

# Teen sex talks with parents, especially moms, associated with safer sex

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Talking about sex with parents, especially mothers, had an effect on safer sex behavior among adolescents, especially girls, according to an article published online by *JAMA Pediatrics*.

Risky sexual behavior among adolescents is a serious public health problem because of the risk of [sexually transmitted infections](#) and [unintended pregnancies](#). Communication between parents and adolescents is one factor that could positively affect safer sex behavior among teens, including the use of contraception and condoms. However, such open [communication](#) about sex does not always take place because embarrassment and inaccurate knowledge can get in the way.

Laura Widman, Ph.D., of North Carolina State University, Raleigh, and coauthors reviewed medical literature and pooled data from 30 years of research with more than 25,000 adolescents from 52 articles to examine the effect of parent-adolescent sexual communication on safer sex behavior among youth.

The data indicate a small but significant positive effect of parent-adolescent sexual communication associated with [safer sex](#) behavior. That association was stronger for girls and stronger for adolescents who discussed sexual topics with their mothers. The association between parent communication and adolescents' contraceptive and condom use was significantly stronger for girls than boys, the study reports.

"Results of this study confirm that parent-adolescent sexual communication is a protective factor for youth, and a focus on communication remains justified in future intervention efforts," the study concludes.

In a related editorial, Vincent Guilamo-Ramos, Ph.D., M.P.H., L.C.S.W., R.N., of New York University, and coauthors write: "In summary, the meta-analysis by Widman et al provides evidence that parent-adolescent communication is associated with adolescent use of contraceptives and condoms. Most research has focused on parental influences in delaying sexual debut. Sexually active youths also benefit from parental discussions regarding sexual and reproductive health outcomes. Youth want to hear from their parents and overwhelmingly say that parents matter. Hence, public health efforts should support the unique role that [parents](#) can play in sexual decision making among [adolescents](#)."

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