

# Life Planning Education

## A Youth Development Program

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### Questions for Fact or Fiction

1. Most teenagers have had sexual intercourse by the time they finish high school.
2. Once a girl has had her first period, she can become pregnant.
3. A girl can become pregnant before she has her first period.
4. It is unhealthy for a girl to bathe or swim during her period.
5. Abstinence is the only method of contraception that is 100 percent effective.
6. A teenager has to be 18 to get contraception from a clinic, without a parent's consent.
7. Only females can have sexually transmitted diseases without any symptoms.
8. A woman cannot get pregnant if she has sex in certain positions.
9. A woman cannot get pregnant if she has sexual intercourse during her period.
10. Oral contraceptives (the pill) often cause cancer in women.
11. Douching will prevent pregnancy from occurring.
12. Once a person has had gonorrhea and been cured, she or he cannot get it again.
13. Condoms are not very effective in preventing pregnancy and STDs.
14. Cancer of the testicle is more common among teenage males than among men over 35.
15. Teenagers can be treated for STDs without their parents' permission.
16. A woman is temporarily infertile while she is nursing a baby.
17. All boys have wet dreams during puberty.
18. Males need to have sex to keep good health.
19. Alcohol makes it easier for people to get sexually aroused.
20. A woman can always calculate the "safe" time during her menstrual cycle when she can have vaginal intercourse and be protected from pregnancy.
21. There is no known cure for herpes.

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22. Having a sexual experience with someone of the same sex means you are lesbian or gay.
  23. Men's penises are all about the same size when they are erect.
  24. Once a man gets aroused and has an erection, he must ejaculate to avoid harmful effects.
  25. A woman can get pregnant even if a man doesn't ejaculate inside her vagina.
  26. If a penis is touched a lot, it will become permanently larger.
  27. Normal adolescents do not masturbate once they become sexually active.
  28. Women should begin having pelvic exams in their late teen years.
  29. A woman with a heavy discharge from her vagina probably has a sexually transmitted disease.
  30. In a homosexual relationship, one person usually takes the male role and the other takes the female role.
  31. For most women, menstrual cramps are very real.
  32. "Crack" cocaine is the only drug that affects an unborn baby's health after the first three or four months of pregnancy.
  33. In males, one testicle usually hangs slightly lower than the other one.
  34. A woman will always bleed and feel pain when she has vaginal intercourse for the first time.
  35. In some cultures, girls' genitals are mutilated to keep them from having sex before marriage.
  36. Anal intercourse is a safe way for a woman to avoid pregnancy and STDs.
  37. Men who rape generally rape strangers.
  38. A man who has had a vasectomy no longer ejaculates during intercourse.

### Answers to Fact or Fiction

1. *Most teenagers have had sexual intercourse by the time they finish high school.*

**FICTION** Recent research indicates that only 30 percent (about one-third) of all girls and 50 percent (about one-half) of all boys have had sexual intercourse by age 17. The figures are even lower for teens under age 15. It is important to recognize that many older teens and most young teens choose **not** to have intercourse.
2. *Once a girl has had her first period, she can become pregnant.*

**FACT** When a girl starts having menstrual periods it means that her reproductive organs have begun working and that she can become pregnant, if she has vaginal intercourse. It does not mean she is ready to have a baby, only that she is capable of bearing one.
3. *A girl can become pregnant before she has her first period.*

**FACT** Before a girl's first period, her ovaries release the first ovum, or egg, during ovulation. She can become pregnant if she has intercourse around the time of her first ovulation, **before she has her first menstrual period.**
4. *It is unhealthy for a girl to bathe or swim during her period.*

**FICTION** There is no health reason to restrict any activity during a menstrual period. Bathing during menstruation is especially important for good hygiene. Some girls and women will avoid certain activities during menstruation because of religious beliefs or cultural customs.
5. *Abstinence is the only method of contraception that is 100 percent effective.*

**FACT** Abstaining from ("not having") sexual intercourse of any kind is the **only** way to be absolutely sure of avoiding the risk of pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases.
6. *A teenager has to be 18 in order to get contraception from a clinic, without a parent's consent.*

**FICTION** In all states but Utah, teens of any age can get contraception, without a parent's consent or notification. Family planning clinics ensure the confidentiality of their services. They do not tell anyone, including a parent, that a teenager wants contraception. Most health care providers do encourage young people to talk with parents or guardians about health care needs and concerns.
7. *Only females can have sexually transmitted diseases without having any symptoms.*

**FICTION** Some STDs, such as herpes, have obvious symptoms in men and women. Others, such as gonorrhea and chlamydia, typically show no symptoms in women and often show no symptoms in men, as well. HIV infection may occur in men and in women with no symptoms of the disease for 10 years or more. It is important for everyone, male or female, to be examined regularly by a health practitioner if she or he engages in sexual intercourse.
8. *A woman cannot get pregnant if she has sex in certain positions.*

**FICTION** A woman who has vaginal intercourse in any position – sitting, standing, lying down – is at risk for becoming pregnant **every** time she has sex. Even women who have anal intercourse may become pregnant if semen comes in contact with the vulva and sperm make their way into the vagina.
9. *A woman cannot get pregnant if she has sexual intercourse during her period.*

**FICTION** It **seems** like a woman should be safe from pregnancy during her period, since her last ovulation was 14 days before and she shouldn't ovulate again for 10-14 days. Pregnancy is

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possible, however, at any time during the menstrual cycle. Women, and especially teens, sometimes ovulate sooner than expected, and even during their periods. Stress, illness and other factors can bring on ovulation at a time other than normal.

10. *Oral contraceptives (the pill) often cause cancer in women.*

**FICTION** There is no evidence that the pill causes cancer and, in fact, it may help prevent some forms of cancer. Minor side effects for users of oral contraceptives include nausea, breast tenderness, headaches, spotting and slight weight gain. Compared to the side effects of earlier oral contraceptives in the 1960s and 1970s, these effects are minimal, primarily due to the lower dosage of estrogen in today's pills. There are significant health risks of oral contraceptive use for women who smoke, are over 35, are overweight, or have high blood pressure or diabetes.

11. *Douching will prevent pregnancy from occurring.*

**FICTION** Douching may actually force sperm farther up into the vagina and may cause conception. It does nothing to help prevent pregnancy. Douching is not necessary to keep a healthy vagina clean. In fact, commercial douches may harm the body's natural cleansing mechanism by destroying bacteria that clean the vagina.

12. *Once a person has had gonorrhea and been cured, they cannot get it again.*

**FICTION** A person can get gonorrhea as many times as she or he has oral, anal or vaginal intercourse with an infected partner. It is very important for anyone who is treated for gonorrhea (or any other sexually transmitted disease) to make sure that his or her sexual partners are also treated.

13. *Condoms are not very effective in preventing pregnancy and STDs.*

**FICTION** Condoms are not 100 percent effective, but besides abstinence, they are the most effective way of preventing STDs, including HIV infection. In addition, if used correctly, latex condoms will prevent pregnancy about 80 percent of the time.

14. *Cancer of the testicle is more common among teenage males than among men over 35.*

**FACT** Cancer of the testicle is rare, but it usually occurs among teen and young adult men. The first sign is a lump on the testicle that can easily be detected through testicular self-examination. All boys should feel their testicles on a regular basis after a bath or shower when the scrotum is relaxed. If they feel any unusual lumps or irregularities, they should consult a health practitioner. If detected early, this is a very treatable form of cancer.

15. *Teenagers can be treated for STDs without their parents' permission.*

**FACT** Teenagers, protected by the law, can be tested or treated for an STD without parental permission.

16. *A woman is temporarily infertile while she is nursing a baby.*

**FICTION** Some women who breast feed regularly, without supplementing their babies' feedings with formula, may not ovulate during that time, and therefore will not become pregnant again until after they stop nursing. That is not true, however, for all, or even most, nursing women. Breast-feeding cannot be relied on for pregnancy prevention.

17. *All boys have wet dreams during puberty.*

**FICTION** Some boys do not have wet dreams at all, and that is normal for them. Wet dreams occur only as necessary to release excess sperm. Many males who have regular ejaculations through masturbation or sexual intercourse will not have wet dreams.

18. *Males need to have sex to keep good health.*

**FICTION** It is normal and healthy for **both** males and females to have sexual feelings and a desire to express them, but neither males nor females **need** to have sex to be healthy.

19. *Alcohol makes it easier for people to get sexually aroused.*

**FICTION** Actually, alcohol has the opposite effect. Alcohol is a depressant: it decreases the flow of blood to the genital area, making it more difficult for males to have an erection and more difficult for males and females to experience orgasm. These drugs may reduce a person's inhibitions ("hang-ups") and make an individual feel more free to have sex, but they can also reduce sexual performance. More importantly, they can make people feel like it is okay to do things they would not ordinarily do sexually, such as have intercourse or not protect against pregnancy, STDs and HIV infection.

20. *A woman can always calculate the "safe" time during her menstrual cycle when she can have vaginal intercourse and be protected from pregnancy.*

**FICTION** There is **no** time during a woman's cycle when she is absolutely safe from pregnancy. Even if she is monitoring her cycle for signs of ovulation, she cannot be certain she will not get pregnant during unprotected intercourse.

21. *There is no known cure for herpes.*

**FACT** Herpes is a virus that can cause painful sores on the mouth, genitals or anus and other parts of the body. Once contracted, it cannot be cured. Women with herpes may have a greater risk of developing cancer of the cervix, so they should have an annual Pap smear (medical test done during a pelvic exam). Herpes can also cause brain damage or death in infants who are infected with the virus during birth. Women who have herpes must not deliver a child vaginally if any herpes lesions or sores are on the genitals or in the birth canal at the time of delivery, because the baby's sight might be affected.

22. *Having a sexual experience with someone of the same sex means you are gay or lesbian.*

**FICTION** Having a same-sex experience does not mean a person is a homosexual. Almost half of all men and one-fourth of all women report having had same-sex experiences. Many young people have a sexual experience with a close friend or peer of the same sex, as a way of exploring their sexuality. What determines that someone is gay, lesbian, or bisexual is their **feelings**, not their sexual behavior. Gay men and lesbians feel primarily attracted to, and become romantically involved with, people of their same gender; bisexuals feel strongly attracted to people of both genders (although they may prefer one over the other).

23. *All penises are all about the same size when erect.*

**FACT** The size of a penis when it is flaccid (soft) has no bearing on its size when erect (hard). Penises are many different sizes when they are flaccid, but size is more or less equalized by erection in most men. More importantly, the size of a man's penis says nothing about his masculinity, his ability to be a good lover or his ability to father a child.

24. *Once a man gets aroused and has an erection, he must ejaculate to avoid harmful effects.*

**FICTION** There is no harm if a man does not ejaculate after he gets an erection: semen does not get "backed up" in his testicles and cause infection or disease. A man may feel some discomfort and heaviness in his testicles if he is sexually excited for a long period of time without ejaculating. Some people call this condition "blue balls." The feelings will disappear once he stops the sexually stimulating activity.

25. *A woman can get pregnant even if a man doesn't ejaculate inside her vagina.*

**FACT** If a man ejaculates near the opening to a woman's vagina or touches her vulva while he has semen on his fingers, it is possible for sperm to find their way inside and fertilize an ovum. Women have become pregnant without ever actually having vaginal intercourse.

26. *If a penis is touched a lot, it will become larger permanently.*

**FICTION** Genes from both parents determine a person's physical characteristics, including size, eye color, body type, overall adult height and so on. No amount of touching will affect the size of a man's penis (or of a woman's breasts).

27. *Normal adolescents do not masturbate once they become sexually active.*

**FICTION** Masturbation, or touching and stimulating the genitals, is a normal sexual behavior that occurs in males and females of all ages. Masturbation is a common means of achieving sexual pleasure and release. Masturbation is not physically harmful and it is a safe way to express sexuality without risking pregnancy or disease. People whose family, religion or culture teach that masturbation is wrong may feel guilty if they masturbate.

28. *Women should begin having pelvic exams in their late teen years.*

**FACT** When a woman reaches her late teen years, she should have a pelvic exam once a year to make sure her genitals and reproductive organs are healthy. She does not need to wait until she begins having intercourse to have an exam, but she should certainly have one once she begins to have sexual intercourse.

29. *A woman with a heavy discharge from her vagina probably has a sexually transmitted disease.*

**FICTION** All women and girls who have reached puberty have a normal vaginal discharge that is part of the vagina's natural way of cleansing itself. The amount of discharge varies at different times in a woman's menstrual cycle and from woman to woman. It is usually heaviest around the time of ovulation. If the discharge starts to itch or burn, or has a different color or odor than usual, that may be sign of a common vaginal infection or of an STD. In either case, the woman should consult a health practitioner.

30. *In a homosexual relationship, one person usually takes the male role and the other takes the female role.*

**FICTION** In a homosexual relationship today, just as in a heterosexual relationship, there is no need to play out traditional male and female roles.

31. *For most women, menstrual cramps are very real.*

**FACT** Menstrual cramps are real. Most doctors believe they are caused by hormones called prostaglandins, which cause the uterus to contract. When women have very strong contractions during their periods, some experience painful cramps. Other women report no cramping during their periods, or only minor discomfort.

32. *"Crack" cocaine is the only drug that affects a fetus's health after the first three or four months of pregnancy.*

**FICTION** While crack cocaine certainly affects fetus' health, there are other substances that are also harmful. Many newborns suffer brain damage as a result of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome acquired because their mothers drank alcohol during their pregnancies. Women who smoke while they are pregnant directly affect the health of their unborn child — smoking increases a woman's risk of miscarriage and stillbirth and a baby's risk of low birth weight.

33. *In males, one testicle usually hangs slightly lower than the other one.*

**FACT** All bodies are uneven — one hand or foot is usually larger. One testicle hangs slightly lower than the other. This is completely normal and eliminates the likelihood of chafing which would occur if testicles rubbed together when a man walks. (One of a woman's breasts is usually slightly larger, as well.)

34. *A woman will always bleed and feel pain when she has vaginal intercourse for the first time.*

**FICTION** Most women have a hymen, a thin membrane that partially covers the vaginal entrance just inside the opening. Hymens vary in size and thickness and some women are not born with one at all. Many hymens are torn or stretched during normal physical activity. A small amount of bleeding may occur during first vaginal intercourse if a woman's hymen has never been stretched or torn. If her partner is gentle and they are both ready for lovemaking, there will usually be little or no pain during first intercourse.

35. *In some cultures, girls' genitals are mutilated to keep them from having sex before marriage.*

**FACT** In some African and Middle Eastern cultures, girls have their clitoris and/or their labia removed at birth, during childhood or at puberty. This procedure is meant to prevent young girls from being sexually stimulated and having intercourse or becoming pregnant outside of marriage. Infection and scarring often result. With the clitoris gone, these women will not experience normal pleasure from sex. Female genital mutilation has been declared illegal in many countries, but the tradition continues. Millions of women in Africa are affected and some immigrants continue the practice in Europe and the United States.

36. *Anal intercourse is a safe way for a woman to avoid pregnancy and STDs.*

**FICTION** This is a particularly dangerous myth, since engaging in anal intercourse is one of the easiest ways to spread HIV infection and some other STDs. Because the anus is not as elastic as the vagina and is not lubricated, it can tear more easily, allowing viruses and bacteria to be transmitted directly into the blood of a partner. In addition, it is possible for a woman to become pregnant from anal sex if semen from the ejaculation seeps out onto the vulva and moves into the vagina.

37. *Men who rape generally rape strangers.*

**FICTION** Over half of all reported rapes are committed by men known to the women — either an acquaintance, friend, date or relative. Many people believe that most rapes happen in deserted alleys or wooded areas when in fact, half of all rapes occur in the woman's home. No matter what a woman says or does to make a person think it is okay to have sex with her, once she says "stop," and the person forces her anyway, it is rape.

38. *A man who has had a vasectomy no longer ejaculates during intercourse.*

**FICTION** Semen, the fluid ejaculated out of the penis when a man has an orgasm, consists of sperm cells and fluids from several glands in the male reproductive system. When a man has a vasectomy, his vas deferens are severed so that sperm cells can no longer travel from his testicles out through his penis. All of the glandular fluids, however, continue to be secreted and they make up most of the semen that is ejaculated during orgasm. Neither the man nor his partner will notice a difference in the amount of ejaculate after a vasectomy.