

When to Start Talking to Your Teen

By age 19, about 70% of teens are engaged in sexual activity. It is important that you inform your child about safe-sex practices before they are overcome with pressure and the desire to be accepted by their peers.

Here are 5 signs that tell you it is time to open up some new and possibly uncomfortable lines of communication with your teen.

1. When your child starts asking questions regarding their body parts.



It is important to take this kind of opportunity to establish comfortable communication with your child, no matter how young they are. By engaging with a question like this, your child can learn that you are their best and most reliable source.

2. When they start talking about their friends' boyfriends or girlfriends.



Chances are, if their friends are 'dating,' your child is either interested in having a partner or already does. At the very least, they are talking to their friends about the opposite sex.

3. When they begin attending parties or outings with the opposite sex.



Chances are, these gatherings are harmless. But it is best to be sure your child gets information from you before 'movie night with friends' turns into 'spin the bottle.'

4. If they seem to become distanced from close friends.



When you're a teen, there is not much that will get you to stop talking to your best friends. Conflict over the opposite sex can be to blame more often than not. This is a great chance to build on a trusting relationship with your child and be there for them when they are feeling lonely and insecure. When they have no one else to open up to, chances are they will respond if you give them an obvious opportunity.

5. When they start desiring more privacy.



The desire for privacy is completely natural and should not be ignored. Giving your child privacy is key to letting them know you trust them. However, this could be a potential sign that they are engaging in things they wouldn't want you to know about. Again, this isn't necessarily a bad thing. But it does serve as a warning for you to begin paying closer attention to the details of your child's activity.

When approaching your teen about safe sex, it is important to remember what you needed at their age, providing them with space alongside guidance. The earlier you instill a comfortable line of communication the better. Lastly, it is always important to give continual encouragement and reassurance.