

Did you know in Canada...

- ☞ Children who have been exposed to age-appropriate sexuality education in the home from a young age are more likely to postpone sexual involvement until they are older.
- ☞ In Canada, the rates of teen pregnancy are higher than in many developed countries¹. Currently, over 42,000 young women aged 15-19 become pregnant each year². It is estimated that $\frac{3}{4}$ of pregnancies among young women are unintended³.
- ☞ World Health Organization (WHO) released a report in October of 2002 identifying the top ten major health risks in the world. Unsafe sex was number two on the list.
- ☞ Orton and Rosenblatt estimated that for every \$1 spent on family planning services, more than \$10 is saved in welfare and family benefits alone.¹⁶
- ☞ Over 60% of Canadian youth under 19 have had sexual intercourse¹. This statistic does not include other sexual behaviours (such as oral sex) which can result in STIs unless safer sex is practiced.
- ☞ There are high rates of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in youth aged 15-24 in Canada⁸.
- ☞ Many sexually active youth place themselves at risk of pregnancy and STIs. Only 60% of 15-17 year olds consistently use some form of contraception. Only 40% had “always” used condoms in the last 6 months. A majority (58%) of teens are sexually active before starting on birth control⁹.
- ☞ Most youth see pregnancy, and not STIs or HIV, as the primary risk associated with sexual activity. Many young people are unaware and unconcerned about future problems that may result from STIs including infertility and pelvic inflammatory disease¹.
- ☞ Infertility is experienced by approximately 7% of Canadian couples, often as a result of earlier untreated STIs¹.
- ☞ A significant proportion of sexual activity among Canadian adults with non-regular partners is unprotected¹⁰.

- ☞ Individual Canadians and society as a whole, pay a considerable price for sexual and reproductive health problems, including emotional, financial and health costs. Although dollars spent on the prevention of negative health outcomes could result in vast savings, sexual and reproductive health services are especially vulnerable to reductions in health funding made by all levels of government¹.
- ☞ Many young women are coerced into sexual activity. One study found that nearly ¼ of women have been verbally or physically coerced into sexual activity. Younger women were more likely to have experience abuse¹¹.
- ☞ Four in ten adult women (39%) report having been sexually assaulted at least once since the age of 16, and 60% of women who experienced sexual assault had experienced more than one incident.¹
- ☞ Very few women are comfortable talking to their doctors about sexual issues, sexual violence or sexual orientation¹¹.
- ☞ There are 35,000 diagnosed cases of HIV/AIDS in Canada and an estimated 15,000 more who are unaware of their HIV infection. The number of women becoming infected with HIV is on the rise and has increased 20% since 1997⁵.
- ☞ Although the rates of HIV infection are relatively low among youth in Canada, sexual risk behaviour and the high rates of STIs indicate the potential for HIV infection exists among young Canadians⁶.
- ☞ There is a significant proportion of Canadians with risk factors for HIV infection that have never been tested for HIV. It has been estimated that about 30% of the HIV-infected population are unaware that they are infected⁷.
- ☞ Reproductive rights are internationally recognized rights, incorporated in international human rights documents which have been ratified by Canada, including the 1994 ICPD Programme of Action.
- ☞ Some Canadians have little or no access to SRH information and services because of their socio-economic status, age, abilities, geographic location, language, culture or sexual orientation. Canadians who live in marginalized circumstances are disproportionately affected by sexual and reproductive health problems¹.
- ☞ Although abortion is legal in Canada and the majority (almost 80%) of Canadians are pro-choice, access to this reproductive choice varies across the country⁴.
- ☞ Sexually active Canadians often mistakenly believe that trust will protect them from STIs. Condom use tends to drop off once partners become acquainted and develop trust, without the benefit of STI testing⁹.

- ☞ A majority of women lack knowledge about emergency contraceptive pills (ECP) to prevent a pregnancy after unprotected sex. The national average for awareness of ECP is only 46%⁹.
- ☞ It is estimated that between 10-15% of Canadians are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered
- ☞ Canadian youth watch over 15 hours of television per week¹². Two thirds of TV shows contain references to or depictions of sexual behaviour while only 10% of shows with sexual content include references to safer sex or the possible risk of sex¹³.
- ☞ While the majority of Canadian parents want their children to receive sexuality education in schools¹⁴, access to sexuality education in schools has declined. Curriculum time devoted to sexual health has declined as health education is combined with career or physical education.
- ☞ From Health Canada¹: *“We know that positive action can promote sexual and reproductive health and prevent the kinds of problems outlined above. Programs and services are offered by all levels of government and private organizations in Canada: however, there is wide agreement that we are not achieving the best possible result for our efforts, and that there are significant gaps”*.

¹ see Health Canada (2001). *Report from Consultations on a Framework for Sexual and Reproductive Health*.

² Dryburgh, H. (2000). Teenage pregnancy. *Health Reports*; 12:9-19.

³ see Langille, D. (2000). *Adolescent Sexual Health Services and Education: Options for Nova Scotia*. Policy Discussion Series Paper No. 8.

⁴ Arthur, J. (1999). Abortion in Canada: History, Law and Access. <http://www.prochoiceactionnetwork-canada.org/Canada.html>

⁵Health Canada, 2000

⁶Health Canada, (April 2002) HIV/AIDS Epi Update, HIV and AIDS among youth in Canada).

⁷Health Canada (April 2002). HIV/AIDS Epi Update, Prevalent HIV infections in Canada: Up to one-third may not be diagnosed.

⁸Health Canada (May 2002) STD Epi Update, Condoms, Sexually transmitted infections, safer sex and you.

⁹ Fisher, W., Boroditsky, R., & Bridges, M. (1999). The 1998 Canadian Contraception Study, *CJHS* 8:3.

¹⁰ Health Canada (May 1999). HIV/AIDS Epi update, Sexual risk behaviours of Canadians.

¹¹JSOGC, 2000

¹² Statistics Canada (January 25, 2001). *The Daily, Television Viewing Fall 1999*.

¹³ Kaiser Family Foundation, 2001.

¹⁴see McKay, A. (2001). Common Questions about Sexual Health Education, *SIECCAN Newsletter* 35-1, 129-137.

¹⁵Progress of Canada's Children, '99-00.

¹⁶ Orton MJ, Rosenblatt E: Adolescent pregnancy in Ontario: progress in prevention. *Planned Parenthood Ontario, Report #2*, February 1986