Are Teens Too Young to Have Sex?

**YES**

By George Toman, 18
Contributor

Teens, like me, are too young to have sex. We have a lot going on: maintaining our grades, extracurricular activities, making friends and learning about life as we go along. And some of us can’t even do these things—the things we need to do—without going through some drama. Can you imagine adding sex to the mix?

Sex requires a profound level of maturity. And maturity isn’t about finally convincing yourself that you’re “sexually mature.” Maturity is about being able to communicate with your partner about your sexual histories, what you do or don’t want to do, getting tested and having safer sex each and every time you have sex.

Guys, most of us can’t even say the words “penis” or “vagina” out loud. Do you really think we’re ready to communicate about sex? And communicating isn’t just about talking; you’ve got to be able to really hear what your partner is saying. Many of us can’t even listen to our parents, let alone our partners! It takes some serious communication skills to talk and listen to your partner when it comes to sex.

Maturity also involves action. If you’re too scared or embarrassed to get tested for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) or buy condoms, do you really think you’re mature enough for sex?

I think of myself as a responsible guy, and I’m responsible enough to know I’m not ready to deal with an STD or an unplanned pregnancy. Why would I risk my future plans by having sex now, when in six years I could be having sex regularly with someone I love and trust? I can see it now: marriage, wedding night. You get the picture. And trust me; waiting six years to have sex is nowhere close to the years and years of responsibility that would come if you got an STD like herpes or got pregnant and chose to have a child.

And whether marriage or long-term partnership is in your future or not, shouldn’t you get to enjoy your teen years without the stress of the risks involved with sex? I feel like I should enjoy my teen years. And I can do it without having sex.

Monopoly anyone?

On the Forums at Sexetc.org:

If you’re too embarrassed to tell your parents what you are doing, just don’t do it at all.

—Sarah, 14, FL

I really think the right time to have sex is when both you and your partner are consenting and the rewards outweigh the risks. Age is just a number.

—Jake, 15, KY

I’m still a virgin. And I personally think that sex is a huge deal, and it definitely needs to be talked about before being done. Also it’s just stupid not to discuss it, because you should be concerned about the safety and protection of your partner, bringing a child into the world and STDs.

—Chris, 16, ND
If you're a teen who can walk into your local pharmacy and head straight for the birth control, you're taking your sexual health seriously. If you can brave the sidelong glances from mothers buying cough syrup for their children and the questioning looks from the pharmacist and still walk up to the counter with your box of condoms in hand, then I'd say you aren't too young to have sex.

A teen has given the decision to have sex a lot of thought in order to buy condoms, get tested or have a conversation with his or her partner about safer sex. And if you ask me, that teen is pretty mature—mature enough to have sex.

When Is Too Young

Clearly, not all teens are able to be responsible about sex. Those teens just aren't ready. Yes, maturity does come with age, but how can someone declare an age when it's OK to have sex? What gives anyone the right to say that a person isn't allowed to express themselves sexually until a certain age? Sex is a part of human nature and individual expression.

Alright, I know that 13-year-olds aren't emotionally and mentally mature enough to have sex. They also just don't fully understand what it takes to practice safer sex. Now, while younger teens are not mature enough, some older teens definitely are. A teen who is mature enough for sex knows the facts about birth control, safer sex and getting tested for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). He or she is aware of the emotional consequences that can come with having sex and is willing to take steps to have safer sex.

Responsible Decision Makers

As a member of the Sex, Etc. staff, I am comfortable talking about sex with my friends, family and people I meet. This may be the reason why my friends turn to me for support when they are making decisions about their sex lives. It's a stereotype to say that teens don't think about the consequences of their actions. Teens usually aren't hasty with their decisions.

I've gone with friends to buy condoms and to talk with their doctors about birth control. Teens are thinking and questioning what is and isn't right for them. It can be scary for a teen to make sexual decisions alone. A teen who has the maturity to talk about protection with his or her parents and partner proves that he or she is ready to have sex.

Teens aren't as naïve as many adults think. Many of us understand that by engaging in vaginal, oral or anal sex, we are putting ourselves at risk. If someone practices safer sex, it doesn't always mean someone is ready for sex. But practicing safer sex shows that you have enough maturity to reduce the risk of unplanned pregnancy and STDs.

The truth is that no one person can tell a teen that he or she is ready for sex. Only the teen can decide that. And there are plenty of teens out there who are mature enough to make the right decision for themselves when it comes to choosing to have sex—or not.