Teen Pregnancy Rates in the USA

by Victor C. Strasburger, MD
University of New Mexico School of Medicine

The United States has the highest teen pregnancy rate in the western world, despite the fact that our teens are not more sexually active than Swedish teens, or Canadian teens, or British teens.

Why? Because we don't educate about birth control in sex education classes, we don't discuss it at home, we don't give teens good access to it, and we don't advertise it in our media. Other countries do, and they are rewarded with low rates of teen pregnancy and teen abortions. But, you say, making condoms available in school-based clinics would 'give kids the wrong idea'. In fact, 5 recent research studies indicate that it doesn't.

Educating teenagers about contraception makes them more likely to use contraception when they begin having sex, but it doesn't lower the age at first intercourse.

Why? Probably because the decision where and with whom to become sexually active is a very complicated one, rooted in family, peers, religion, the media, and individual personality factors. But the decision whether to contracept or not is a very simple one: is it available? If so, I'll use it. If not, I'm still going to have sex, but I'm not going to go out of my way to get birth control.
Until Americans get over their hysteria about giving young people access to birth control, we will continue to have the highest teen pregnancy rates in the western world. It's really that simple.

*Victor C. Strasburger, MD University of New Mexico School of Medicine*

Fact: One million teens in the USA will become pregnant over the next twelve months. Ninety-five percent of those pregnancies are unintended. About one third will end in abortion; one third will end in spontaneous miscarriage; and one third will continue their pregnancy to term and keep their baby.

More than half of them are 17 years old or younger when they have their first pregnancy.

Approximately 40 percent of young women become pregnant before they reach 20 years old.

The United States of America has double the adolescent pregnancy and birth rates of any other industrialized country.

The poorer the young woman, the more likely she will become a mother.

Less than one-third of teens who have babies before the age of 18 finish high school.

Almost half of all teen mothers end up on welfare.

Less than 25 percent of births to teens occur within wedlock.
The birth rate for teens has been declining in recent years.

IMPORTANT NUMBERS:

Planned Parenthood
1-800-230-PLAN - 24 hour hotline will direct you to the clinic nearest to you.

National Office of Post Abortion Trauma
1-800-593-2273

National Abortion Federation
1-800-772-9100

National Adoption Center
1-800-862-3678 - dedicated to expanding adoption opportunities in the U.S.

Post-Abortion Project Rachel
1-800-5WE-CARE

The Independent Adoption Center
1-800-877-6736

Children of the World - (if you want to adopt)
1-973-239-0100

This information was compiled by http://www.coolnurse.com/teen_pregnancy_rates.htm