

# Breaking the Silence

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Preventing HIV/AIDS in Latin American and Caribbean Adolescents and Youth



## Strong Families for Better Adolescent Health



Improving the health and development of adolescents and preventing their participation in risk behaviors, such as those that expose them to HIV and unplanned pregnancy, is the goal of the Strong Families project, a joint PAHO/SIDA/NORAD effort.

Begun in 2002, the two-year project focuses on El Salvador as a pilot country. Strong Families is an orientation program adapted and translated into Spanish from the Iowa Strengthening Families Program (ISFP), which has shown to be highly effective. It centers on strengthening the capacity of parents to express love and set clear limits for their teenaged children, as well as improving youths' capacity to better communicate with their parents and make healthy life decisions, including those affecting their sexual and reproductive health. El Salvador is currently validating the model to scale it up to the national level.

For more information contact [singlets@paho.org](mailto:singlets@paho.org).

## Family-Friendly Adolescent Health Care: Tips for Providers

Families are oftentimes one of the few sources of support for adolescents and youth confronted with health and development problems. The Canadian Pediatric Society's Adolescent Health Committee recently reaffirmed steps providers can take to create places that welcome and promote the family's role in helping youth achieve maximum health. Below are some of these steps, adapted from guidelines published by the BC Council for the Family, British Columbia.

There are four main points to keep in mind when creating family-friendly places:

- Recognize the diversity of families, such as promoting diverse images of the family, as opposed to one ideal; finding out which people adolescents include in their immediate family; and offering linguistically and culturally-sensitive services.
- Build on family strengths, by helping families respect adolescents' need for privacy, confidentiality, informed consent and peer interaction; facilitating family-to-family support networks; and including family members in program planning and community education.
- Establish a working relationship that respects adolescents' need for confidentiality while considering the family's wishes about whom to include in treatment management and health-related discussions; offering educational materials such as videos, pamphlets and tours of the facility; and treating family members as resources for the adolescent's care.
- Create a safe, welcoming environment that encourages families to talk directly.

Visit <http://www.cps.ca/english/statements/AM/am97-01.htm> to view the full list

# What Adolescents Should Know about Sexuality

Giving sexuality information to children while they're young is key to helping them make healthy choices throughout their lives. Planned Parenthood Federation of America provides guidelines for parents and educators regarding what children need to know and when. Because understanding one's sexuality is a lifelong process, it is important for parents to decide when a given topic is age-appropriate for their child. The following is a selection of tips for what parents should consider discussing with their pre-teen and teen children.

## Preadolescents ages 9 to 13 can analyze:

1. How to accept human sexuality as a natural part of life
2. The biology of the reproductive cycle
3. How to talk about how babies are made
4. The topics of menstruation and wet dreams
6. That sexuality is part of development, not just a way to have a baby
7. The probability of pregnancy with unprotected vaginal intercourse

8. The topic of contraceptive methods
9. The topic of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV transmission, prevention and treatment

## Adolescents ages 13 to 18 can discuss:

1. The impact of media presentations that depict sexual involvement
2. The range of difference in sexual behaviors
3. What contraceptive choices exist
4. The causes, prevention and cures of sexually transmitted infections
5. The stages of pregnancy
6. How to articulate their own values regarding interpersonal relations, including sexual behavior
7. How to recognize sexuality as a positive aspect of one's total personality

To view the complete guidelines for all age groups, visit:  
[www.plannedparenthood.org/PARENTS/human\\_sexuality1.html](http://www.plannedparenthood.org/PARENTS/human_sexuality1.html).

## Raising Teens

Raising Teens, A 2001 report published by the Harvard School of Public Health to heighten public awareness of a new body of research in parenting of adolescents has been translated into Spanish by the Pan American Health Organization's Child and Adolescent Health Unit. Written by Dr. A. Rae Simpson, Administrator of Parenting Programs at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the goal of the report is to make findings on parenting more accessible and useful to those who work with and on behalf of parents, adolescents and families, so they can then make the information more accessible and useful to parents.

To learn more about Raising Teens in English, visit the report website:

<http://web.mit.edu/hr/worklife/raising.html>

See the PDF of the Spanish version at:

<http://www.paho.org/Spanish/AD/FCH/CA/serpadresadol.pdf>

