Pregnancy can lead to devastating health consequences for girls. Many adolescents are not yet physically ready for pregnancy or childbirth, and are therefore more vulnerable to complications. Additionally, adolescents who become pregnant tend to be from lower-income households, and many are nutritionally depleted, increasing the risks associated with pregnancy and childbearing.

Tens of thousands of adolescents die annually of causes related to pregnancy and childbirth. In fact, these are the second leading cause of death among adolescent girls, aged 15-19, globally.

Health problems are even more likely if a girl becomes pregnant too soon after reaching puberty. The risk of maternal death for girls under age 15 in low- and middle-income countries is higher than for women in their twenties. These girls also face risks such as obstetric fistula.

**The way forward**

Many countries are working to prevent adolescent pregnancy. Unfortunately, these efforts often focus on changing the behaviour of girls rather than addressing the underlying drivers of adolescent pregnancy. Such drivers include [gender inequality](http://www.unfpa.org/gender-equality), poverty, sexual violence and coercion, child marriage, social pressures, exclusion from educational and job opportunities, and negative attitudes about girls. Many efforts also neglect to account for the role of boys and men.

A more holistic approach is required to support girls in avoiding early pregnancy. Such an approach should include providing age-appropriate [comprehensive sexuality education](http://www.unfpa.org/comprehensive-sexuality-education) for all young people; investing in girls’ education; preventing child marriage, sexual violence and coercion; building gender-equitable societies by empowering girls and [engaging men and boys](http://www.unfpa.org/engaging-men-boys); and ensuring adolescents’ access to sexual and reproductive health information as well as [services](http://www.unfpa.org/resources/adolescent-sexual-and-reproductive-health) that welcome them and facilitate their choices.

United population fund , November 2015. <http://www.unfpa.org/adolescent-pregnancy>

**Health effects**

Pregnancy and childbirth complications are the second cause of death among 15 to 19 year olds globally. However, there have been significant drops in the number of deaths in all regions since 2000, most notably in South-East Asia where mortality rates fell from 21 to 9 per 100 000 girls. Some 3 million unsafe abortions among girls aged 15 to 19 take place each year, contributing to maternal deaths and to lasting health problems.

Early childbearing increases the risks for both mothers and their newborns. In low- and middle-income countries, babies born to mothers under 20 years of age face a 50% higher risk of being still born or dying in the first few weeks versus those born to mothers aged 20-29. The younger the mother, the greater the risk to the baby. Newborns born to adolescent mothers are also more likely to have low birth weight, with the risk of long-term effects.

**Economic and social consequences**

Adolescent pregnancy can also have negative social and economic effects on girls, their families and communities. Many girls who become pregnant have to drop out of school. A girl with little or no education has fewer skills and opportunities to find a job. This can also have an economic cost with a country losing out on the annual income a young woman would have earned over her lifetime, if she had not had an early pregnancy.

**WHO response**

WHO published guidelines in 2011 with the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) on preventing early pregnancies and reducing poor reproductive outcomes. These made recommendations for action that countries could take, with 6 main objectives:

* reducing marriage before the age of 18;
* creating understanding and support to reduce pregnancy before the age of 20;
* increasing the use of contraception by adolescents at risk of unintended pregnancy;
* reducing coerced sex among adolescents;
* reducing unsafe abortion among adolescents;
* increasing use of skilled antenatal, childbirth and postnatal care among adolescents.

WHO is also involved in a variety of joint efforts with related agencies and programmes, such as the “H4+” initiative that includes UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Women and the World Bank. The H4+ aims to to accelerate progress towards achieving Millennium Development Goals 4 (reducing child mortality) and 5 (improving maternal health) by 2015. It tackles the root causes of maternal, newborn and child mortality and morbidity—among them gender inequality, child marriage and limited access to education for girls. H4+ aligns closely with national health plans and provides some financial and technical support to governments.

(WHO, 2014 http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs364/en/ )

**Peer Pressure**

During adolescence, teenagers often feel pressure to make friends and fit in with their peers. Many times these teens let their friends influence their decision to have sex even when they do not fully understand the consequences associated with the act. Teenagers have sex as a way to appear cool and sophisticated, but in some cases the end result is an unplanned teen pregnancy. The Kaiser Family Foundation states that more than 29 percent of pregnant teens reported that they felt pressured to have sex, and 33 percent of pregnant teens stated that they felt that they were not ready for a sexual relationship, but proceeded anyway because they feared ridicule or rejection.

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**Absent Parents**

Teen girls are more likely to get pregnant if the have limited or no guidance from their parents. Many parents have busy lives that prevent them from providing the guidance and support that their young teenagers need to make good decisions on issues such as sex, according to the website Parent Dish. When a teen does not feel that she can talk to her parents about sex either because they forbid sex talk or because they are not around, she will more than likely turn to friends for direction on whether or not to have sex, resulting in misinformation and possible teen pregnancy.

* [Sponsored Links](https://www.google.com/url?ct=abg&q=https://www.google.com/adsense/support/bin/request.py%3Fcontact%3Dabg_afc%26url%3Dhttp://www.livestrong.com/article/146681-what-are-the-causes-of-teenage-pregnancy/%26gl%3DNG%26hl%3Den%26client%3Dca-livestrong_html%26ai0%3DCX1IolXQFWIaqHpC_Wu_9mZgEi5jss0Sst6nntwHAjbcBEAEgj7CkEGC3vIOF9DCgAYSru90DyAEBqAMBqgSvAU_QeI-1VJXWfDHgrIXlTL-LJ69EJvGd23EbS6OY2HtWCGpI9eHcZrR7btiOhh_mUUlIguKQ4d_FUvUceCHeUeVKG7yDLqoUfRfgAc5ZS13LQiOqhBcVXM0kYkGJVFLEz2wn35H--gt83iYLy-XUG60YbPbXoGczLsm7bx-nnARrVN6PlGWJyuHt0JrYagFupGT_dTCIh_MHrI0TAiw4a1E0KYOveDvGBIHJP6yVrJ2IBgGAB-TUxCKoB6a-G9gHAdIIBQiAARAB&usg=AFQjCNHVip0Em7jhcyyQIpQQnXiXqzmHSw)
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**Glamorization of Pregnancy**

The movie industry and the media contribute to teenage pregnancy by glamorizing teen pregnancy in news stories and movies. Movies that depict teen pregnancy as something to be desired encourage teens to engage in reckless sexual activity, according to ABC's "Good Morning America." During adolescence, teens become more focused on their appearance and how their peers perceive them. They want to be seen as part of the group, so if teen pregnancy is viewed as acceptable in their school or amongst their friends, they may seek to become pregnant as a way to gain social acceptance.

**Lack of Knowledge**

Teenagers who are uneducated about sex are more likely to have an unintended pregnancy. Some teens do not fully understand the biological and emotional aspects associated with having sex, according to DailyRecord.co.uk. These teens may get incorrect information from friends, videos, sitcoms and/or movies. Many times, teens do not have the knowledge needed to make informed and responsible decisions about whether or not to engage in sexual activity that can alter their life.

**Sexual Abuse or Rape**

Teens can become pregnant as a result of sexual abuse or rape. The Guttmacher Institute states that between 43 and 62 percent of teens acknowledge that they were impregnated by an adult male, and two-thirds report that their babies' fathers are as old as 27. Approximately 5 percent of all teen births are the result of a rape.

**Teenage Drinking**

Teen drinking can cause an unexpected pregnancy, according to the website Love to Know. Many teens experiment with drugs and alcohol. Drinking lowers a teen’s ability to control her impulses, contributing to 75 percent of pregnancies that occur between the ages 14 and 21. Approximately 91 percent of pregnant teens reported that although they were drinking at the time, they did not originally plan to have sex when they conceived.

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* [Love Compatibility Test](https://googleads.g.doubleclick.net/aclk?sa=l&ai=CG5pjlHQFWIHZHYrUWKu0iNABv5SJskXn_LXg4gPAjbcBEAEgj7CkECgEYLe8g4X0MKAB1-7y-QPIAQGoAwGqBK8BT9AiCEfmxkCWcXAEoc6qPIu7MBQNCXCB1DUcmv4BNsFenWX35Oqf3ZAJtGWdyQMfLlNImrSD-aUJ_SbzOdaQUdRA2T--vu2f1vZ7PEMqJGsGVyQtm7yPMr8l6DkJ7hV_ARtiDnwCL6KL4W6plShK-21ShDF51oSVwQVqbH0Wmrvn5ZF4WGBtMyYCqeK0wOEtN8_YrTi1cdPZCGLY0qJo9ClIgm7HQPIsw3js_Sxf64AHkZGNBqgHpr4b2AcB0ggFCIABEAHYEwg&num=1&sig=AOD64_1CyuLGVUWVbYGOMs7yObjhOLFzoA&client=ca-livestrong_html&adurl=https://www.the-astrology.com/welcome-s.php%3Fr%3DRDM101166)

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