

# In Defense of a Little Virginity

a message from Focus on the Family

The federal government has spent almost \$3 billion of our taxes since 1970 to promote contraceptives and "safe sex" among our teenagers. Isn't it time we asked, What have we gotten for our money? These are the facts:

- The federal Centers for Disease Control estimate that there are now 1 million cases of HIV infection nationwide.<sup>1</sup>
- 1 in 100 students coming to the University of Texas health center now carries the deadly virus.<sup>2</sup>
- The rate of heterosexual HIV transmission has increased 44% since September 1989.<sup>3</sup>
- Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) infect 3 million teenagers annually.<sup>4</sup>
- 63% of all STD cases occur among persons less than 25 years of age.<sup>5</sup>
- 1 million new cases of pelvic inflammatory disease occur annually.<sup>6</sup>
- 1.3 million new cases of gonorrhea occur annually; strains of gonorrhea have developed that are resistant to penicillin.<sup>7</sup>
- Syphilis is at a 40-year high, with 134,000 new infections per year.<sup>8</sup>
- 500,000 new cases of herpes occur annually; it is estimated that 16.4% of the U.S. population ages 15-74 is infected, totaling more than 25 million Americans — among certain groups, the infection rate is as high as 60%.<sup>9</sup>
- 4 million cases of chlamydia occur annually; 10-30% of 15- to 19-year-olds are infected.<sup>10</sup>
- There are now 24 million cases of human papilloma virus (HPV), with a higher prevalence among teens.<sup>11</sup>

To date, over 20 different and dangerous sexually transmitted diseases are rampant among the young. Add to that the problems associated with promiscuous behavior: infertility, abortions and infected newborns. The cost of this epidemic is staggering, both in human suffering and in expense to society; yet epidemiologists tell us we've only seen the beginning.

**Incredibly, the "safe-sex" gurus and condom promoters who got us into this mess are still determining our policy regarding adolescent sexuality. Their ideas have failed, and it is time to rethink their bankrupt policies.**

How long has it been since you've heard anyone tell teenagers why it is to their advantage to remain virgins until married? The facts are being withheld from them, with tragic consequences. Unless we come to terms with the sickness that stalks a generation of Americans, teen promiscuity will continue, and millions of kids... thinking they are protected... will suffer for the rest of their lives. Many will die of AIDS.

There is only one safe way to remain healthy in the midst of a sexual revolution. It is to abstain from intercourse until marriage, and then wed and be faithful to an uninfected partner. It is a concept that was widely endorsed in society until the 1960s. Since then, a "better idea" has come along... one that now threatens the entire human family.

Inevitable questions are raised whenever abstinence is proposed. It's time we gave some clear answers:

**Why, apart from moral considerations, do you think teenagers should be taught to abstain from sex until marriage?**

No other approach to the epidemic of sexually transmitted diseases will work. The so-called "safe-sex" solution is a disaster in the making. Condoms can fail at least 15.7 percent of the time annually in preventing pregnancy.<sup>12</sup> They fail 36.3 percent of the time annually in preventing pregnancy among young, unmarried minority women.<sup>13</sup> In a study of homosexual men, the *British Medical Journal* reported the failure rate due to slippage and breakage to be 26 percent.<sup>14</sup> Given these findings, it is obvious why we have a word for people who rely on condoms as a means of birth control. We call them "parents."

Remembering that a woman can conceive only one or two days per month, we can only guess how high the failure rate for condoms must be in preventing disease, which can be transmitted 365 days per year! If the devices are not used properly, or if they slip just once, viruses and bacteria are exchanged and the disease process begins. One mistake after 500 "protected" episodes is all it takes to contract a sexually transmitted disease. The damage is done in a single moment when rational thought is overridden by passion.

Those who would depend on so insecure a method must use it properly on every occasion, and even then a high failure rate is brought about by factors beyond their control. The young victim who is told by his elders that this little latex device is "safe" may not know he is risking lifelong pain and even death for so brief a window of pleasure. What a burden to place on an immature mind and body!

Then we must recognize that there are other differences between pregnancy prevention and disease prevention. HIV is 1/25th the width of sperm,<sup>15</sup> and can pass easily through even the smallest gaps in condoms. Researchers studying surgical gloves made out of latex, the same material in condoms, found "channels of 5 microns that penetrated the entire thickness of the glove."<sup>16</sup> HIV measures 1 micron.<sup>17</sup> Given these findings, what rational, informed person would trust his or her very life to such flimsy armor?

This surely explains why not one of 800 sexologists at a conference a few years ago raised a hand when asked if they would trust a thin rubber sheath to protect them during intercourse with a known HIV-infected person.<sup>18</sup> Who could blame them? They're not crazy, after all. And yet they're perfectly willing to tell our kids that "safe sex" is within reach and that they can sleep around with impunity.

There is only one way to protect ourselves from the deadly diseases that lie in wait. It is abstinence before marriage, then marriage and mutual fidelity for life to an uninfected partner. Anything less is potentially suicidal.

**That position is simply NOT realistic today. It's an unworkable solution: Kids will NOT implement it.**

Some will. Some won't. It's still the only answer. But let's talk about an "unworkable solution" of the first order. Since 1970, the federal government has spent nearly \$3 billion to promote contraception and "safe sex." This year alone, 450 million of your tax dollars will go down that drain!<sup>19</sup> (Compared with less than \$8 million for abstinence programs, which Sen. Teddy Kennedy and company have sought repeatedly to eliminate altogether.) Isn't it time we ask what we've gotten for our money? After 22 years and nearly \$3 billion, some 58 percent of teenage girls under 18 still did not use contraception during their first intercourse.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, teenagers tend to keep having unprotected

intercourse for a full year, on average, before starting any kind of contraception.<sup>21</sup> That is the success ratio of the experts who call abstinence "unrealistic" and "unworkable."

Even if we spent another \$50 billion to promote condom usage, most teenagers would still not use them consistently and properly. The nature of human beings and the passion of the act simply do not lend themselves to a disciplined response in young romantics.

**But if you knew a teenager was going to have intercourse, wouldn't you teach him or her about proper condom usage?**

No, because that approach has an unintended consequence. The process of recommending condom usage to teenagers inevitably conveys five dangerous ideas: (1) that "safe sex" is achievable; (2) that everybody is doing it; (3) that responsible adults expect them to do it; (4) that it's a good thing; and (5) that their peers know they know these things, breeding promiscuity. Those are very destructive messages to give our kids.

Furthermore, Planned Parenthood's own data show that the number one reason teenagers engage in intercourse is peer pressure.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, anything we do to imply that "everybody is doing it" results in more... not fewer... people who give the game a try. Condom distribution programs do not reduce the number of kids exposed to disease... they radically increase it!

Want proof of that fact? Since the federal government began its major contraception program in 1970, unwed pregnancies have increased 87 percent among 15- to 19-year-olds.<sup>23</sup> Likewise, abortions among teens rose 67 percent; unwed births went up 61 percent.<sup>24</sup> And venereal disease has infected a generation of young people. Nice job, sex counselors. Good thinking, senators and congressmen. Nice nap, America.

Having made a blunder that now threatens the human family, one would think the designers would be backtracking and apologizing for their miscalculations. Instead, they continue to lobby Congress and corporate America for more money. Given the misinformation extant on this subject, they'll probably get it.

**But if you were a parent and knew that your son or daughter was having sex, wouldn't you rather he or she used a condom?**

How much risk is acceptable when you're talking about your teenager's life? One study of married couples in which one partner was infected with HIV found that 17% of the partners using condoms for protection still caught the virus within a year and a half.<sup>25</sup> Telling our teens to "reduce their risk" to one in six (17%) is not much better than advocating Russian roulette. Both are fatal, eventually. The difference is that with a gun, death is quicker. Suppose your son or daughter were joining an 18-month skydiving club of six members. If you knew that one of their parachutes would definitely fail, would you recommend that they simply buckle the chutes tighter? Certainly not. You would say, "Please don't jump. Your life is at stake!" How could a loving parent do less?

**Kids won't listen to the abstinence message. You're just wasting your breath to try to sell them a notion like that.**

It is a popular myth that teenagers are incapable of understanding that it is in their best interest to save themselves until marriage. Almost 65 percent of all high school females under 18 are virgins.<sup>26</sup>

A few years ago in Lexington, Ky., a youth event was held that featured no sports contest, no rock groups—just an ex-convict named Harold Morris talking about abstinence, among other subjects. The coliseum seated 18,000 people, but 26,000 teenagers showed up! Eventually, more than 2,000 stood outside the packed auditorium and listened over a hastily prepared public address system. Who says kids won't listen to this time-honored message?

Even teens who have been sexually active can choose to stop. This is often called "secondary virginity," a good concept that conveys the idea that kids can start over. One young girl recently wrote Ann Landers to say she wished she had kept her virginity, signing the letter, "Sorry I didn't and wish I could take it back." As responsible adults we need to tell her that even though she can't go back, she can go forward. She can regain her self-respect and protect her health, because it's never too late to start saying "no" to premarital sex.

**Even though the safe-sex advocates predominate in educational circles, are there no positive examples of abstinence-based programs for kids?**

Thankfully, some excellent programs have been developed. Spokane-based *Teen Aid* and Chicago's *Southwest Parents Committee* are good examples. So are *Next Generation* in Maryland, *Choices in California and Respect Inc.* in Illinois. Other curricula such as *Facing Reality*, *Sex Respect: Me, My World, My Future*, *Reasonable Reasons to Wait*, *Sex, Love & Choices*, *F.A.C.T.S.* etc., are all abstinence-themed programs to help kids make good sexual decisions.

A good curriculum for inner-city youth is *Elayne Bennett's Best Friends Program*. This successful "mentoring" project helps adolescents in Washington, D.C. graduate from high school and remain abstinent. In five years, not one female has become pregnant while in the *Best Friends Program*!

Establishing and nurturing abstinence ideas with kids, however, can be like spitting into the wind. Not because they won't listen, because most will. But pro-abstinence messages are drowned out in a sea of toxic teen-sex-is-inevitable-use-a-condom propaganda from "safe-sex" professionals.

**You place major responsibility on those who have told adolescents that sexual expression is their right as long as they do it "properly." Who else has contributed to the epidemic?**

The entertainment industry must certainly share the blame, including television producers. It is interesting in this context that all four networks and the cable television entities are wringing their hands about this terrible epidemic of AIDS. They profess to be very concerned about those who are infected with sexually transmitted diseases, and perhaps they are sincere. However, TV executives and movie moguls have contributed mightily to the existence of this plague. For decades, they have depicted teens and young adults climbing in and out of each other's beds like so many sexual robots. Only the nerds were shown to be chaste, and they were too stupid or ugly to find partners.

Of course, the beautiful young actors in those steamy dramas never faced any consequences for their sexual indulgence. No one ever came down with herpes, or syphilis, or chlamydia, or pelvic inflammatory disease, or infertility, or AIDS, or genital warts, or cervical cancer. No patients were ever told by a physician that there was no cure for their disease or that they would have to deal with the pain for the rest of their lives. No one ever heard that genital cancers associated with the human papilloma virus (HPV) kill more women than AIDS,<sup>27</sup> or that strains of gonorrhea are now resistant to penicillin.<sup>28</sup>

No, there was no downside. It all looked like so much fun. But what a price we are paying now for the lies we have been told.

The government has also contributed to this crisis and continues to exacerbate the problem. For example, a current brochure from the federal Centers for Disease Control and the City of New York is entitled, "Teens Have the Right," and is apparently intended to free adolescents from adult authority. Inside are the six declarations that make up a "Teenager's Bill of Rights," as follows:

- I have the right to think for myself.
- I have the right to decide whether to have sex and who(m) to have it with.
- I have the right to use protection when I have sex.
- I have the right to buy and use condoms.
- I have the right to express myself.
- I have the right to ask for help if I need it.

Under this final item (the right to ask for help) is a list of organizations and phone numbers that readers are encouraged to call. The philosophy that governs several of the organizations reflects the homosexual agenda, which includes recruitment of the young and vigorous promotion of a teen's right to sexual expression.

Your tax dollars at work! Surely there are other Americans who recognize the danger now threatening a generation of our best and brightest. It is time to speak up for an old-fashioned value called virginity. Now, more than ever, virtue is a necessity.

If you agree with Focus on the Family that it is time for a new approach to adolescent sexuality, tear out this ad and save it. Take it to your next school board meeting. Send it to your congressman or senator. Distribute copies to the PTA. And by all means, share it with your teenagers. Begin to promote abstinence before marriage as the only healthy way to survive this worldwide epidemic.

Please use the coupon below to obtain a valuable booklet on abstinence. There is no charge for it. However, your support is requested for an upcoming TV program for teenagers on this important topic. Your comments are also solicited.



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**Yes!** I want to support a national television broadcast on abstinence and help Focus on the Family reach out to America's kids.

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