



Teens and Dating

When are teens ready to date? At some point in adolescence most American teens begin to date. This is an important and personal decision. Continued discussion with your teen will help you feel more certain about when your teen should start dating. First, what does dating mean to you and your teen? You may have very different definitions. Is dating in a group or with only the couple?

Should age of the other youth matter? Research finds that girls who date men that are much older, are more likely to use drugs and alcohol and to engage in early sexual behavior.

Here are a few tips for monitoring your teens dating:

- Know whom your teen is dating.
- Know where your teen is going on a date and what they plan to do.
- Set guidelines for where, when, and how often your teen goes on dates.
- Don't jump to conclusions about what dating means. Dating does not equal sex.
- Be clear about your family rules on dating. Clarify how you would feel if the relationship was serious, or if you dislike the person your teen is seeing.

Teens often have questions about dating and intimate relationships. Help your teen understand that healthy relationships are based on trust and caring. Being able to identify and be in healthy relationships is a very important skill. Remember, teens fall in love often and intensely, so listen to them and try not judge their relationships. Dating can help build self-esteem, can help teens figure out who they are, and can teach social skills.

For more information call your health care provider or visit Parenting.umn.edu

Source: *Positive Parenting of Teens*, University of Minnesota Extension Service and University of Minnesota Department of Public Health

For more information on parenting call INFO-U at 612-624-2200 and request a catalog of available topics.

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