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Teenage Pregnancy

She looked down at the test in disbelief. How could this be! They only had unprotected sex once. What was going to happen now? What would she tell him? She was 16! Way too young to become a mother. Looking down at her still flat stomach she put her hand on her abdomen and started to silently cry. Teen pregnancy has become a huge part of our world today. It has huge effects both the teen and everyone around them. By looking at all the reasons why teen pregnancy is happening maybe we can start to prevent it on a greater level.

Part 1 The Cause: Teen pregnancy is caused by many things beside the obvious. Kids are beginning to become sexually active at a younger age than they used to. In a study 29% of teenagers said that they felt pressured to have sex, 33% reported "being in a relationship where they felt things were moving too fast sexually", 24% had "done something sexual they didn't really want to do". Peer pressure has also become a huge factor in making kids become more sexually active. (Ventura, S.J. 23-46)

Drugs have also become a huge part. A vast majority of high school students have either tried an illegal substance or are currently on an illegal substance. Drugs and alcohol have been proven to lower inhibitions and possibly encourage unintended sexual activity. While on the substances students may do things that they normally

would not. They lose apart of their reasoning skills and make bad decisions. Studies have shown that the more overprotective a parent is the more likely a child is to rebel and do drugs/ try sexual activity. This overprotection gives rise to frustration and a feeling of not being loved and cared for. Parents try to protect their children, especially girls, but they may be driving them to rebellion and in an unconscious way cause them to start being sexually active.

Students are also not as aware of contraception as they should be. Many lack knowledge or access to contraception. Also many students are too embarrassed to ask for help getting contraception. More than 80% of pregnancy is unintended which tells us that people are either not using contraception or that they are not using it correctly. The pros and cons of contraception need to be taught in classes throughout school but most importantly we need to teach that abstinence is key to not conceiving. Sexual abuse has also become a reason for teenage pregnancy. There has been shown to be a strong link between women who were molested as young children and them becoming teenage mothers. It has been shown that 70% of women who were molested as children have become teenage mothers. One in five teenage fathers admitted to forcing girls to have sex with them. Many sexual relationships between younger women and older men result in a pregnancy, sometimes one that is unwanted. (Ventura, S.J. 13-23)

Part 2 The Impact: Being a young mother can have a drastic impact on a girl's life.

There can be many complications during the pregnancy and the birth for both mother and child. Premature birth and low birth weight on two of the most prevalent impacts of being a young mother. Many times teens do not seek prenatal care until the third

trimester. Complications that may happen during a teen pregnancy include anemia, toxemia, high blood pressure, placenta previa and premature birth of the baby. Many teens also do not take care their bodies as they should. They fear becoming too “fat’ while pregnant so try to stop the weight gain through various methods. Dieting and skipping meals are the most common ways of trying to lose weight while pregnant. This can have a huge impact on the child, however. Many complications can arise as a result of the dieting. (Henshaw, S.K. 45-63)

There can also be a huge psychological effect on a pregnant teenager. During the pregnancy exhaustion is bound to happen. This can prevent the teen from doing the normal things that they may have done before becoming pregnant. As a result of the exhaustion or simply the pregnancy may be depression. The teen may become depressed while trying to think of ways to deal with the pregnancy or because of all the negative feedback that they may be getting from their friends and family. The many fluctuating hormones that the pregnancy causes may also lead to depression. There is also a hug impact on the child once it is born. Through a study it has been shown that teen mothers are less likely to stimulate the infant through affectionate behaviors such as touch, smiling, and verbal communication, or to be sensitive and accepting toward the child’s various needs. Accepting that they have to leave behind their childhood and adolescence to move into parenthood can also be hard for many teens. They are maturing too fast and that can be hard on the teen. No one wants to leave behind their childhood but the teen will be forced to grow up and mature for the sake of the child.

Part 3 Prevention: The main reason that teenage girls who have never had intercourse

give for using abstinence is that having sex would be against their religious or moral values. Other reasons include the desire to avoid pregnancy, fear of contracting a sexually transmitted disease such as STD's, and not having met the right guy. Three of four girls

and over half of boys report that girls who have sex do so because their boyfriends want them to. This is very common and is always the wrong reason to give your virginity to someone. (Henshaw, S.K. 41-72)

Teenagers who have strong emotional attachments to their parents are much less likely to become sexually active at an early age and less likely to have a teen pregnancy, because they have other things that their mind are on. When a parent is involved with their child they are able to have a greater influence over them and help secure their family values.

Most people say teens should remain abstinent but should have access to contraception. Ninety-four percent of adults in the United States-and 91 percent of teenagers-think it important that school-aged children and teenagers be given a strong message from society that they should abstain from sex until they are out of high school. Seventy-eight percent of adults also think that sexually active teenagers should have access to contraception to prevent teen pregnancy. While putting out contraception is a good way to keep teenagers form unwanted pregnancy it also has the opposite affect. It makes teens believe that they have nothing to worry about and forget about the risk, becuase they have some form of contraception. (Singh, S. 31-55)

Contraceptives used among sexually active teens has increased but remains inconsistent. Three-quarters of teens use some method of contraception which is almost

always the condom for the first time they have sex. There are many risks though to using a condom and not being on birth control. Most teens say that they had a condom so they thought they would be fine with just that, but then the condom broke. A sexually active teen who does not use contraception has a 90 percent chance of teen pregnancy within one

year. It is always a good idea to talk to someone about what you are thinking before you do it, because they can give you a better perspective. (Singh S. 31-55)

Parents rate high among many adolescents as trustworthy and preferred information sources on birth control. One in two teens say they "trust" their parents most for reliable and complete information about birth control, only 12 percent say a friend. Most of that 12 percent ends up having to deal with teen pregnancy. There are some teens who were not factored into that statistic. The ones who do not trust their friends and feel uncomfortable talking with their parents about it. For those of you out there who have this problem then the most recommended thing to do is ask a counselor at your school or when you visit your doctor for your next checkup ask them.

Teens who have been raised by both parents whether it be their biological parents or adoptive parents from birth, have lower probabilities of having sex than youths who grew up with any other type of family arrangement. At age 16, 22 percent of girls from two parent households have had sex at least once. Teens from intact, two parent families are less likely to give birth in their teens than girls that come from broken homes or one parent households. The affect that parents play is bigger than they know. If parents take the time to spend time with their children and talk to them about concerning matters then their teen will have a greater chance of forging a strong

emotional bond that will help them resist the temptation of having sex. family is a big roll in the prevention of pregnancy. (Darroch, J.E. 13-16)

Part 4 Complications: There are many risk that are involved with teenage pregnancy when the mother is not fully matured. Specialists say “most teenagers are not phsycially, emotionally, or financially ready to carry and care for a child, their babies tend to have low birth weight and are predisposed to a variety of illnesses.” A teenage mother will need the full support of her family and friends in order to live a healthy life style that will benefit both her and her child.

Teen pregnancy has reached a 20-year low since the 1980's; however, teens give birth to approximately 500,000 babies each year. Teenagers most often use no form of contraseptives in order to protect themselves from unwanted and unintended pregnancies. The majority of teen mothers are not married and have not even thought about the idea of marriage, but very little teenagers give up their children for adoption. Because of this, the mothers are forced to drop out of school and cannot hold a fulltime job due to their lack of education. They also have to take on the responsibility of raising a child before they are ready, emotionally or financially. (Darroch, J.E. 33-43)

Compared to older mother , teenages are at greater risk of having medical complications. Because the teen is more likely to receive little or no prenatal care due to the fact that she has not told anyone about the unwanted pregnancy and fears the reaction of her peers, she has a high chance of becoming anemic and can develop preeclampsia, a severe condition associated with high blood pressure, due to the lack of prenatal care the teen recieved. Vitamin deficiencies are also common among teens,

and the teen mother runs risk of not gaining the correct amount of weight to sustain the baby. Since the teenage mother is still growing herself, she needs to eat properly not only for her own growth but for the growth of the fetus.

Pelvic bones do not reach their maximum size until about the age of 18;

therefore, the pelvis of the teenage mother may not have grown enough to allow the baby to get out

with out complications. For this reason, many mothers have to go through the hassle of having a c-section to avoid harm to their child. (Maynard, R.A. 1-21)

Babies born to teenage mothers are more likely to die in the first year of life compared with babies born to mothers older than 20 years of age. Since the teenage mother is less likely to eat correctly during pregnancy, her baby is at a very high risk to come out premature. When a child comes out premature they do not weigh as much as a baby that has been in it's mothers stomach for a full 9 months. Since the baby's are underweight they run the risk of being prone to many illnesses that could severely damage the fragile newborn or even cause death.

Part 5 High School: Life may be difficult for a teenage mother and her child. Teen mothers are more likely to drop out of high school than girls who choose to wait to have sex. Only 40 percent of teenagers who have children before age 18 go on to graduate from high school, compared to 75 percent of teens who decide to wait to have sex and come from the same social and economic background.

With her education cut short, the teenage mother will be lacking the skills needed to get a job and if they do it will not be a good full time job that pays well enough to support the teen and her new baby. Most teenage moms become financially dependent

on their family or on some form of public assistance. Teen mothers are more likely to live in poverty than women who delay having sex, and more than 75 percent of all unmarried teen mothers go on welfare within 5 years of the birth of their first child. It is also very common for a teen who has had the birth of their first child before the age of 18 to have another child only a few years later.

About 64 percent of children born to an unmarried teenage high school dropout live in poverty, compared to 7 percent of children born to women over age 20 who are married and have graduated high school. A child born to a teenage mother is 50 percent more likely to repeat a grade in school and is more likely to perform poorly on standardized tests and drop out before finishing high school. There are so many downsides to having a child early. Not only does the teenager who gets pregnant suffer by dropping out of high school, but they also are affecting their child's future by not waiting until they are mature enough and financially ready. (Maynard, R.A. 35-62)

Part 6 Single Parent: A lot of the time teen pregnancies lead to single parenting. It can be that it was a one-night stand or that the guy just got scared when he found out. No matter what the reason, there is a really good chance that the guy will leave the girl either while she is pregnant or after she has the baby.

Carrying a child for nine months results in both being attached to each other, more so the girl to the child. So a lot of the time, even if the father is out of the picture, the girl will keep the child because it is too hard for her to separate from the child, even though that is probably what is best for the baby.

As a single parent, raising the child is a difficult job. The child only has one income going to it, and not only that, but that one income is going to the mother too. It's

pretty doubtful that the income is enough for both mother and child, and so one tends to go without. Also, teenage mothers are more likely to be selfish compared to older mothers. Sometimes, not that often, the mother will make the child go without, so she can be satisfied.

The child is more likely to have behavior problems in a single parent household.

Whether it be a mother or a father missing, a huge part of their life is not there.

Typically, mothers should be there to nurture and care for the child, and the father should be there for support and teaching, both parents should be there to teach the child right from wrong. As it shows, missing one of the parents is making the child miss out on some important guidance from a parent. (Brown, S. 28-39)

Part 7 Fathers: In most cases of teen pregnancies, the father is either not in the picture for long, or not in the picture at all. A lot of the time, it's the girl that gets all of the judgement and ridicule. Most people forget that it takes two to have a baby. The fathers are often forgotten and usually don't play a role in the pregnancy, the birth, of the child's life.

In rare cases, the guy decides to stick around and is there for the mother. He will help pay for the pregnancy and the birth of the child, and stay throughout the child's life, whether or not he stays with the mother. It's very likely that the mother and father will break up, and the life of the child turns into a custody battle. Which comes to the question, does a teen father deserve full custody of the child?

Most people will argue that guys don't fully mature until they are in their midtwenties, so why would a judge give custody of a child to another child? Girls mature quicker than guys, and not only that, but carrying a baby for nine months and then

giving birth to that child, really helps a girl to mature. Fathers don't get any of those chances and it 's really hard for them to fully understand like the mother could. Of course, in some cases, it's a better option for the child to be placed with their father but those are very rare cases, because it takes a lot for a judge to take a child away from their mother. (Sawhill I.V. 8-26)

It's not that teen boys wouldn't make good parents, it's that they are too busy to have a child, because they are still trying to grow up themselves. Yes, a teen mother isn't ready for a child either, but when it comes down to it, the girl will be more prepared than the boy.

Conclusion: With each teen pregnancy comes drastic changes. We should be doing everything possible to learn about the reasons for each pregnancy and doing all we can to prevent it. Everyone needs a full childhood and this can not happen when teen pregnancies are increasing. There are many causes for a teen becoming pregnant and each pregnancy had a huge impact on the mother of the child, the father, and the unborn child. We can prevent pregnancy through many ways and we simply need to teach and educate everyone of the different types of contraception. Once the child is born there can also be various hardships. Many children end up growing up in single parent households and this can be detrimental. We need to do all we can to prevent this from happening and by learning about teen pregnancy we can start taking steps to eliminate it. The best way to prevent unwanted pregnancy is to practice abstinence. I am aware that this can be very difficult for some people so other forms of contraceptives are birth control or the pill and condoms. These are the most commonly used and you can get a hold of them the easiest. Take responsibility of your life and your body.