

Parent Guide to Teachable Moments

California requires that students receive education about HIV/AIDS. While most education can be given through the classrooms, there is no substitute for the guidance of parents. However, parents and teenagers often find it difficult to communicate and discuss topics such as sex and drugs because it makes them uncomfortable. It is important to bridge this communication gap, however, and discuss this very important topic. Parents want to protect their children but don't always know how to go about opening the lines of communication for varying reasons:

- **Some mistakenly believe discussing sexual and drug issues will encourage teens to engage in these activities.**
- **Parents feel they might not have enough accurate information.**
- **Some parents deny that their child could ever engage in risky behavior.**
- **Many parents have little experience talking about sex.**
- **Some parents have trouble relating to their teens as sexual beings.**
- **Parental denial or discomfort exists regarding homosexuality.**

Teenagers want to go to their parents for information about sensitive topics such as sex, drugs and AIDS but are often embarrassed or uncomfortable. Some teenagers don't go to their parents because they sense their parents discomfort with these topics. It is important that parents be educated so they may discuss sex, drugs and AIDS more comfortably. These **basic facts about AIDS and safer sex can guide the conversation:** Parents need to know that their **discomfort is normal** and that there are ways to overcome their discomfort and become active communicators and listeners with their teenagers.

- **AIDS is a preventable disease.**
- **There is no cure for AIDS.**
- **The Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) which causes AIDS, is transmitted during sex or while sharing injection drug equipment.**
- **HIV is not spread by casual contact.**
- **Abstinence from both sex and drugs is the best way to prevent infection with HIV, the virus which causes AIDS.**
- **Sexually active persons should use latex condoms in conjunction with a nonoxynol-9 cream or gel (a spermicide) for extra protection during vaginal/anal intercourse.**
- **The use of a latex condom plus spermicide is termed "safer" sex, meaning safer than no protection at all. Only abstinence (or sex with a lifelong, mutually monogamous uninfected partner) is 100% "safe sex."**
- **The more sexual partners a person has, the greater the chance of coming in contact with someone who is infected.**
- **Drugs and alcohol impair judgment when making sexual decisions. They should not be used before or during sexual activity.**

