

# Healthy Behaviors for Teens

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## A Special Report to Parents of Teens in Elbert County

Fall, 2012

Elbert County Health Department

### **INSIDE:**

Tips for Talking to your Teens

Common Teen Behaviors and Causes of Death

Stress, Depression

Tobacco, Alcohol, Sex

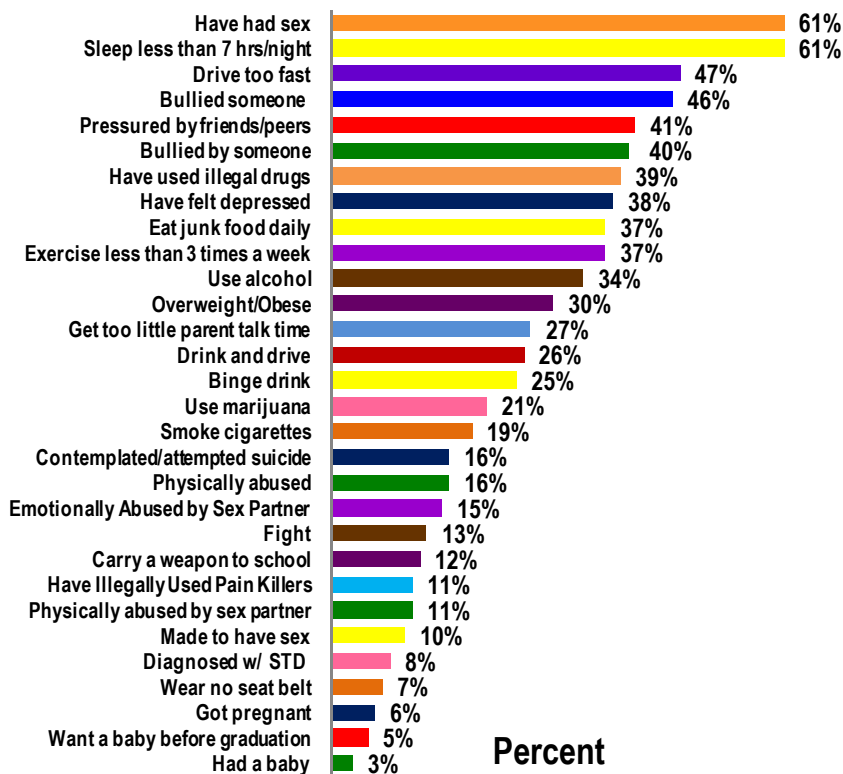
Overweight and Exercise

# BEHAVIOR AND RISK FOR TEENS

In April of 2012, 1,070 students or \_\_\_\_\_ percent of Elbert County High School and Middle School students took the BART survey. Parents were sent written notification of the survey and given the opportunity to refuse to allow their child to participate. Each teen anonymously answered 59 multiple choice questions about personal behavior relating to nutrition, safety, tobacco, alcohol, drugs, stress and sex. Statistical reports are available at [www.publichealthathens.com](http://www.publichealthathens.com).

**As teens grow older, more and more participate in unhealthy behaviors, often without knowledge of the risks or input from their parents. Studies confirm that good parent-teen communication with clear advice about behavior choices makes a difference. Talking with your kids can help them stay safe and healthy.**

## Preventable Health Risks 17 and 18 Year Olds in Elbert County



### “THIRTEEN ESSENTIAL RULES OF THUMB FOR TALKING WITH KIDS ABOUT ANYTHING”

1. Create an open environment.
2. Consider your child’s temperament.
3. Respect your child’s feelings.
4. Understand the questions.
5. Always be honest.
6. If you don’t know something, admit it.
7. Don’t leave big gaps.
8. Use age-appropriate language.
9. Get feedback.
10. Be patient.
11. Say it again and again.
12. Give them your undivided attention.
13. Speak separately to kids of different ages.

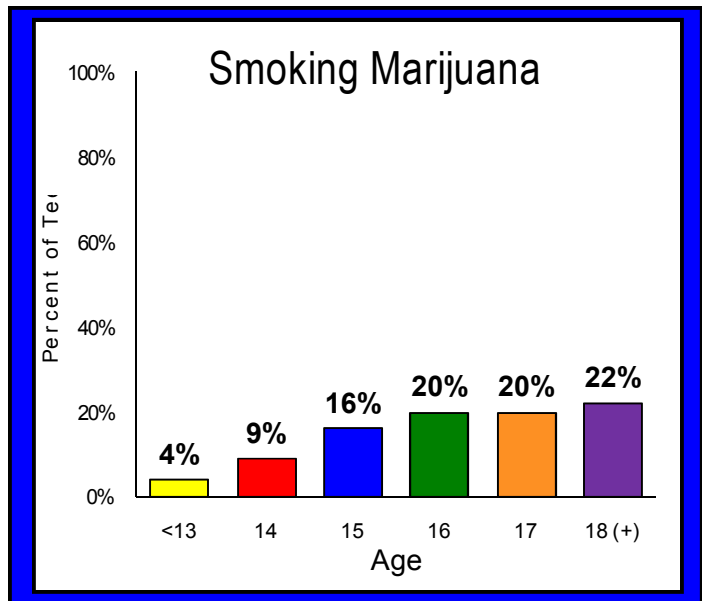
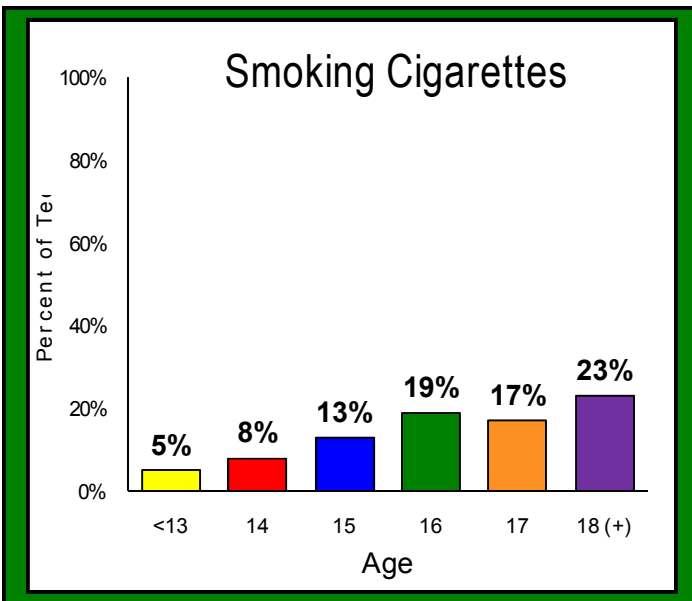
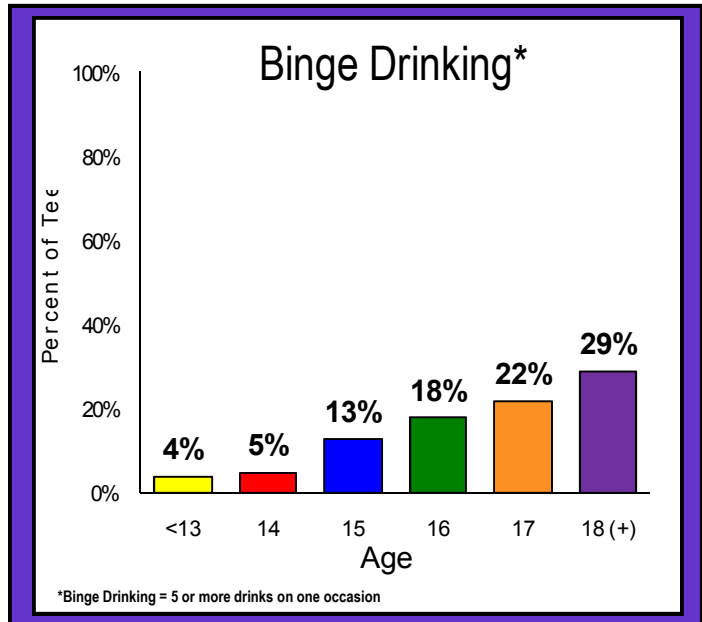
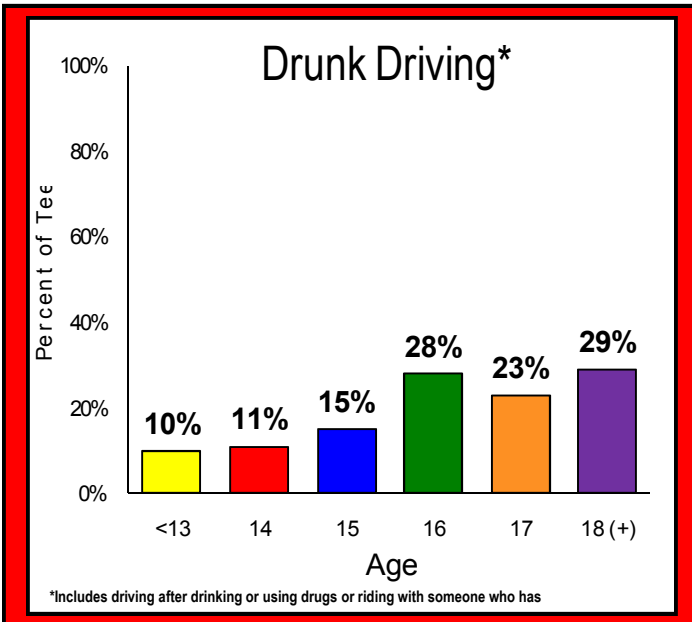
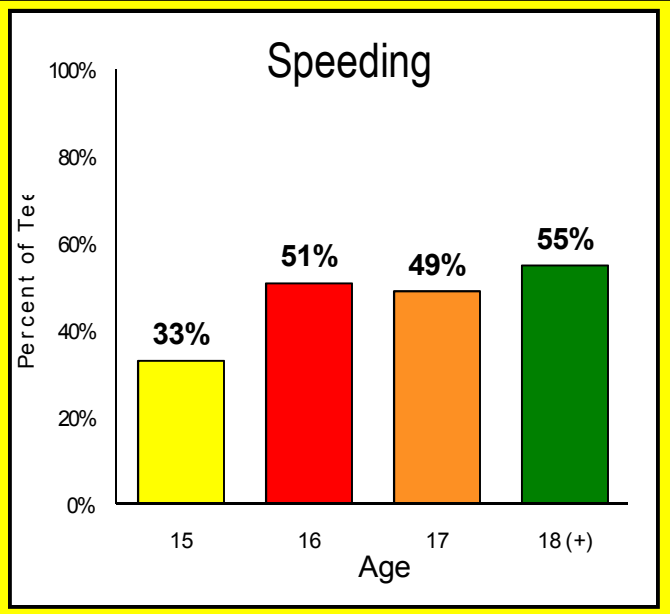
# ELBERT COUNTY



## BEHAVIOR AND RISK FOR TEENS

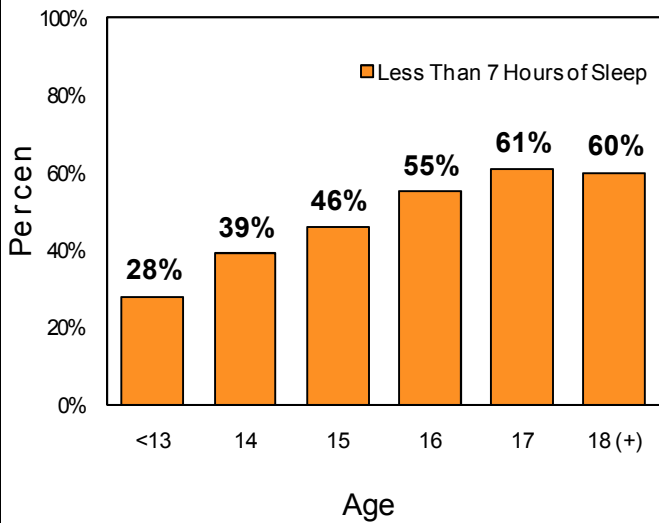
A health survey about nutrition, exercise, safety, tobacco, alcohol, drugs, stress and sex

Anonymous Survey (no student names used)  
Computerized School and Individual Student Feedback

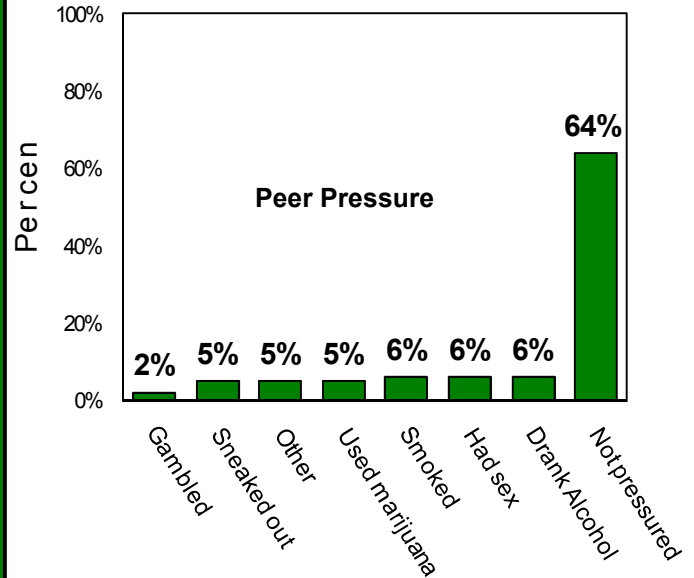


# STRESS

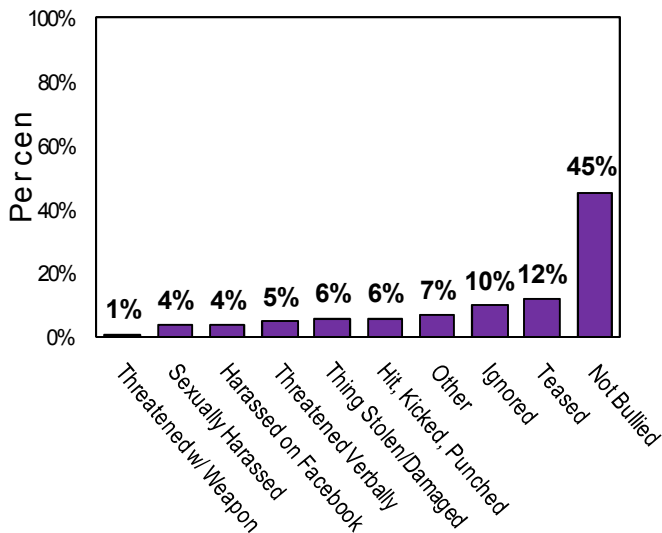
Over half of 18 year olds get inadequate sleep.



Over one third of teens feel pressured by friends to do unhealthy things.



Types of Bullying



## Signs of Stress:

- Marked change in school performance
- Marked changes in sleeping and/or eating habits
- Prolonged negative mood and attitude
- Poor appetite or sleeping problems
- Inability to cope with problems and daily activities
- Frequent outbursts of anger, aggression
- Many physical complaints
- Abuse of alcohol and/or drugs
- Self-injury or self-destructive behavior
- Threats of harm to self or others

Teenagers may experience stress when they perceive a situation as dangerous, difficult, or painful, and they do not have the resources to cope. Stress factors include

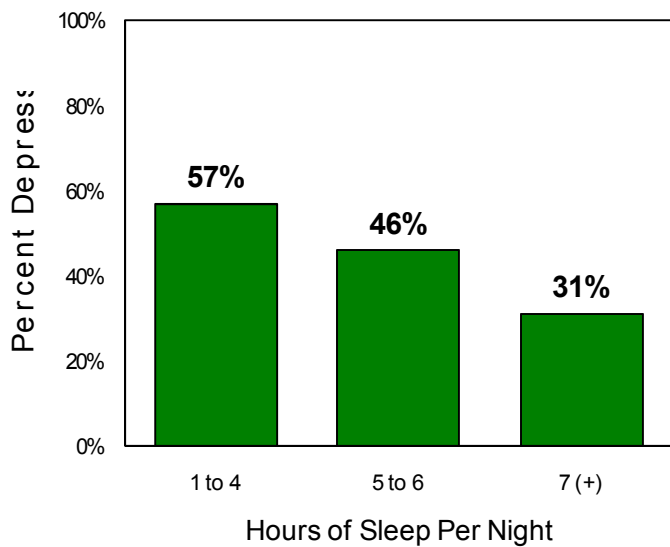
- School demands and frustrations
- Negative thoughts and feelings about themselves
- Problems with friends and/or peers at school
- Taking on too many activities or having too high expectations
- Changes in their bodies

If stress is not managed appropriately, it can lead to illness, anxiety, social withdrawal, aggression, or poor coping skills such as drug and/or alcohol abuse.

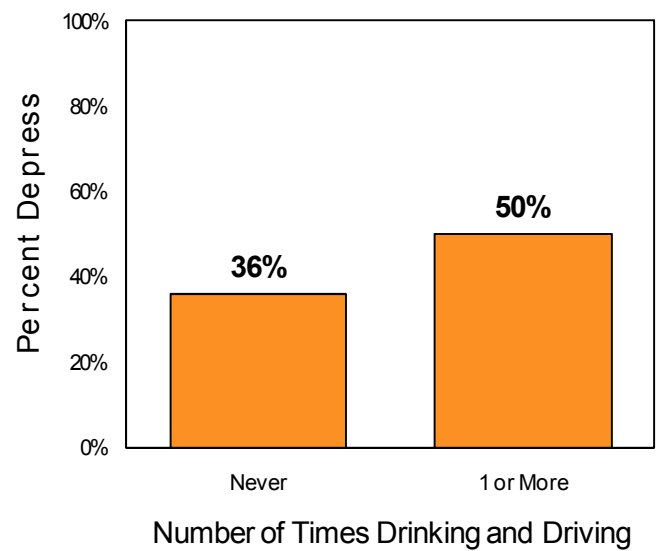
# DEPRESSION

Depressed teens are more likely to get inadequate sleep, drink and drive, use extreme measures to lose weight and get in fights.

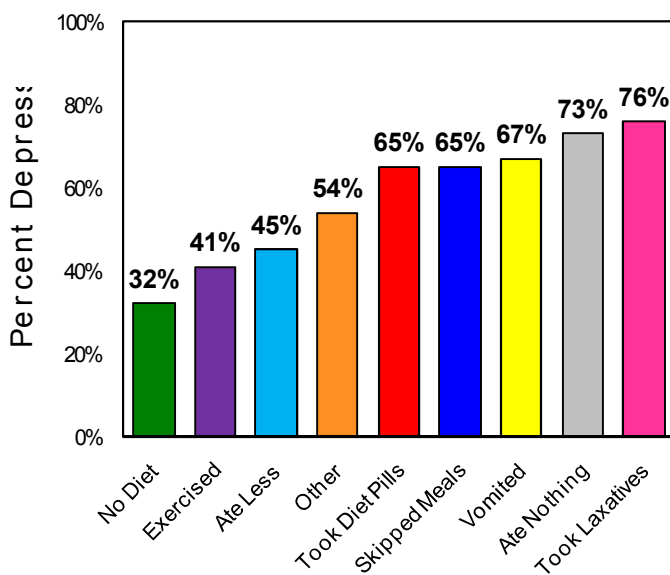
### Depression by Nightly Hours of Sleep



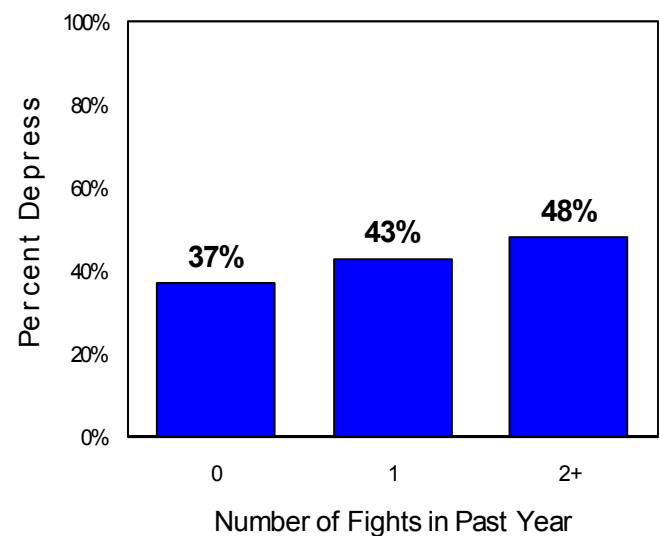
### Depression by Drinking and Driving



### Depression by Weight Loss Methods



### Depression by Physical Fighting



## TIPS FOR PARENTS:

- Depression is common among teens and merits parent and school attention.
- Listen carefully to teens and watch for stress overload.
- Teach teens how to handle stress.
- Support involvement in sports and other social activities.
- Serious depression often goes unnoticed, even by doctors.

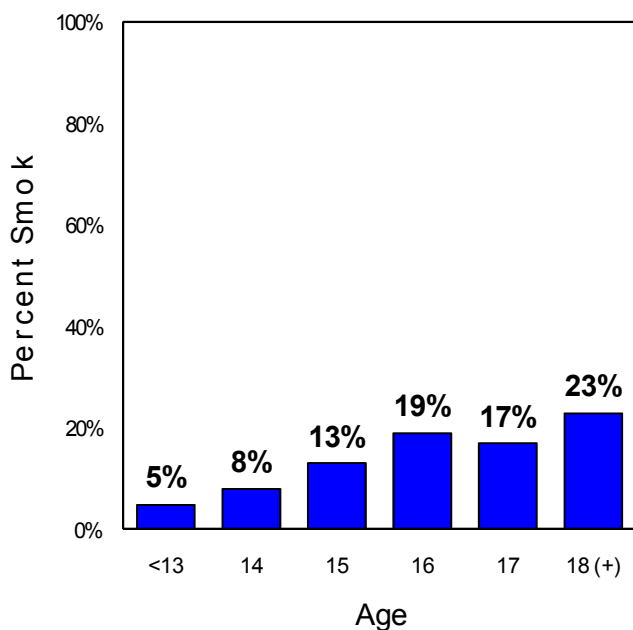
# TOBACCO

Parents often believe there is little they can do or say to prevent their children from smoking cigarettes. However, parents have more influence over their child's behavior than they realize. A medical study found that teens are less likely to become smokers if they perceive that their parents would strongly disapprove of their smoking and if they receive clear and consistent anti-smoking messages. Teens who perceive that their parents will become more lenient over time are more likely to become smokers.

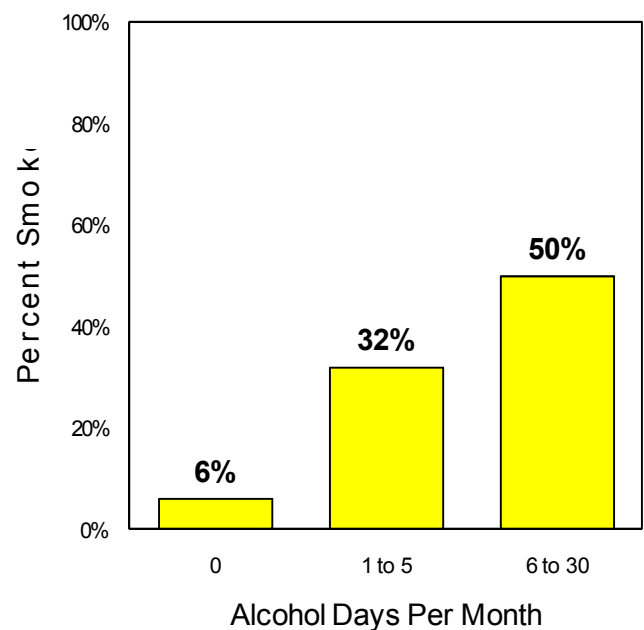
Recent tobacco survey results show:

- Teens are twice as likely to be smokers if they live with parents who smoke.
- If no one is allowed to smoke in their home, teens are half as likely to be smokers.
- Teens are 4 times as likely to be smokers if their parents would "do nothing" if they caught them smoking.

### Smoking by Age



### Smoking by Alcohol Use



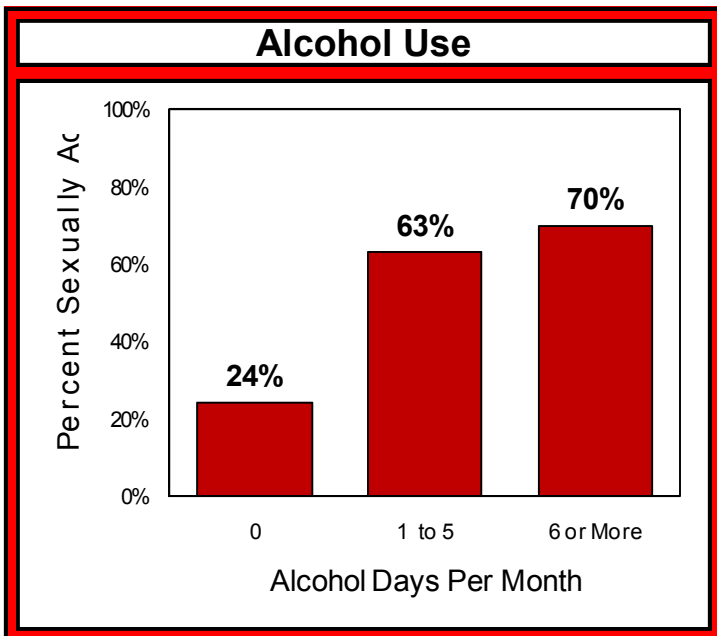
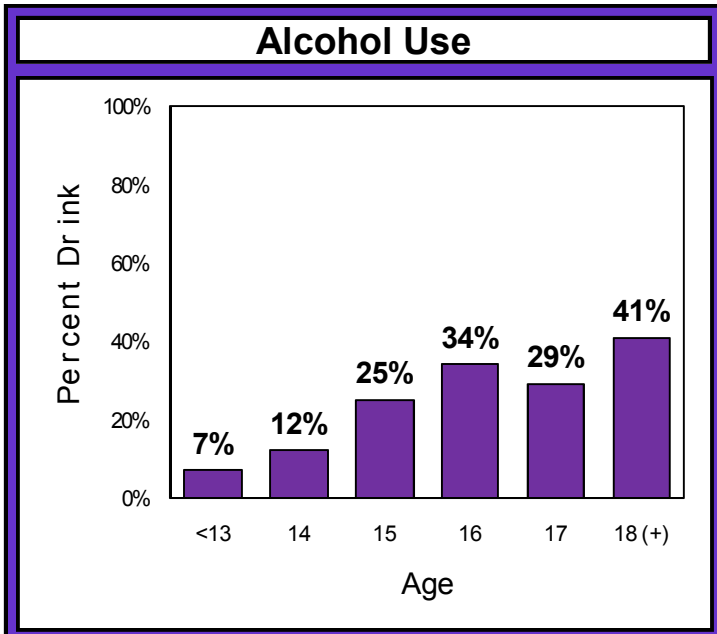
## TIPS FOR PARENTS

### To Help Prevent Teenage Tobacco Use

- Support school and community anti-smoking efforts. Tell school officials you expect them to enforce no-smoking policies.
- Emphasize the short-term effects of tobacco such as bad breath, yellow fingers, smelly clothes, shortness of breath and decreased performance in sports.
- Make tobacco less readily available to children and teens.
- Emphasize that nicotine is addictive.
- Parents are role models. If you smoke, quit. If you have not quit, do not smoke in front of your children, and tell them you regret that you started.

# ALCOHOL

Parents can help with early education about alcohol by utilizing open communication, having early recognition of problems, and by setting a good example.



## Facts About Alcohol

Experimentation with alcohol during adolescence is common. Teens may use alcohol out of curiosity, to reduce stress, or to fit in. Teenagers often don't see the link between actions and consequences:

- School failure
- Poor judgment
- Accidents, violence, and suicide
- Unplanned and unsafe sex
- Increased risk of drug use

## TIPS FOR PARENTS

- Keep lines of communication open.
- Teenagers who cannot talk to their parents may further isolate themselves with risky behavior.
- Be supportive, understanding, and firm.
- Create a calm atmosphere, emphasizing mutual caring and family values.
- Responsibility, self-esteem, and judgment are tools for coping with stress.
- Help your children develop the ability to make good choices.

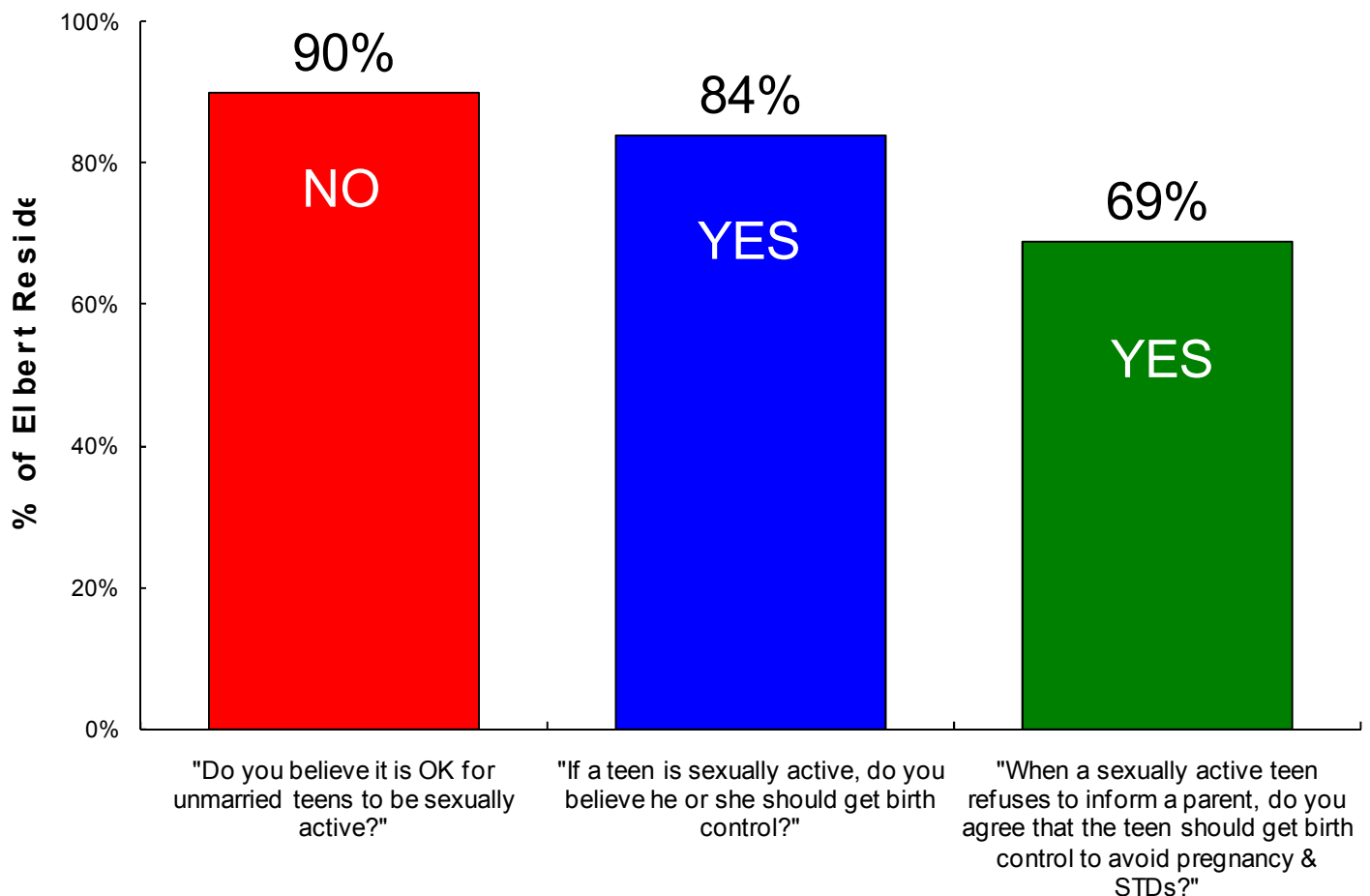
# TEEN SEX

Public Health, along with parents and teachers, strongly supports teen abstinence from dangerous behaviors like smoking, drinking, speeding, using drugs and having sex. 9 out of 10 Elbert county citizens in a recent survey said it's NOT okay for teens to be sexually active. We believe it is important that teens hear about the risks of sex at home, at school and at your Health Department. Also, more than 8 out of 10 Elbert citizens believe that if teens are sexually active they should use birth control. Over two thirds agree that sexually active teens should have access to birth control even if they refuse to inform their parents.

Educational materials and videos help to convey the right messages and can give you something to talk about with your teens. But like medicine, one dose rarely works. Teens need to hear these messages many times and in many ways, so their resolve to stay safe will be strong when they face pressures and choices. Videos for parents to check out are available at the Elbert County Health Department and Public Library.

## Elbert County Adult Opinion Survey

Scientific random sample telephone survey of  
Elbert County Adults - 2007





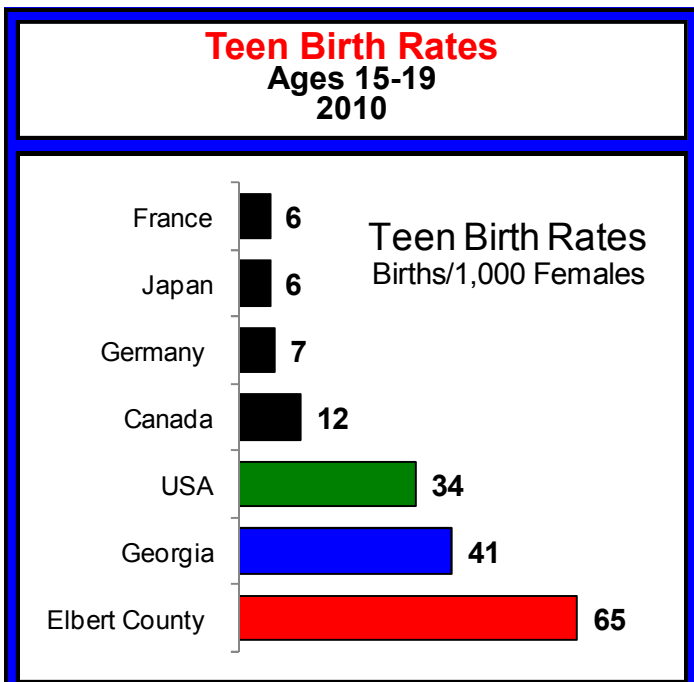
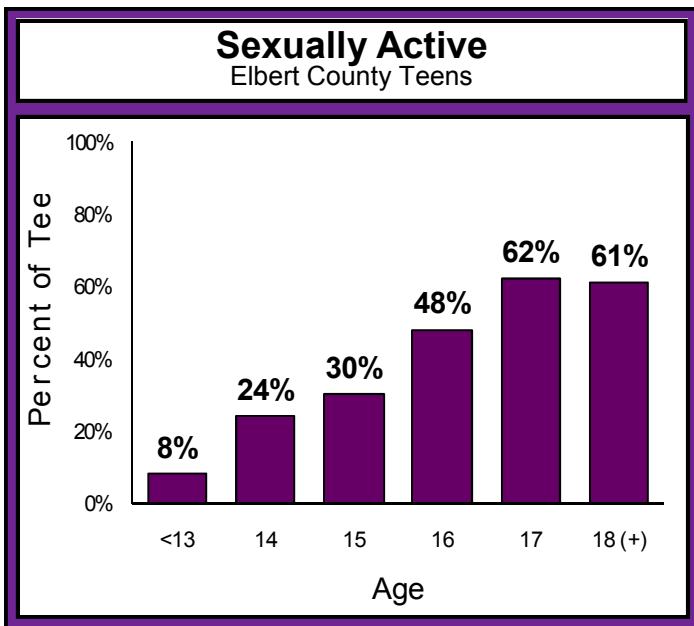
# ABSTINENCE FIRST

- The United States has the highest teen birth rate in the developed world.
- Georgia has one of the highest teen birth rates in the U.S.
- Elbert County's teen birth rate is higher than the rate in Georgia or in the United States.
- Elbert County has a teen birth rate more than 10 times the rate in France.

Abstinence from sexual activity is by far the safest choice to avoid pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. Many teens, however, still choose to have sex despite the risks. In a survey of 1,070 Elbert County teens, 61% of 17 and 18 year olds reported having had sexual intercourse.

Among all sexually experienced teens:  
*68% have had more than one sexual partner.*  
*13% did not use any form of birth control the last time they had sex.*

Behaviors like these result in high rates of sexually transmitted disease, infertility, and cervical cancer.



## Protection

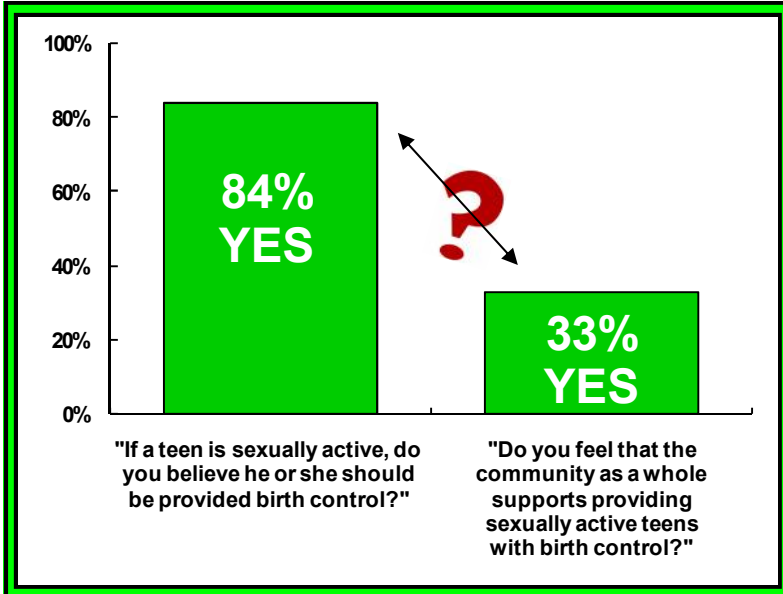
**S**exually active teens are much more likely to use birth control effectively if they get parental guidance & support. It's a difficult transition for many parents to go from strongly emphasizing abstinence to actively supporting protection with condoms and birth control. Keep in mind that advice does NOT equal permission.

**N**early 8 out of 10 adults in Elbert County say that if teens are sexually active, they should use birth control.

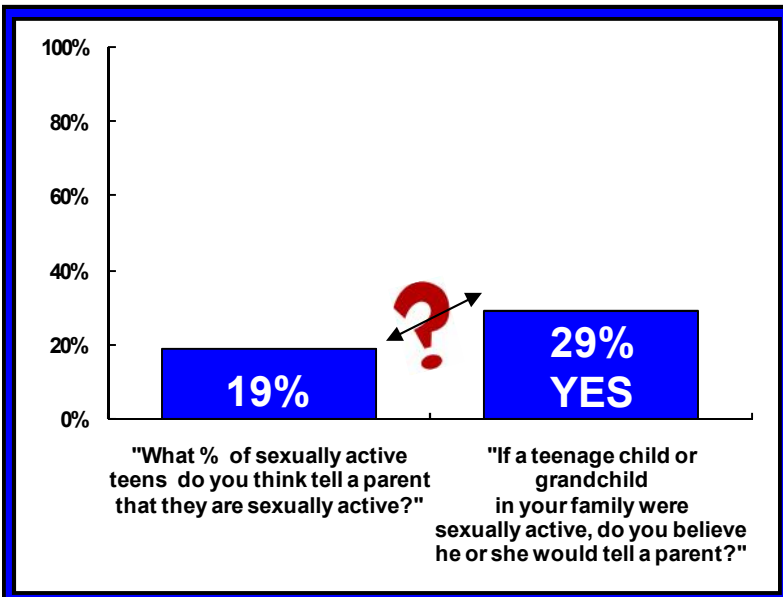
**C**ondoms are important. They cut the risk for both disease and pregnancy by 80%, if always used and used properly. Condoms are free at the Elbert County Health Department.

**B**irth control pills or depo shots, if properly used, cut the risks of pregnancy almost to zero but give no disease protection.

# ELBERT COUNTY ADULT OPINION SURVEY - 2007



Is the community **AWARE** of what it wants?



Are parents in **DENIAL** about their children's sexual activity?

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Elbert County BART Survey - 2012

When asked if one of their parents knows that they have had sexual intercourse

**42%** of teens answered **NO**

# HOW CAN YOU KNOW?

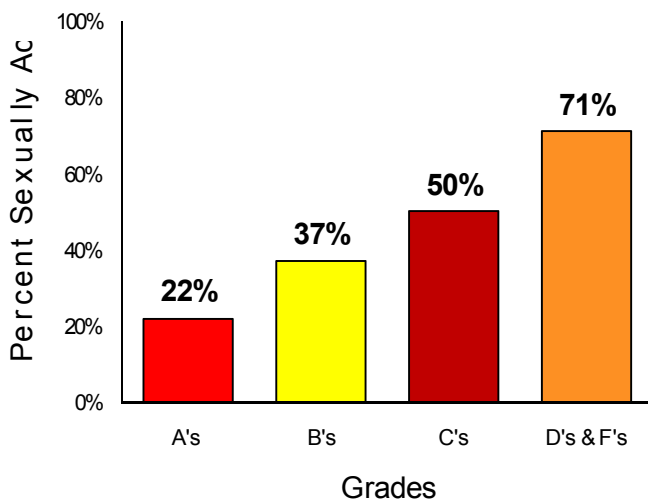
As Ben Franklin said, “The price of liberty is eternal vigilance.” You as a parent or guardian of a teen need to always be on the look-out for warning signs.

According to the recent BART Survey of Elbert County teens, if your teen smokes cigarettes, he or she is much more likely to be sexually active. If your teen smokes marijuana, drinks or drives too fast, the likelihood of sex is also greater. The risk of each of these behaviors is higher among older teens than younger ones, but at any age they are powerful predictors.

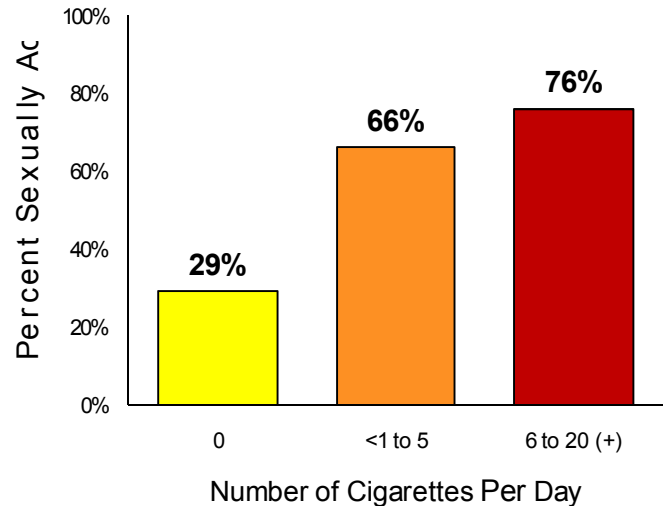
Once a teen begins to engage in risky behaviors, he or she usually tries several. These behaviors often go together, but they don't necessarily cause each other. In other words, stopping smoking won't lead to stopping sex. However, no longer associating with teens who do these things may help to reduce the risk for your teen.

## Red Flags for Sexual Activity from Elbert County BART Survey

**Good grades go with less sex.**



**No smoking goes with less sex.**

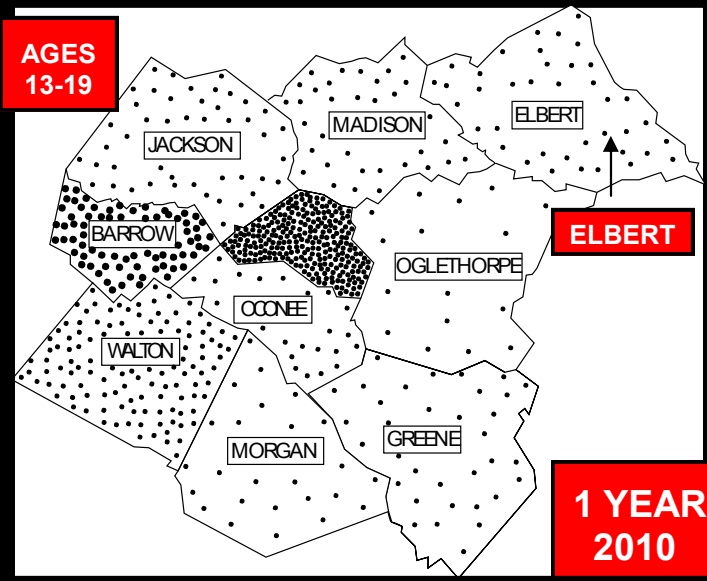


A two year study at Columbia University's Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse concluded that:

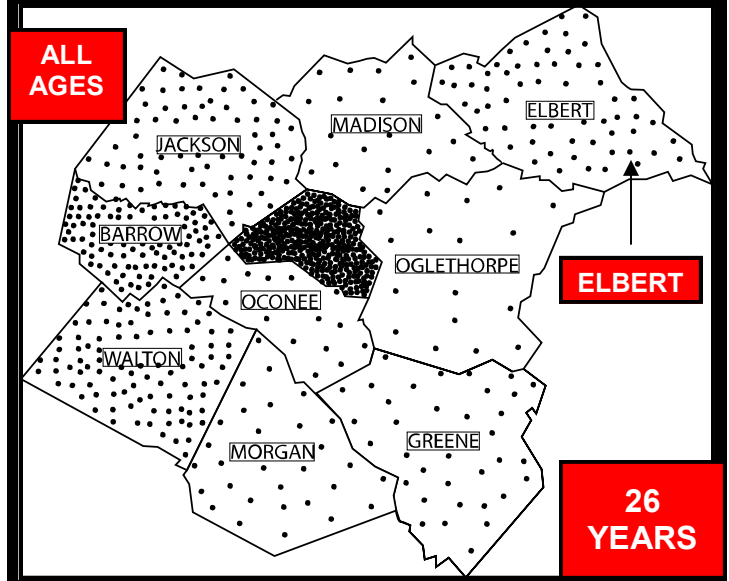
- Teens who drink alcohol are 7 times more likely to have sex and are twice as inclined to have four or more sexual partners.
- Teenage drug users are 5 times more likely to have sex and 3 times more likely to have four or more sexual partners.

# UNPROTECTED SEX

## CHLAMYDIA CASES

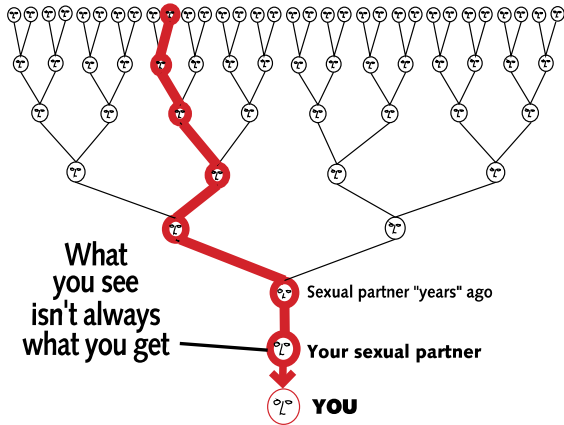


## HIV/AIDS CASES



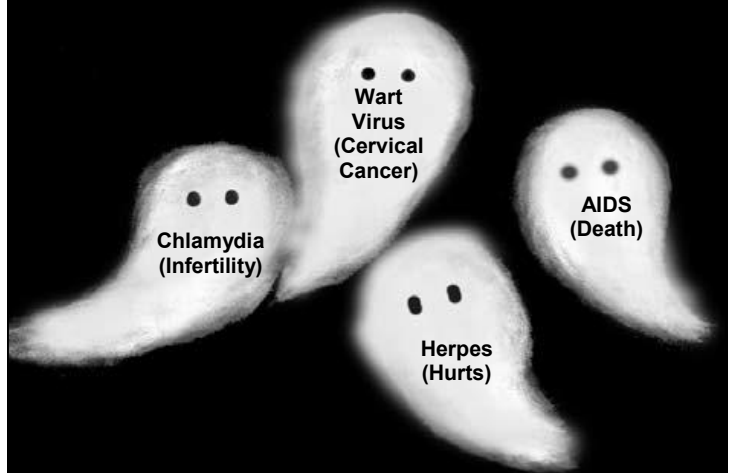
Did you know that Gonorrhea may soon be incurable? Sex without a condom exposes you to everyone your partner had sex with plus everyone each of them ever had sex with, etc.

### Sexually Transmitted Disease



What if one of them had an STD like Chlamydia, Gonorrhea, Wart Virus (cancer), Hepatitis, Herpes or AIDS?

## SOME GHOSTS ARE REAL



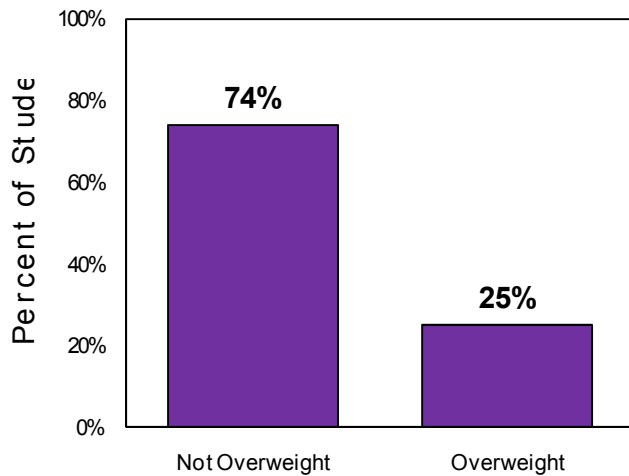
## AND SHOULD SCARE YOU!

## Key Facts

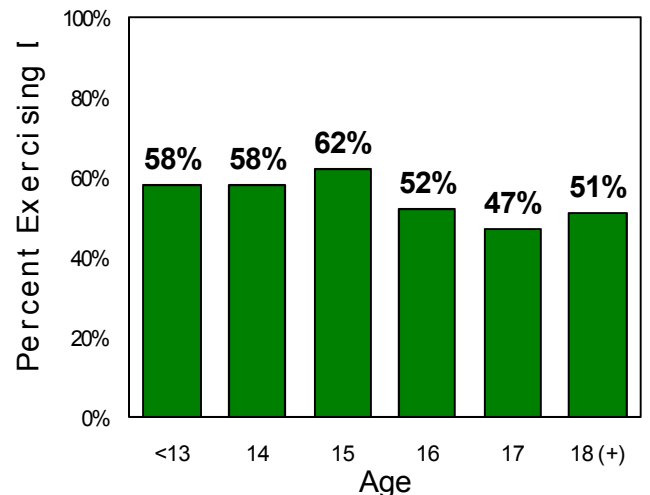
- People who have had unprotected sex should be tested for HIV.
- Half of the people infected with HIV don't know it.
- Only half the people who know they have HIV tell their sexual partner (s).
- Condom use greatly reduces the risk of STD's.
- Abstinence from sex and drugs is the only 100% effective way to avoid STD's.

# DIET AND EXERCISE CONTROL WEIGHT

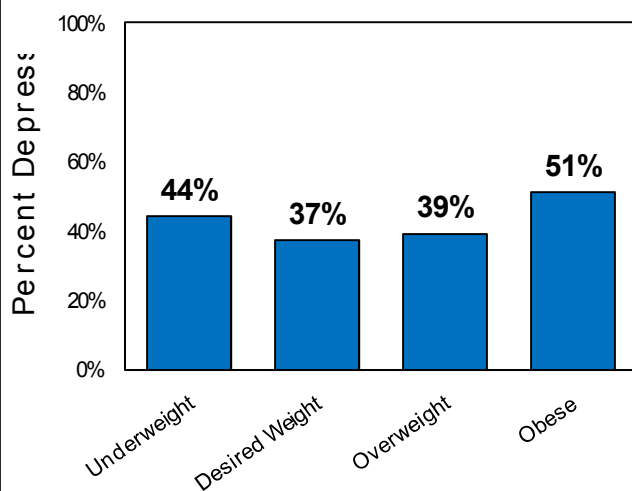
Most teens are not yet overweight:  
74%



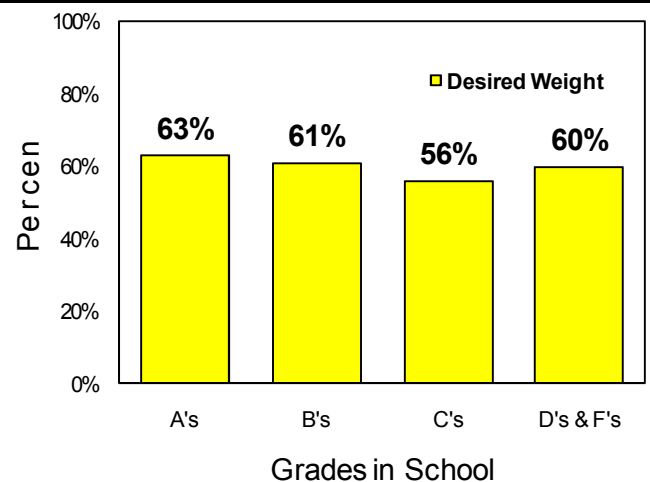
More than half of teens  
exercise daily.



Teens who are obese are more likely  
to be depressed.



Normal weight  
goes with better grades.



- 75% of all surveyed teens have tried to lose weight.
- Diabetes is increasing in overweight and obese teens.
- Being overweight as a teen leads to obesity, diabetes and clogged arteries as an adult.

# ARE YOUR KIDS MAKING THE GRADE?

The National Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) from 2009 shows that healthy diets and physical activity go with higher academic achievement.

Physical activity exerts powerful positive influences on physical health and on the brain, emotional stability, and ability to learn. Better health means more success in life.

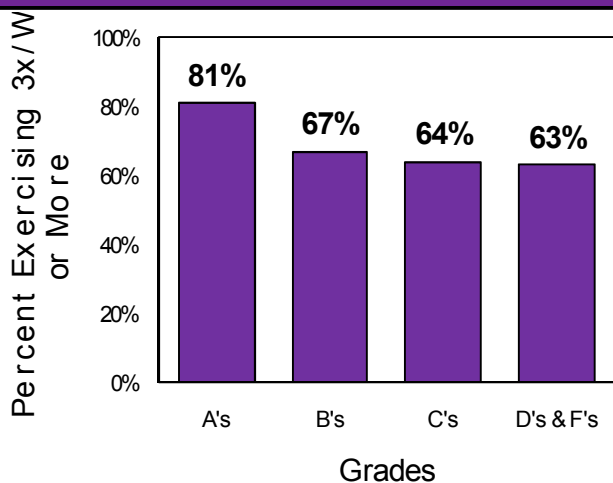
## 4 Keys to Weight Loss



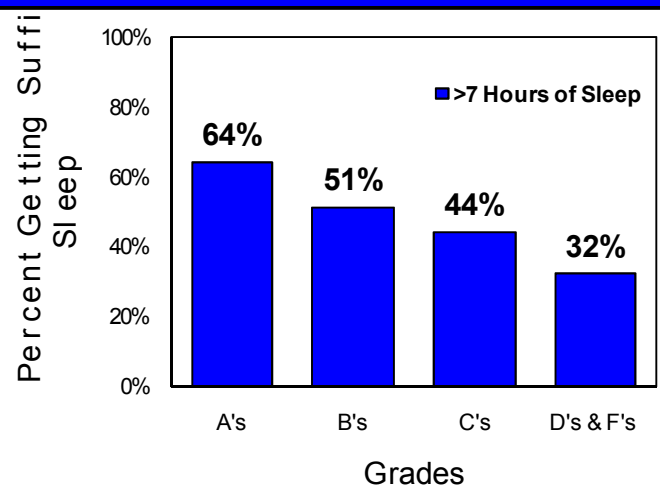
Eating too much of these four food categories causes overweight and obesity.

Cut back or cut out these calorie sources.

More exercise goes with better grades.

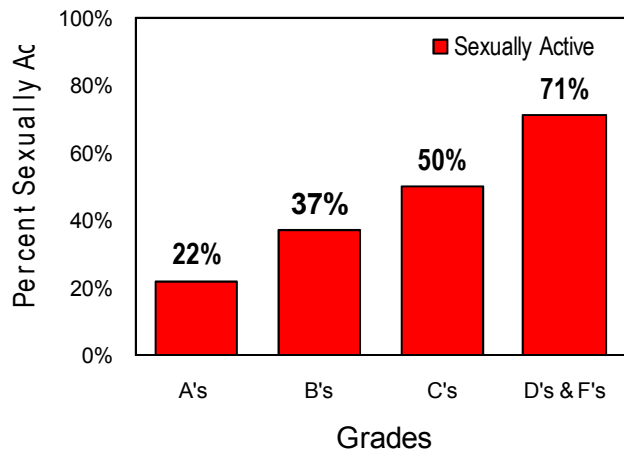


More sleep goes with better grades.

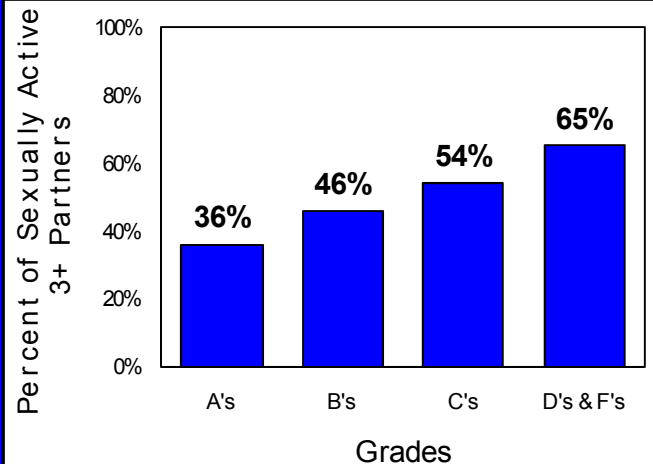


# SMART STUDENTS ARE SMARTER IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE

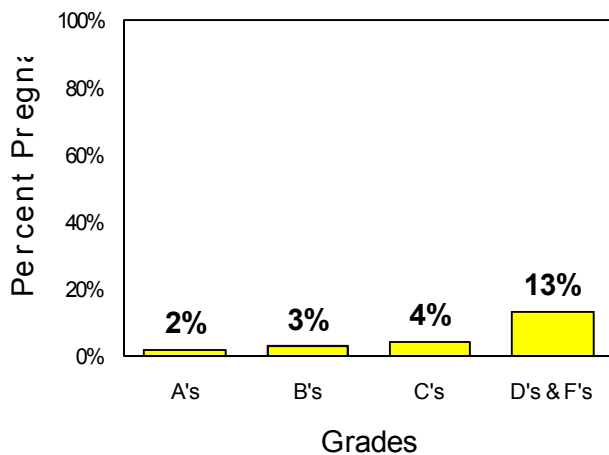
Less sexual activity goes with better grades.



Fewer sex partners go with better grades.



Fewer teen pregnancies go with better grades.



According to a CDC study, students with higher grades are less likely to have sex until they graduate. If they do become sexually active, they are more likely to:

- Always use a condom
- Use effective birth control
- Have fewer sex partners
- Not drink too much and become unable to make good decisions

# WHAT CAN PARENTS DO?

We know it's hard to talk to teens about their behavior. Here are some ways to make it a little easier:

## Find Teachable Moments

There is no such thing as "too late" when it comes to talking to your child about issues they are confronting. To make it easier, find teachable moments to bring difficult issues up.

- A situation in a TV show can provide an opportunity to discuss topics with your children. It is often easier to talk about **fictional characters** than it is to ask a specific question about your child's experiences.
- If there is a **younger sibling** in the family, ask your teenager to help you explain a health issue to them. This will allow you to find out what your teen already knows and to correct any misinformation they have been given.
- The **news** often covers stories like sexual harassment, AIDS and adultery. Don't ignore them, use them to ask your teens what they have heard about the situation and what they think of it.



## Be "Askable"

Your children need to know that they can come to you to discuss health issues. Talking openly and honestly with your child gives you an opportunity to share your beliefs, values and concerns. Give your children the proper tools to make healthy choices.

- A national survey showed that teens who thought their **parents** would **disapprove** were more inclined to **abstain** from sexual intercourse.
- **Open communication** about sex and contraception leads to more responsible teenagers and lower risk.
- **Ask questions** about your child's friends and significant others.
- **Listen** to your teen's questions and points of view. Ask them what prompted the questions and what they know about the topic.



**It's ok to say, I don't know.** If your teen asks about something you don't know tell them you'll find out and get back to them.

**Don't criticize, nag, lecture or shout.** This won't help your teens learn or feel comfortable coming to you in the future.

**Correct information is very important.** Elbert's Health Department has videos, books and brochures you can check out or keep to help with these issues.

**Don't make excuses.** "My parents never talked to me about this stuff, and I turned out ok." Times have changed and your kids need to know the truth about sex, drugs and other risky behaviors.



# TALK WITH YOUR KIDS

## Parents Can Monitor Alcohol and Marijuana Use

**There are new tools to help parents combat drug use:** a urine test for marijuana and a breath test for alcohol. These tests can be done easily at home.

Using substances like tobacco, alcohol and marijuana is part of a high risk behavior profile which increases the chances of poor school performance, violence, pregnancy, road injury, permanent health damage and death.

**Public Health provides education**, videos and flyers to inform parents and teens of these dangers. The staff talks with all teens about the importance of staying drug free.

### Help Teens Stay Out of Trouble

**Know where your teen is and who their friends are.** The need to be liked by peers can lead your teen to do things you would not approve of.

**Make your home comfortable for your teen's friends.** Kids are less likely to get into trouble when parents know their friends.

**Limit unsupervised time.** Help your teen get involved in activities they enjoy. This will limit the time spent at home alone (most pregnancies occur after school before parents get home).

**Encourage your teen to take part in the community** or activities offered by the school. It will help them stay busy and feel better about themselves.

### Key Messages For Young People



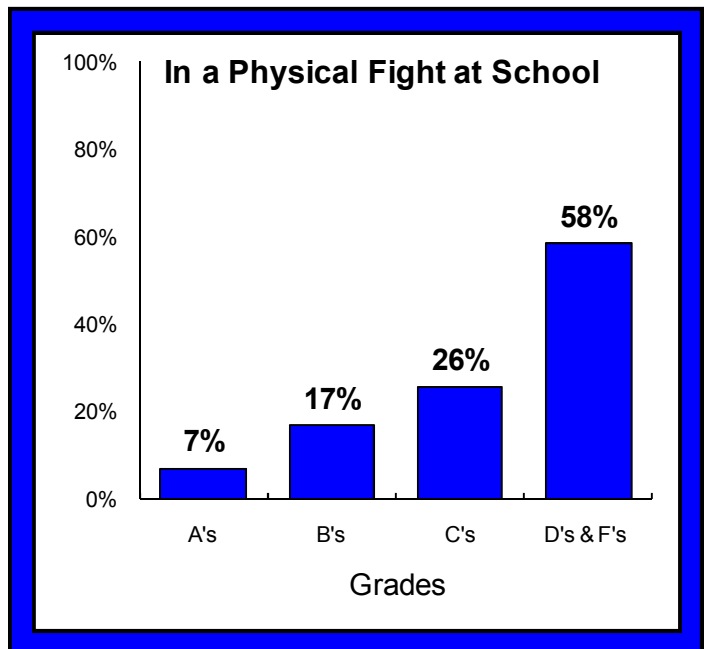
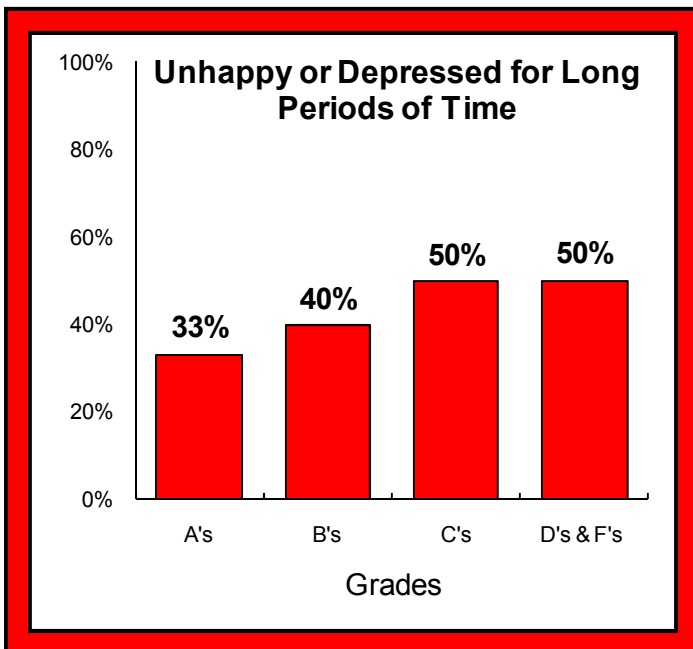
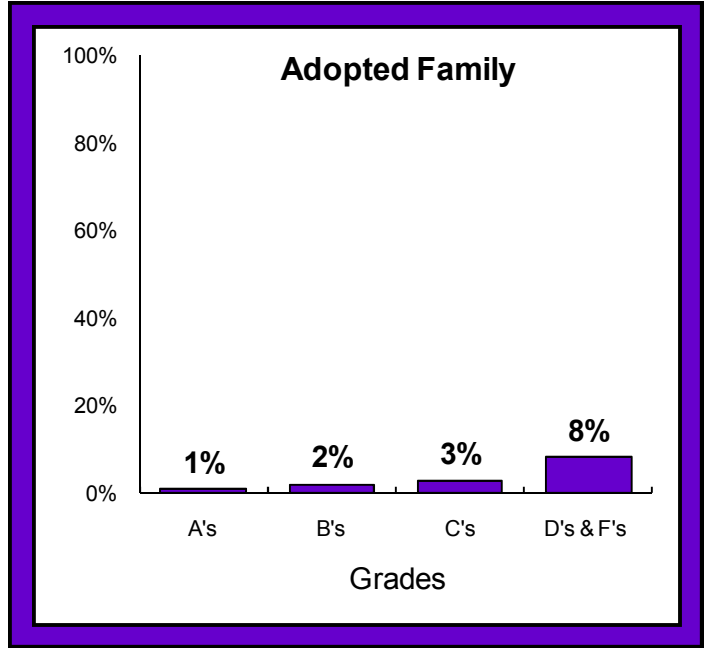
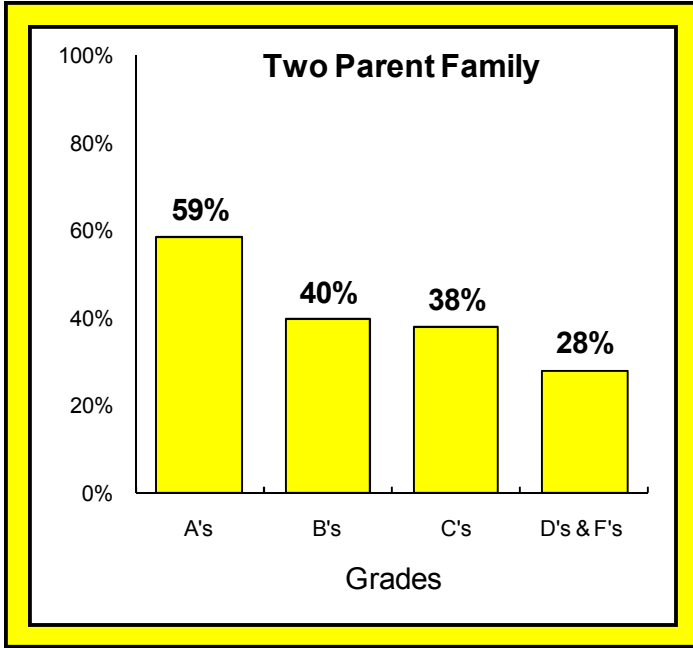
- 1 Abstinence from drinking, smoking, doing drugs and having sex is best. You can have fun without taking these risks.
- 2 Peer pressure can be tough, but it's VERY important not to do anything you don't want to do.
- 3 Abstinence from sex and drugs is the ONLY 100% way to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease including HIV/AIDS.
- 4 Associate with teens who think and act responsibly.

### Teen Matters

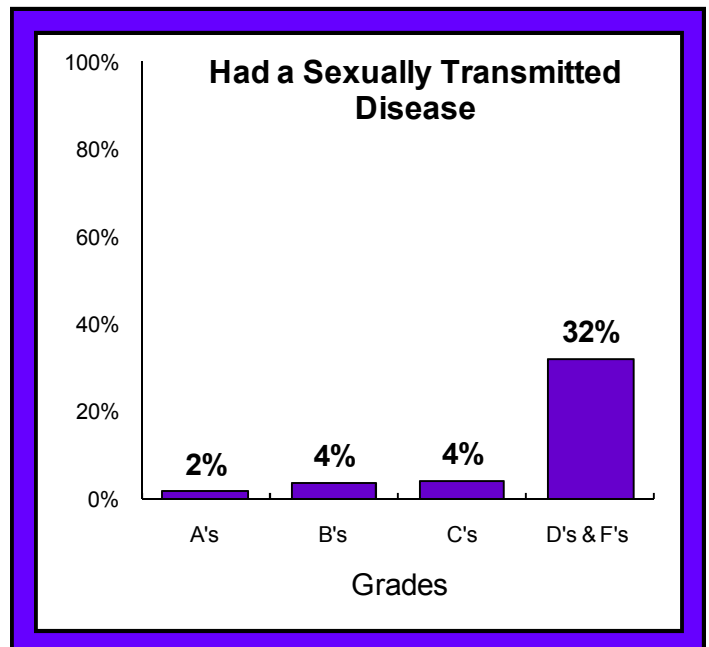
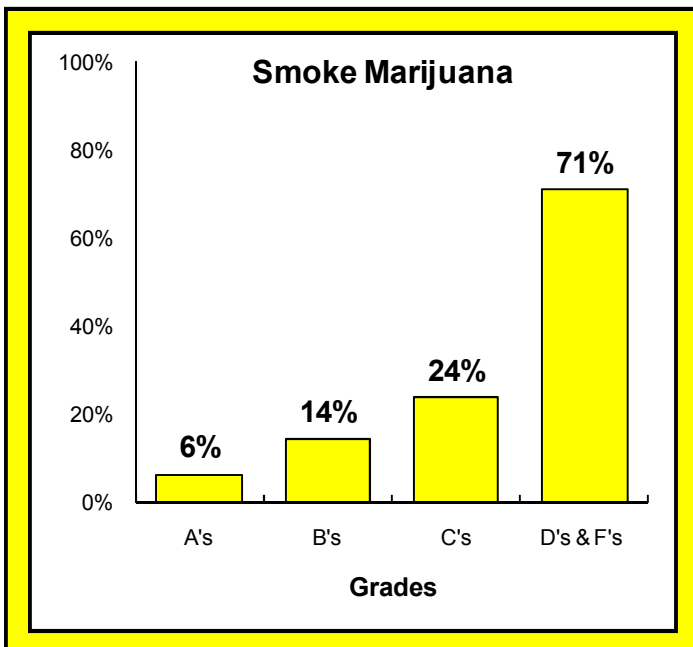
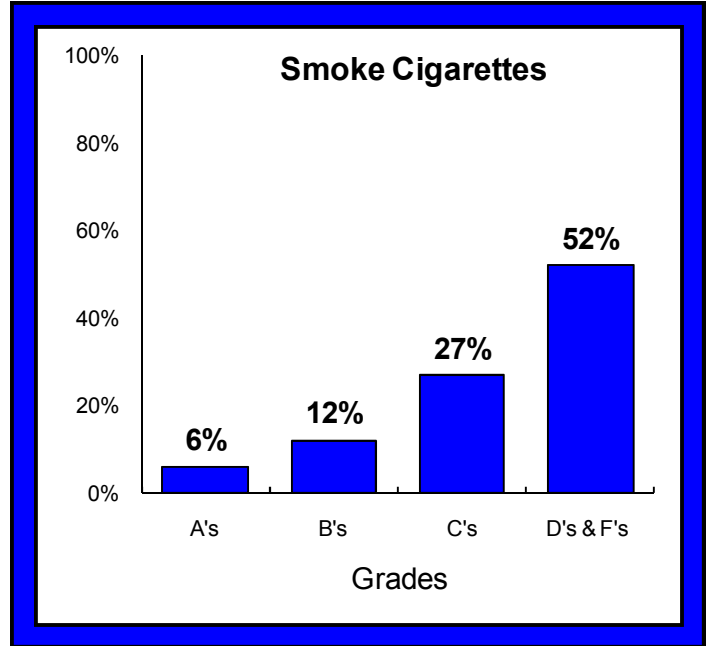
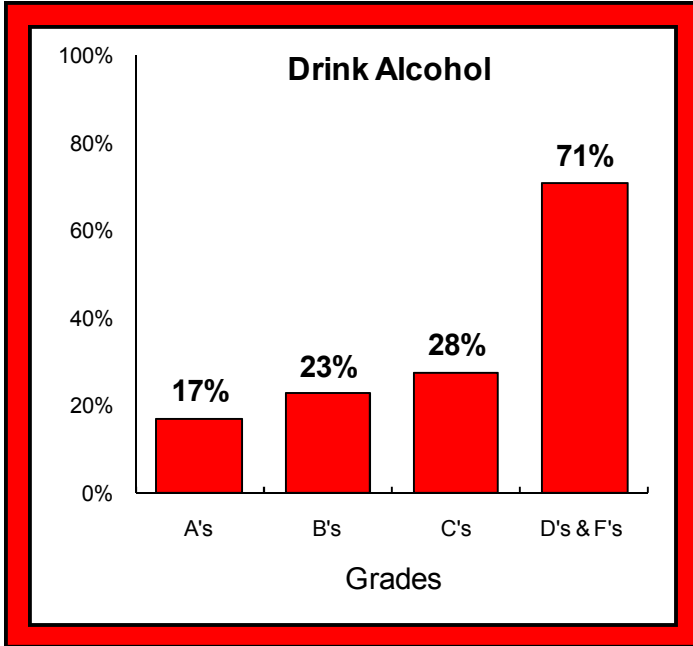
A center for education and services for teens and their parents in Elbert  
Call **706-283-3775**

- Teen Matters is a full service health clinic for teenagers between 11 and 19 years old, offering a variety of clinical services, as well as health education, guidance and information.
- Teen Matters is a service designed to promote the health and well-being of adolescents through opportunities and programs that are developed in collaboration with families, communities, schools and other public and private providers.

# FACTORS ASSOCIATED..



# ..WITH SCHOOL GRADES



# HEALTH INFO LINE

If you need help dealing with your  
teen's risky behavior call:

# 1 (800) 4PD-HELP

A number to call to Prevent Disease and ask questions  
about physical and emotional health questions or problems.

**8am-5pm Monday - Friday**

*If closed, callers may leave a message on the answering machine \*\*\*\*\*Confidentiality is strictly maintained.\*\*\*\*\**

*The Health Information Line is sponsored by the Northeast Health District.*

## WWW.PUBLICHEALTHATHENS.com

Health Educators are trained to answer questions and provide  
information and referrals on such topics as:

- Abuse: Sexual, Physical, Emotional
- Alcohol, Drugs & Tobacco
- Birth Control
- Cardiovascular Health
- Care of Infants & Children
- Diabetes
- Diet & Nutrition
- Exercise & Weight Loss
- High Blood Pressure
- HIV/AIDS
- Parenting
- Physical Health
- Pregnancy
- Quitting Smoking
- Relationship Issues
- Sexual Harassment
- Sexually Transmitted Diseases
- Stress Management

## ELBERT COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

618 Jones Street Elberton, GA 30635 706-283-3775

**HOURS:** Weekdays 8am-4pm, Monday 'til 6:30, Friday close at 1pm

1. Blood Sugar, Blood Pressure and Cholesterol Testing and Treatment
2. Birth Control & Counseling
3. Breast Exam and Mammogram Referral
4. Child/Infant Health– Screening and Physicals
5. Environmental Health Services
6. Epidemiology (contacts of infectious disease)
7. HIV/AIDS Testing and Counseling
8. Immunizations– Children and Adults
9. Infectious Disease Control
10. Pregnancy Testing
11. Prenatal Services
12. Services if you are sick: Sore Throat, Ear Ache, Chest Cold, Skin Problems
13. Sexually Transmitted Disease Testing & Treatment
14. Tuberculosis Testing and Treatment
15. Vital Records– Birth & Death Certificates
16. WIC– Supplemental Food Program for Pregnant Women, Infants & Children
17. Women's Health: Physicals, Lab Services, Pap Smears, Urinary Tract Infection Treatment