



Tips for Parents: Teen Parents

Having a child when you are a teenager will make your life much more difficult, and you will have to work much harder to attain your goals. But it can be done, and you can raise a happy, healthy, successful child, and achieve success yourself--if you take the right steps, get help, and commit yourself to building a new life—no matter what it takes.

If You're Pregnant

If you just found out that you or your girlfriend is pregnant, you are probably in shock and afraid. You're going to have to make some difficult decisions, and if you can get help from trusted adults, hopefully your parents, you'll probably make better choices.

These are your next steps:

1. Find a way to tell your parents. Tell them both at the same time, talk to one and have them tell the other, or write a letter. If you can, you should both talk to both of your sets of parents. That shows maturity and a willingness to accept responsibility. Stay calm when you talk to them and realize they have a right to be upset. If they yell, keep your own temper. You made this choice and must accept the consequences. If your parents are abusive and you think they might hurt you, talk to your school counselor or a social worker instead.
2. You are going to have to decide to keep and raise the baby, allow someone else to adopt the baby, or to have an abortion. Before you make a decision, talk to other people that have been in your situation. Thoroughly understand what the consequences of each decision are. Ask trusted adults to help you. In the end, it is your decision and will affect you for the rest of your life so make an informed choice.
3. If you decide to have the baby, you will need medical care for the rest of your pregnancy. You may be able to get this from your parent's health insurance. If not, you can get care from nonprofit organizations and state agencies. Ask your parents, school counselor or a doctor to help you find where to go.
4. Keep going to school. If you quit now, you cut yourself off from an education that will allow you to make enough money to pay your bills and care for you child. It's going to be VERY hard to keep going to school with a baby, but not as hard as spending the rest of your life working at a minimum wage job and not being able to afford good child care or anything fun.
5. You are still a teen, but having a child forces you to take on adult responsibilities. That includes getting a job and planning your future. There are many programs to assist teen parents to finish school, find work, learn parenting skills, and learn how to live on their own. There are group homes for pregnant and parenting teens. Now is not the time to be shy and hesitate. You have to be strong for

your baby, and persistent. Find out as much as possible about your options, and keep moving forward everyday. Don't give up!

6. Eat healthy food, get plenty of sleep, and follow the exercise plan your doctor gives you. If you drink, smoke or do drugs, STOP NOW! You could cause your baby to have birth defects, to be addicted, to be born premature, or to have other problems for the rest of their life. If you can't stop on your own, you have to ask for help. Do this for your baby. They deserve a chance to have a healthy life.

If You're Already a Teen Parent

If you have a child and you're a teen parent you know that taking care of your son or daughter is a big responsibility. Here are some teen parenting tips that will help you and your child:

1. Ask for help. There are many friends, family, people and organizations out there that are willing to assist you. There's no reason to do it all on your own. Get the help you need so that both you and your baby have the best opportunities to be happy and healthy.
2. Stay in school. If you've dropped out, you have to go back. Giving up on school means giving up on your chance to reach your dreams and to make enough money to pay your bills and give your child a comfortable life. Going to school while parenting is VERY hard, but many other teen parents have done it, and they always say it was worth the hard times. You CAN do it!
3. Keep yourself and your baby healthy. When you have to work long hours and don't have much money, it can be easy to eat junk, not get enough sleep, or not keep fit. But eating well, getting enough sleep and exercising actually gives you more energy and will help you. Your baby is growing and needs plenty of healthy food to develop. If you can't afford healthy food, ask about the Food Stamp and WIC programs at your local health department.
4. Don't drink, smoke or do drugs. First, you don't have the money for these things, and if you do, you should be spending it on things your baby needs or saving it for an emergency. Second, these harm your health and if your baby is exposed, it will harm theirs as well. If you use drugs or drink illegally around your baby, they could be taken away from you. If you have a habit, you can't quit on your own. Get help, and don't give up. You and your baby deserve to be happy and healthy!
5. Realize that you are going to miss out on a lot of fun that other kids your age are having. But look for ways to have fun with your child and your family that you can afford. Spend time with positive, supportive friends that encourage you to succeed.
6. Keep a stable home for you and your child. Kids need a safe, secure environment and a regular routine. Right now, you have to focus on work, school, and taking care of your baby. You don't have time to party, and if you're single, try to stay that way. Once you get your life back on track and have matured you can look for a partner or spouse, but right now your focus is on you and your baby.
7. Make time to relax and do something fun on your own. To be a good parent, you have to take a break from time to time. Find a babysitter, ask a family member or

- friend, or trade babysitting with another mom. Take a walk, read a book, see a movie, go out to dinner with a friend, or take a long hot bath.
8. Realize that you are going to be overwhelmed, angry and sad from time to time. You may resent having to take care of your baby, but that is not your baby's fault. You made a choice and this is the result. Accept responsibility and find a healthy way to deal with your emotions such as going for a walk, talking to a friend, taking a nap or writing in a journal. If your baby won't stop crying, or you feel so angry that you want to hurt or shake your baby, put your baby in its crib, step outside, and call for help. Take deep breaths, and ask your neighbor to watch your baby until your help arrives.
 9. Take parenting classes. Being a parent is hard and confusing. Learn what to do and how to help your child by taking some classes. Knowing more about being a parent is always a good choice.

As a teen parent, you and your baby are going to face unique challenges. But if you commit to making good choices and working hard, you have a good chance for a better life. Look to others that have made it for inspiration and have faith in yourself. You CAN do it!

For more information:

[Teenage and Young Adults Parents Resources](#)

[Tips for Teen Parenting](#)

[TeenageParent.org's Life in the Fast Lane in English](#)

[TeenageParent.org's La vida acelerada en Español](#)

You may also find these related Tips for Parents helpful:

[Tips for Parents: Adoption](#)

[Tips for Parents: Single Parents](#)