



Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiative

Do's and Don'ts When Talking to Youth About Sexual Health

(Based on direct feedback from teens)

DO:

- ★ **Be Real With Us!** Give us the facts, especially if you have information on STI rates in our surrounding communities/cities.
- ★ **Listen and talk without judgment.** Allow us to make decisions about our sexual behaviors, but give us information on how to be safer.
- ★ **Body language counts!** Watch your facial and non-verbal communication; certain ways of sitting and other non-verbal cues make us think you are judging us.
- ★ **Drop the “professional” demeanor** – remember what it's like to be a teenager (use phrases like “I understand where you are coming from”).
- ★ **Ask us if it's okay** to ask sensitive questions before you start asking.
- ★ **Talk to me, not at me** – have a dialogue with us. Ask open-ended questions to keep the dialogue going, not just yes/no questions.
- ★ **Be open-minded.**
- ★ **You can ask sensitive questions** at the first visit if you create an open, comfortable environment.
- ★ **Start earlier** – many of us started experimenting in Middle School, so if you wait until High School to talk to us, it may be too late.
- ★ **Ask us if it's okay** to have our parents in the room with us. Some of us are okay with having our parents there and some of us are not. Let us decide.

DON'T:

- ★ **Don't say “don't do this...”** You need to understand that kids are curious.
- ★ **Don't just go down the list** of questions and check off the boxes – look us in the eye and talk.
- ★ **Writing everything down** is intimidating to us. Wait until after we leave to write up your notes or at least explain to us what you are doing and why you need to.
- ★ **We don't want to see** who else has been to see you – cross off our names after we check in so we know that our confidentiality is being protected.
- ★ **We don't want to hear** you talking with each other about patients you have seen that day.
- ★ **We can tell if you** are just there to do a job vs. really caring about us.
- ★ **Don't just tell us about contraceptives,** we also need to know how to get them, where to go and how we can afford to buy them. It's intimidating to go into a pharmacy and buy them and we need providers to understand that and help us with that.