STIs. Condoms can also help prevent unwanted pregnancies. Condoms are inexpensive, easy to use and easily accessible. However, young people may encounter obstacles to using them.

To ensure that teens are using condoms correctly during sex, they must:

- Be informed about their effectiveness and benefits
- Know where they can get them
- Get condoms and carry them
- Be able to ask their partners to wear a condom
- Know how to use them

Things kids may be wondering

- This is the first time for both me and my partner: why do we need to use a condom?
- I'm too embarrassed to buy condoms. Where can I get them?
- I want to use a condom, but my partner says she's on the pill: what do I do?
- I'm scared I have an STI. What do I do?

Did you know?

- Young people who know that their parents support condom use have a greater chance of using them.
- One out of five boys would agree to sex with someone who does not want to use a condom.
- Girls are more uncomfortable buying condoms than boys are.
- Embarrassment, the heat of the moment and unplanned sex are the frequent reasons teens don't use condoms.
- The majority of people infected with an STI have no symptoms.

WHAT CAN YOU DO AS A PARENT?

Help your child get condoms

Here are some ways you can help teens easily access condoms:



- Help them identify places where they can get them (e.g., pharmacy, school, CLSCs, youth centres, etc.).
- Give them money so that they can buy some (e.g., pharmacy gift card).
- Put some in the bathroom cabinet.
- Give them a box that they can keep in their room.

Help teens learn to negotiate condom use during sex

Let them know that it can be more difficult to use condoms or negotiate using them in certain situations. For example, when sex is unplanned, when your partner doesn't want to use one, when one or both partners have consumed alcohol or drugs, when the girl is already on the pill, when it's the first time for both partners, etc. Ask your child: What would you do in these situations?

What would you say to someone who says:

- You don't you trust me?
- Do you think I have an STI?
- Have you had many partners before me?
- We don't need a condom, I've been tested!
- Condoms decrease sensation.
- Etc.

The following resources can give you answers to these questions.



WHAT CAN HELP YOU?

Web sites

www.itss.gouv.qc.ca/accueil_en.dhtml

www.sexualityandu.ca

Do you need a professional resource?

Call Info-Santé at 811 or the parent help line at 1-800-361-5085.

Tips

Start a dialogue about the importance of using condoms during sex before your child becomes sexually active. This will encourage them to talk to you if they have questions and to use condoms when the time comes.

Are you uncomfortable talking about condoms? Your child can also talk about condoms with someone else (brother, sister, nurse) and consult resources (CLSC, websites) Ask them what they learned at school on this topic.

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Page layout: Alphatek

This tool was produced thanks to funding from the Secrétariat à la jeunesse as part of the Stratégie d'action jeunesse 2009-2014.