

**Q & A: How do I talk with my teen about sex?
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Question: “My daughter is 13 and we have already had to talk about her losing her virginity. Both parents have to work and are not home when the kids get home. There are some tough choices to make on trusting your child to do the right thing. Do you start your 13 year old on birth control? At 16 I could handle such a decision but not at 13. I don’t think I have to worry about drugs or smoking, but I am not ruling anything out either.”

Answer:

Thirteen years old is too young to even be considering placing your child on birth control—and what I mean by that is that thirteen years old is too young for her to even be considering having intercourse. I know, I know, kids are more knowledgeable about sexuality than ever before, but the bottom line is that a thirteen year old is still a child and has no business being allowed access to sexual interaction. I’m aware, certainly, of the middle school phenomenon of oral sex, petting, and sexual barbs, taunts and teases. But if you are concerned that your young teenager may engage in sexual relations, therefore bringing up the need for contraception, then something is drastically wrong. If she doesn’t have the self-control as well as smarts to avoid sexual contact at her age, then you need to instill some boundaries and limitations for her. If you can’t trust her to be unsupervised after school, then find supervision. Consider having her stay at a friend or relative’s house where there is appropriate adult supervision. Or, an after-care program at the school, church or recreational center may be available. More important, what’s up with her self-concept so that she would even consider having relations with a boy at her age? It’s great that you’ve discussed the issue of sexuality and losing one’s virginity. But, have you discussed (and modeled yourself) morality and values? What about a discussion of health-related concerns such as STDs, pregnancy and especially the emotional ramifications (depression, reputation stresses) which go hand-in-hand with sexual involvement? Sounds to me as if this young lady is being influenced too much by peers and freedom, and not enough by parents and boundaries. Run; don’t walk, to setting up a safe after-school environment for her and your other children. Birth control is not the answer—self-control, values and limits are what this child desperately needs.