

How Important Are the Relationships Between Teens and Their Parents in Preventing Early Sexual Intercourse?

December 2, 2016

One of the key components of health maintenance research is trying to establish strong bonds and relationships between a child and parent or parents early on in life and then helping families maintain those relationships as children get older.

Dr. Lewis First, MD, MA, Editor-in-Chief, Pediatrics

Content License: FreeView

Article type: [Pediatrics Blog](#)



One of the key components of health maintenance research is trying to establish strong bonds and relationships between a child and parent or parents early on in life and then helping families maintain those relationships as children get older. Yet adolescence can be a time of independence and sometimes those relationships weaken, leading to risk-taking behaviors such as early sexual intercourse.

To better understand the importance of the parental relationship with a teen and to see if a mother-teen or father-teen dyad was more critical in delaying the onset of early intercourse, Nogueira Avelar e Silva et al. ([10.1542/peds.2016-0782](#)) looked at a longitudinal cohort of almost 3000 teens in the Netherlands between 12 and 16 years who were given self-report questionnaires and asked about early sex and their parental relationships over a 2 year survey period. The findings are extremely interesting in terms of which parent—mother or father can reduce the risk of early sexual intercourse.

The study also looks at whether boys or girls are more apt to benefit from a strong parental relationship and then combines gender of child with gender of parent to see if when combined some interesting pairings ensue. They do. This is a study you may want to talk about with families of your patients before these patients reach adolescence to stress the importance of keeping strong ties in place between parent and child as they transition to the age of adolescence. This study is also a great way to remind families that you are available to help offer suggestions or recommend counseling should the relationship start to weaken before or during adolescence. Helping to promote healthy sexual behaviors by learning from studies like this one, and then sharing the results with parents, is yet another great reason to feel good about the health maintenance work so many of us do each and every day.

Further Reading

- [Age at Menarche and Age at First Sexual Intercourse: A Prospective Cohort Study](#)

- [Childhood Behavior Problems and Age at First Sexual Intercourse: A Prospective Birth Cohort Study](#)
- [Pediatrics on Instagram](#)
- [Pediatrics on Facebook](#)

Copyright © 2016 American Academy of Pediatrics