

## **Claim #8** **It's normal and healthy for teenagers to have sex.**

Nothing could be further from the truth. The vast majority of teenagers, 72 percent of girls and 55 percent of boys, admit regret over early sexual activity.<sup>18</sup> The vast majority of teenage pregnancies occur unintentionally and outside of marriage.<sup>19</sup> Of those who carry their babies to term, only one-third will complete high school and 80 percent will begin to rely on government welfare within five years.<sup>20</sup> Sexually active girls are three times more likely to be depressed and three times more likely to commit suicide than girls who are abstinent. Sexually active boys are twice as likely to be depressed and eight times more likely to commit suicide than boys who are abstinent.<sup>21</sup> Sexual activity can be extremely harmful to teenagers.

"Today, sadly, there are far too many teens with broken hearts and incurable diseases," writes Dr. Janice Crouse of the Beverly LaHaye Institute, "because adults are unwilling to state categorically that sex is meant exclusively for marriage."<sup>22</sup>

For more on abstinence education and teen sexual activity, visit *Concerned Women for America's* Web site, [www.cwfa.org](http://www.cwfa.org).



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## **End Notes**

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# What Your Teacher Didn't Tell You About Abstinence

By Emma Elliott

From the media to the classroom, teens today are constantly being inundated with “safe sex” claims. They will become sexually active anyway, the thinking goes, so let’s teach them how to do it “safely”—that is, with contraception. Teenagers are told it is fine to practice “safe sex” and abstinence is given short shrift. But that lie could ultimately destroy them.

### **Claim #1** **Abstinence education doesn’t work.**

Proponents of “safe sex” education insist that abstinence education fails to deter teenage sexual activity. However, no fewer than 10 studies have shown that teenagers in abstinence-education programs are significantly less likely to be sexually active than their peers. Four of these studies were published in peer-reviewed journals.<sup>1</sup> One of them showed that Best Friends, a program for girls aimed at reducing high-risk behavior such as sexual activity and drug use, produced an 80 percent reduction in the likelihood its participants would have sex.<sup>2</sup>

### **Claim #2** **Abstinence education increases pregnancy and the rate of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).**

One of the most insidious lies says that abstinence education denies teenagers “vital” information on contraceptives. The Web site of NARAL Pro-Choice America presents the story of “Katie” who tells how Miss America Heather Whitestone came to her school to talk about abstinence. Katie describes Whitestone’s discussion of the risk of condom failure and then says, “A couple of months later the first girl got pregnant. The second girl got pregnant a few weeks later.” Katie herself became pregnant and had an abortion.

NARAL, in its twisted reality, blames Miss America for telling the truth about condoms, rather than sexual activity, for these pregnancies.<sup>3</sup> But studies that purport to show that abstinence education is the problem have been exposed as junk science.<sup>4</sup> “Safe sex” has been around for years. Yet, more than 8,000 teens become infected with a sexually transmitted disease *every day*,<sup>5</sup> and about 40 percent of sexually active teens eventually become pregnant out-of-wedlock.<sup>6</sup> Abstinence is the only sure way to combat these troubling statistics.

### **Claim #3** **Condoms and other contraceptives are causing the recent decline in teen pregnancies.**

Thankfully, the teen pregnancy rate dropped 28 percent between 1990 and 2000.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, abortions for 15- to 19-year-olds decreased 43 percent from 1988 to 2000.<sup>8</sup> Proponents of “safe sex” argue that these declines prove their message is working. However, this is not reasonable when one considers the failure rates of condoms and contraceptives. Major studies have shown that less sex by teenagers, not increased use of condoms and contraceptives, is causing this.<sup>9</sup> When abstinence is taught, the message gets through powerfully.

### **Claim #4** **Condoms and contraceptives are nearly foolproof.**

Perhaps the greatest lie told by “safe sex” proponents is that there even is such a thing as “safe sex.” This could cost teenagers their lives. While sexually active characters on television programs virtually never contract STDs, millions of real teenagers will this year.<sup>10</sup> Reports from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services indicate that condoms, at best, *sometimes* prevent the transmission of sexually transmitted diseases including HIV, gonorrhea, Chlamydia, syphilis, cancrivids, trichomoniasis, genital herpes and human papillomavirus. Other contraceptives provide *no* protection from STDs.<sup>11</sup> Condoms have an estimated 15 percent failure rate in preventing pregnancy.<sup>12</sup> The only truly “safe” option is abstinence until marriage and faithfulness thereafter.

### **Claim #5** **Abstinence education is everywhere.**

Those who teach “safe sex” like to pretend that abstinence education is the norm in public schools. Organizations like Planned Parenthood and politicians like Rep. Henry Waxman (D-California) focus primarily on President Bush’s recent increases in funding for abstinence education. This is unrealistic. President Bush called for \$250 million to be spent on abstinence education in 2005; Congress approved only \$168 million. On the other hand, \$653 million was spent on condom-based sex education.<sup>13</sup> This imbalance must change for abstinence education to fulfill its potential.

### **Claim #6** **“Abstinence-plus” education is better.**

Proponents of “safe sex” pretend there is middle ground in what they euphemistically call “comprehensive” sex education or “abstinence-plus.” They want to sabotage the authentic abstinence message by including instruction in condom and contraception use. But that’s a mixed message. We don’t tell children not to do drugs and then give them clean syringes in case they do. We don’t tell them not to smoke and then give them low-tar cigarettes because those are the least harmful. We don’t do those things because they undermine the point we are trying to make.<sup>14</sup> Another strike against so-called “abstinence-plus” education is that it contains very little abstinence. The Heritage Foundation examined nine different curricula and found that, in a total of 942 pages, not one single sentence urged students to abstain from sexual activity.<sup>15</sup>

### **Claim #7** **“Everybody’s doing it.”**

Many teens today have the impression that everyone their age is sexually active. However, research reports that in 2003 fully 53 percent of high school students reported never having had sex.<sup>16</sup> This is up from 46 percent in 1991.<sup>17</sup> This fact needs to be promoted—and abstinent teenagers ought to be supported and encouraged, not ridiculed or ignored.