

# Sex education

[Family](#), [Marriage](#)



Sex education is the process of acquiring information and forming attitudes and beliefs about sex, sexual identity, relationships, and intimacy. It is also about developing young people's skills so that they make informed choices about their behavior, and feel confident and competent about acting on these choices. Young people have a right to sex education because it is a way of helping to protect themselves against abuse, exploitation, unintended pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, and HIV/AIDS. Sex education seeks to both reduce the risks of potentially negative outcomes from sexual behavior and to enhance the quality of relationships. It is also about developing young people's ability to make decisions over their entire lifetime. If sex education is going to be effective it needs to include opportunities for young people to develop skills, since it can be hard for them to act on the basis of only having information. For example, being able to communicate, listen, negotiate, ask for and identify sources of help and advice, are useful life-skills and can be applied in terms of sexual relationships. Other important skills include being able to recognize pressures from other people and to resist them, deal with and challenge prejudice, seek help from adults – including parents, guardians and professionals – through the family, community and health and welfare services. Sex education that works also equips young people with the skills to be able to differentiate between accurate and inaccurate information, discuss a range of moral and social issues and perspectives on sex and sexuality, including different cultural attitudes and sensitive issues like sexuality, abortion and contraception. Young people can be exposed to a wide range of attitudes and beliefs in relation to sex and sexuality. These

sometimes appear contradictory and confusing. Young people are very interested in the moral and cultural structures that bind sex and sexuality. They often welcome opportunities to talk about issues where people have strong views, like abortion, sex before marriage, lesbian and gay issues and contraception and birth control. It is important to remember that talking in a balanced way about differences in opinion does not promote one set of views over another, or mean that one agrees with a particular view. Part of exploring and understanding cultural, religious and moral views is finding out that you can agree to disagree. People providing sex education have attitudes and beliefs of their own about sex and sexuality and it is important not to let these influence negatively the sex education that they provide. Attempts to impose narrow moralistic views about sex and sexuality on young people through sex education have failed. Rather than trying to frighten young people away from having sex, effective sex education includes working on attitudes and beliefs, coupled with skills development, that allows young people to choose whether or not to have a sexual relationship taking into account the potential risks of any sexual activity. Providing information through sex education entails finding out what young people already know and adding to their existing knowledge and correcting any misinformation that they may have. Young people need to have information on the following topics: sexual development, reproduction, contraception, and relationships. Sex education that works starts before young people reach puberty, and before they have developed established patterns of behavior. Providing basic information provides the foundation on which more complex knowledge is built up over time. For example, when

they are very young, children can be informed about how people grow and change over time, and how babies become children and then adults. This provides the basis on which they understand more detailed information about puberty provided in the pre-teenage years. Some people are concerned that providing information about sex and sexuality arouses curiosity and can lead to sexual experimentation. Unfortunately, the Bush administration is a believer of this myth. There is no evidence that this happens. However, President Bush advocated blocking an international drive to provide teenage sex education because of his belief in chastity before marriage. Health experts believe this could fatally undermine the battle against AIDS. Bush has poured millions of dollars into 'true love waits' - style programs in America, which teach that abstinence out of wedlock is the best way to avoid underage pregnancy. Tommy Thompson, the U. S. Health and Human Services secretary, pumped \$17 million dollars into "abstinence-until-marriage" sex education, which does not address the real needs of young people and denies the existence of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth. The Bush Administration's act of throwing money into ineffective and discriminatory "abstinence-until-marriage" sex education in the face of skyrocketing rates of HIV infection among young people is an example of how out of touch the federal government is with the many issues facing our youth. Now the Bush Administration wants to increase federal abstinence funding to \$90 million dollars. These programs withhold medically accurate information about STD, HIV and pregnancy. These are serious issues in the world community and should not be taken lightly or dealt with in an insufficient manner. According to the Center for Disease Control and

Prevention (CDC) in December 2002, 384, 906 people in the U. S. had AIDS. Of the 298, 248 men (13 yrs old and older), 57% were men who had sex with another man. 10% resulted from heterosexual contact. Of the 82, 764 women (13 yrs old and older), 61% were infected with AIDS due to heterosexual contact. These statistics are proof that every young person, no matter what their sexual orientation or any other factor may be, has the right to an education on how to protect themselves from these tragic outcomes. There were 2. 5-3. 5 million AIDS deaths in 2003 alone. This startling number is a testament that effortless " wait to have sex" methods of education will not satisfy or meet our growing concerns and problems. Young people who do not have the opportunity to marry due to legal reasons do not even have that option to wait until marriage to have sex. This forces them into a state of self-denial or rejection, which causes serious problems within themselves. Sex education is extremely important for our young people. This is the most effective way of fighting against the many diseases and social issues facing our young people in this society today.