

Anticipatory Guidance on Sex and Sexuality for the Adolescent

- Encourage adolescents to identify a supportive adult who can provide accurate information about sex.
 - Make adolescents feel comfortable asking questions about physical changes during puberty, including variations they may notice from individual to individual.
 - Assist adolescents in asking questions or getting information in an effort to educate themselves about preventing pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and how to use different contraceptive methods.
 - Acknowledge to adolescents that romantic and sexual feelings are normal. Discuss with adolescents that having sex should be delayed until they are mature enough to assume responsibility for sexual relations; the decision to have sex should be well thought out. Adolescents should not have sex if they do not want to.
 - Emphasize that the safest way to prevent pregnancy and STDs, including HIV infection/AIDS, is to not have sexual intercourse.
 - Encourage adolescents to learn ways to say “no” to sexual intercourse and to avoid situations that may increase pressure to engage in intercourse (e.g., using alcohol or drugs, attending unsupervised parties).
- Stress to adolescents that if they are engaging in sexual activity (i.e., oral sex, anal sex, vaginal sex) they should ask the health professional for an examination and a discussion of methods for preventing pregnancy and STDs. Adolescents need to learn how to negotiate safer sex and how to share feelings about sexuality with their partners.
 - Emphasize to adolescents that they should practice safer sex by limiting the number of partners they have and by using latex condoms and other barriers correctly. Demonstrate and explain correct condom use with a model or illustration.
 - Let adolescents know that if they are confused or concerned about their sexual feelings (for the same or the opposite sex), they can and should talk to a trusted adult or a health professional.

See also

Tool for Families: Talking to Your Teen About Sex and Sexuality, p. 127;

Tool for Families: Where to Find Resources on Adolescent Sexuality, p. 129;

Tool for Families: Teen Dating Violence, p. 130.

Source: Adapted, with permission, from Green M, Palfrey JS, eds. 2000. *Bright Futures: Guidelines for Health Supervision of Infants, Children, and Adolescents* (2nd ed.). Arlington, VA: National Center for Education in Maternal and Child Health.