Lesson Five

Title: Abstinence & Pregnancy Prevention

Theme: Birth Control & Abstaining

Time: 140 minutes

Materials:
* Flip Chart Paper
* Markers & Tape
* Chalkboard / Whiteboard
* Video: *Teens and Sex*
* Pregnancy Prevention FACT SHEETS
* Birth Control Overheads and Samples of Birth Control Methods

Objectives

- To explain the term abstinence as it applies to healthy sexuality.
- To examine abstinence and decisions to postpone sexual activity as healthy choices.
- To provide students with factual information about birth control.
- To identify and explain the use of contraception methods.

Curriculum Expectations

7p11 – Use effective communication skills to deal with various situations.

7p12 – Explain the term abstinence as it applies to healthy sexuality.

8p10 – Explain the importance of abstinence as a positive choice for adolescents.

8p12 – Identify methods used to prevent pregnancy.

4MAT Quadrant Codes

3L: Teacher as Facilitator; Worksheets; Discussion; Case studies
4L: Group Work; Problem-Solving; Individual Projects; Decision Making; Preparation for Group or Individual Oral Presentations; Organizing; Researching
Lesson Five

Background Information

Although the incidence of adolescent pregnancies in Canada have dropped steadily since the 1990s (McKay, 2005) there is still cause for concern with the 2001 provincial rate of 31 births/1000 females aged 15 to 19 years becoming pregnant (Gauging the Health of Peel Youth, 2005). The rate of teen pregnancy in Peel is slightly lower than the provincial rate at 28 births/1000 females aged 15-19 years. The report Gauging the Health of Peel Youth (2005) reveals that roughly 2/3 (62%) of Peel students who have been sexually active engaged in sexual intercourse when they were 15 years or younger. It is interesting to note that the younger an adolescent is when engaging in sexual intercourse, the less likely they are to use contraceptives or methods to prevent STIs (i.e., condoms) (Gauging the Health of Peel Youth, 2005).

The implications of these statistics are well worth some thought given that teenage pregnancy and STIs are the outcome of unprotected intercourse. At a young age most females may not be physically or emotionally ready to have children. Adolescent pregnancy is often associated with poor outcomes such as low birth weight, pre-term infants, poor maternal weight gain, and high blood pressure during pregnancy and STIs (Carter, Fleice, Rossoff, Zabin, Beilenson & Danenberg, 1994). Since pregnancy during adolescence can have a serious impact on the adolescent parents, the child and society, effective prevention strategies are needed. All students need information on contraception and safer sex in order to avoid unintended pregnancies and STIs.

Activity One: What is Abstinence? – 50 minutes

Note to Teachers: Abstinence is the only 100 percent effective method for avoiding unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV. Teens, especially young teens, should be encouraged to delay sexual initiation. Educators should acknowledge the importance of abstinence and provide youth with the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to make abstinence an effective choice. Even
Lesson Five

youth who pledge to remain abstinent need information about contraception and condoms to help them prevent unwanted pregnancy, HIV and other STI’s when they do choose to become sexually active. Research indicates that information about contraception does not increase sexual activity nor hasten the onset of sexual initiation in teens.

Procedure

Participants will define abstinence and identify skills to make sexual abstinence an effective choice.

1. Introduce the activity by pointing out that failure to make responsible decisions about sex is one of the reasons teens can become infected with HIV, other STIs and/or experience an unwanted pregnancy. Explain that one decision teens can make about sex is to not have it—to abstain until they are older and ready for the responsibilities that accompany the choice to be sexually active.

2. Pin up two different sheets of chart paper with the word "Abstinence" written on each one.

3. Ask students to define abstinence in their own words. Write their responses on one of the sheets of chart paper. If the youth do not make the following points, make them yourself:
   a. Abstinence is a deliberate decision to avoid something. People choose to abstain from many different things, such as sweets, meat, candy, tobacco products, voting, alcohol and/or other drugs, and/or sexual activities.
   b. People choose to abstain for many different reasons, such as health (avoiding sweets or fat), personal religious beliefs (avoiding meat, alcohol), commitment to a cause or person (abstaining from voting and/or participating in some behaviours), fear (of punishment, of negative consequences), and disinterest.
Lesson Five

c. People define sexual abstinence in many different ways. For one person, it may mean no physical contact with potential partners—no kissing, no holding hands. For another, it may mean abstaining from one specific behaviour, such as avoiding vaginal intercourse. For the purpose of this exercise, abstinence should be defined as having no sexual intercourse: vaginal, oral, and/or anal.

4. Split the class into four groups and give the groups 15 minutes to discuss and list at least ten reasons why teens might decide to not have sex.

5. Once the groups have completed their list, ask them to share the reasons they have listed with the rest of the class. Record the reasons on a master list using the second sheet of chart paper. Teens should have identified some of the following, if not add them to the list:
   a. Religious beliefs, personal beliefs, not ready for sex, want to wait until married, want to wait until out of high school, risk of pregnancy, risk of STIs, don't want to jeopardize goals, relationship with parents, not in love, peer pressure, not interested.

6. Ask the class to discuss the reasons listed. Ask the teens to evaluate if each reason is a "good" or "bad" reason to choose abstinence. Note that there will be varying views on what constitutes “good” or “bad” amongst the students. Validate that people have different reasons for choosing abstinence and that each should be valued and respected.

7. Explain to the group that abstinence is only 100 percent effective if used consistently and correctly. Ask teens what they think you mean by that statement.

8. Conclude with the following discussion:
   a. Given what we learned today, do you think that there are some good reasons to choose abstinence from sexual intercourse?
   b. Is it difficult to stick to the decision not to have sex? What are some things people can do to help themselves follow through with that decision?
   c. What can you do to help your friends if they choose to be abstinent?

Source: Used with permission from Advocates for Youth, www.advocatesforyouth.org
Lesson Five

**Activity Two: Methods of Pregnancy Prevention – 60 minutes**

1. Prepare 10 sheets of flip chart paper by listing a different method of pregnancy prevention at the top of each one.

**Methods to focus on:**

- Abstinence
- Birth Control Pill (oral contraceptives)
- Male Condom
- Plan B (Emergency Contraceptive Pill)
- Sponge
- Patch
- Contraceptive Foam
- Female Condom
- Vaginal Contraceptive Film
- Diaphragm
- Nuva Ring
- *Note: For Withdrawal and Rhythm methods please see Note to Teacher.

2. List the questions participants will be answering for each method on the charts:
   - What is it?
   - How effective is it?
   - How is it used?
   - What are some of the advantages of this method?
   - What are some of the disadvantages of this method?

Be sure that the flipchart sheets can be read from a distance, and leave enough space for the participants to record their answers.

3. Tape the sheets of flip chart paper up at various points in the room. Place the appropriate sample method nearby for those who wish to get a closer look.

4. Circulate between the groups to keep them on task and to assist them (e.g. leading questions or giving information).
Lesson Five

5. Once participants have completed the questions (to the best of their ability) ask each group to report their findings. Review each method, by following the answer key. Remember that the answer key will not provide all information about each method. The goal of this activity is to introduce participants to the different methods of pregnancy prevention available (particularly the methods that young people most commonly use). For more information about these methods, you can consult the fact sheets provided and/or visit www.peelsexualhealth.ca. You may also wish to make copies of this information for students, including community resources (e.g. youth friendly clinics, phone numbers, etc…).

6. Ask participants to identify which method(s) they think would be most effective for young people and why?

Note to Teachers: Once the students have discussed the contraceptive options listed on the chart paper, ask the students if there are methods they have heard about but not yet discussed. Make sure to conclude with information about the Withdrawal method, the Calendar/Rhythm method, and the risks and consequences of not using a method (see fact sheets at end of lesson for more details).

Possible Extension

Instruct participants to create a poster or a commercial advertising a method of pregnancy prevention. This can be done individually or in partners.

Possible Assessment

Another opportunity for a formal evaluation exists at the end of the Abstinence and Pregnancy Prevention lesson. A poster/presentation could be evaluated by the teacher, peers or self.

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Lesson Five

Activity Three: Screen Video – 28 minutes

*Teens and Sex: What You Need To Know*

The road to informed sexual decision-making is filled with potential wrong turns. Peer pressure, misinformation, media exposure, and increased hormone levels can make it difficult for teens to make decisions in their own best interest. Two peer hosts, using a straightforward approach, answer questions and debunk myths about sexual development, conception, pregnancy, contraception and STIs. Abstinence is presented as the only 100 percent foolproof way to avoid pregnancy.

Interweaving real-life scenarios with clear, crisp graphics, this program takes an in-depth look at the effectiveness of various contraceptives, details how STIs are spread, the dangers of leaving them untreated, and the need for consistent condom use to avoid STIs. The information presented also illustrates the clear link between the presence of an STI and increased risk of contracting HIV. The program ends with a Sex I.Q. quiz to reinforce key concepts and test viewer knowledge.
Lesson Five

Video Handout

As you view the video, “Teens and Sex” please write down any questions that you may have. Here are some possible topics to guide you. If you have other questions, feel free to include them. Also, remember NOT to write your name on this sheet!

- Sexual development
- Sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- Contraception, protection, safer sex
- Pregnancy
- HIV/AIDS (contraction, transmission, disease, symptoms, testing)

Are there topics that you have heard about but do not understand?

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What do you want to know more about?

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Is there something you are concerned or worried about?

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Any other questions?

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Lesson Five

References

Advocates For Youth. *Teaching Abstinence as a Part of Comprehensive Sex Education: What is Abstinence?*, Washington, DC.  [www.advocatesforyouth.org](http://www.advocatesforyouth.org)


