



American College of Pediatricians®

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Patient Information Handout

Facts about Cohabitation for Teens & Young Adults

As you begin dating and thinking about a future relationship leading marriage, living together with your boyfriend or girlfriend may seem appealing. It may appear to be a practical and positive stepping stone towards a healthy marriage relationship. Actually, this notion is far from the truth. Living together before marriage (cohabitation) can bring significant harm to you individually and to the relationship. Cohabitation makes it more likely that couples will break up, and more likely that they will divorce if they do marry. Partners who cohabit are also more likely to be unfaithful than are married spouses, and are 2-5 times more likely to be violent toward the other partner. Here are more facts about cohabitation you should know:

- *Young men*, do you want to be there for your children every day? *Young women*, do you want your children to have a father who is involved in their lives as they grow up? Well, sadly, only 1/3rd of children whose parents were living together unmarried at their birth still have both parents in the home at age 15.
- Couples who cohabited are less likely to ever get married, and if they marry, are not as satisfied as those who marry without first cohabiting.
- Couples who live together report higher levels of stress and depression than couples who are married. Their children experience the same risks.
- Women who settle for cohabitation are more likely to live in or near poverty. Their male partners are less likely to work and more likely to spend their time on personal pleasure than do married men. Their children also experience more poverty.
- Cohabiting couples are more likely to break up than married couples; as many as 50% separate/divorce by the time their 1st child is 3 years old. Due to higher rates of separation, children born to cohabiting couples are very likely to suffer the loss of their father and to experience this loss several times over with a potential "revolving door" of father-figures.
- Children are far more likely to be abused by an unrelated, live-in boyfriend than their own father.
- Children of couples who cohabit are at higher risk for school failure, conviction of crime, alcohol and drug abuse, suicide and child abuse.
- Women in a cohabiting relationship are 10 times more likely to have an abortion than married women, and therefore suffer from its associated mortality and morbidity.

The doctors of the American College of Pediatricians urge you to avoid cohabitation and to recognize the life-long benefits of marriage for you, your future spouse and your children. Don't be fooled by the media and movies who make cohabitation look harmless and happy. Saving your sexual relations for marriage will bring you tremendous physical and emotional benefits for life. Hold firm to these convictions; Be strong!

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