

# My Teen is Going to Be a Parent

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Often, the immediate reaction to learning your teenage son or daughter is expecting a baby is fueled by a rush of emotions: fear, anger, stress, uncertainty, confusion, shock, and maybe even embarrassment. In some cases, families respond with excitement and positivity to such news. All families and kids have different strengths and challenges, but the common ground is all families and kids need support at times like this. It can help to press pause on your emotional reactions, knowing your child is feeling overwhelmed at learning they are going to be a mother or father.

Avoiding messages of guilt, shame, blame, or punishment can reassure young people that they have a safe space to process this news. Parents and kids aren't perfect, and there is no perfect response to news of teen pregnancy.

We hope this helps inform your decisions and provides guidance in talking with your child about teen pregnancy and parenting. As you strive to be present and supportive of your teen, become familiar with other resources and outlets for parents having this experience.

## Quick Tips for Supporting a Health Teen Pregnancy

- ▶ Encourage a healthy, consistent, and balanced diet
- ▶ Teach your child healthy recipes, cooking skills, and food safety
- ▶ Introduce planning and budgeting for meals and groceries
- ▶ Help incorporate safe exercise and activity like walking into daily life
- ▶ Model healthy sleep hygiene, coping skills, and stress management
- ▶ Without lecturing, remind young expecting parents of the importance of eliminating harmful substances like nicotine, alcohol, medications, and illicit substances
- ▶ Show the value of planning, record keeping, and consistent attendance of wellness checks



The **Strengthening Families Protective Factors™** is a research-informed framework intended to increase family strengths, enhance child development, and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect. You can use these five factors to help support pregnant and parenting teens, to achieve the best possible outcomes for your children and their children.

- 1 Parental resilience.** Consider your own abilities and strengths that help you to be a strong support for your expecting son or daughter. Highlight those existing strengths within your child that will help them overcome difficult times as adults and young parents.
- 2 Social connections.** Call on friends, family, and neighbors for their support. Seek guidance from other parents and grandparents. Model and normalize the healthy practice of reaching out, asking for help, and accepting support from others.
- 3 Knowledge of parenting and child development.** Gather resources and learn up-to-date information about healthy parenting practices, safe discipline, and establishing boundaries and expectations. Show your child the growth process of parenting can be enriching for everyone.
- 4 Concrete support in time of need.** Share resources that meet needs and empower your family to find healthy solutions and timely options. Try social support networks and groups in your community like grandparent support and education groups, as well as social opportunities for your parents.
- 5 Children's social and emotional competence.** Healthy, safe kids become strong, balanced adults who keep children safe. Modeling effective communication, healthy coping, and positive interpersonal relationships goes a long way in the bigger picture.

### Resources for Pregnant and Parenting Teens

These nonprofits offer excellent information and advice for parents and caregivers who are navigating teen pregnancy together.

*Youth Rights for Pregnant Teens in Pennsylvania Juvenile Law Center* • [jlc.org](http://jlc.org)

*Child Welfare Information Gateway: The Children's Bureau & Administration for Children and Families* • [childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/promoting/parenting/pregnant-teens](http://childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/promoting/parenting/pregnant-teens)

*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention* • [cdc.gov/teenpregnancy](http://cdc.gov/teenpregnancy)

*Center for the Study of Social Policy* • [cssp.org](http://cssp.org)

*Healthy Teen Network* • [healthyteennetwork.org](http://healthyteennetwork.org)

*Teen Line* • [teenlineonline.org](http://teenlineonline.org) • 310-855-4673 • Text TEEN to 839863