

**Culture Report: Adolescent**

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Adolescent parenting can be a stressful and difficult transition. These teens become parents between the ages of 12-19 years old. These mothers experience many physiological, psychological, and social changes (Durham et al., 2023). Adolescent mothers and/or fathers are taking on a responsibility role while also working through tasks of still being a teenager (Durham et al., 2023). These parents also have little experience to help them prepare for the role conflicts and strains that can come about with being first-time parents (Durham et al., 2023). Research has shown that adolescent parenting can come from any social/racial group (Durham et al., 2023). One major concern that needs to be addressed is the support system that they will have when taking on this new role in life. It is common for teenage parents to come across financial and educational challenges (Durham et al., 2023). Because of this, education is another top priority when taking care of this ethnic group. According to statista, in 2021 the birth rate for 15–19-year-old were 13.6% per every thousand women (Elflein, 2024).

## **Religion**

With adolescents, research has shown that their parents have a large impact on what they believe in (Cooperman et al., 2020). In 2019, there was a study done where they interviewed 1,811 pairs of U.S. teens and their parents (Cooperman et al., 2020). Researchers decided to individually interview each parent and teen within the same household on the degree of religious alignment (Cooperman et al., 2020). Within this study, they found that over 50% of teen parents felt as if their child has the same religious beliefs as they did (Cooperman et al., 2020). However, this study also found that there are teens that like to make their own decisions (Cooperman et al., 2020). Whether the parents and adolescent believed in the same religion or not, researchers found that there was little difference within the patients care. Ultimately, the healthcare

professional needs to make sure the patients' wishes on how to be treated is established within the prenatal phase rather than after birth.

### **Healing Beliefs and Practices**

Healing beliefs and practices can be very difficult for adolescent parents. These mothers deal with more responsibilities than the common student (Schlichter, 2019). Having a child is typically a joyful event in a mother's life. But for these mothers, they could have significant emotional drawbacks. The emotional pain that drags on with these teen moms could affect their point of view with their child (Schlichter, 2019). Having an unsupportive family could also be an emotional setback. With the right support, pregnant teens will be able to continue their education, which is very important for their future family (Buckley, 2024). Pregnant teens also need access to prenatal care to help monitor the health of the baby and manage any pregnancy-related complications (Buckley, 2024). Another part of the healing process is planning their future. It is important for adolescents to understand the importance of each choice they choose and receive guidance in making the best decision for their circumstances (Buckley, 2024).

### **Family Life**

Relationships between a pregnant teen and the father of the baby may need to be strategic because of many variables (Schlichter, 2019). The father is trying to cope with the thought of being a father just as much as the mother is. Because of being young, the father could have been expecting a "no strings attached" relationship (Schlichter, 2019). If this happens, there is a higher risk for the father to become absent during the child's life that could result in the child having social and mental issues (Schlichter, 2019). There are chances that these adolescent parents end up getting married and try to develop a stable household for the child. But because of these

parents being so young, they will tend to have a lot of financial problems (Schlichter, 2019). The mother will find that she needs to get a job to help her new family which will take away that quality time that the child will need (Schlichter, 2019).

### **Communication**

When communicating with teens, healthcare professionals need to assess their level of knowledge (Durham et al, 2023). Information that is given needs to be appropriate and relevant for the individual or couple (Durham et al, 2023). The adolescents' parents could also help with communication. Building a strong relationship between parents and their children can help with having that open communication. This can play an important role in the "normal development of children and helps shape their mindsets to cope with life's difficulties" (Dalizu, 2023 pg. 5).

Another important topic of communication with teens is making sure they know their resources. The government has developed many outlets to help families and their needs. The WIC program can provide nutritional support with food assistance and nutritional education (Buckley, 2024), Medicaid offers healthcare coverage for low-income individuals, including adolescents that do not have a supportive family (Buckley, 2024). There is even temporary assistance for needy families (TANF) that provides financial support for basic living (Buckley, 2024).

Communicating these outlets to adolescents could help relieve stress so the parents can enjoy their time with their newborn.

### **Diet**

The right nutrition is essential for any pregnant mother, but especially for adolescents. As for any mother, it is a priority to eat a balanced diet. Many adolescents have a poor diet quality and poor knowledge of appropriate nutrition (Lenders et al., 2000). Teen nutrition is reviewed from a pediatric perspective (Lenders et al., 2000). Between the ages of 12-19 years, the body is

still developing. Because of this, the teen mother should make sure she is consuming at least 1,300 mg of calcium a day. Lactating women should also increase their caloric intake by 500 to 1,000 calories, along with making sure they are drinking at least three liters of fluid every day (Durham et al, 2023). When talking to adolescents about nutrition, healthcare professionals should make sure that it is at an age-appropriate level. Teens learning styles and teaching strategies are different. Information needs to be provided in a manner that will help them engage in the learning process (Durham et al, 2023).

### **3 tips/suggestions/interventions**

When working with adolescent parents, healthcare professionals are helping develop knowledge on childhood behavior and teaching them how to cope with the stress of parenting (Durham et al, 2023). One-way nurses can do this is to make sure they are including the adolescent father in infant care teaching sessions (Durham et al, 2023). It is important for these fathers to understand information and have encouragement in developing care behaviors (Durham et al, 2023). Assessing the adolescents' level of knowledge is another intervention that needs to be done (Durham et al, 2023). Information given to the parents needs to be age appropriate and relevant (Durham et al, 2023). The third intervention is involving the maternal grandparents in teaching sessions (Durham et al, 2023). Having the grandparents review newborn care is essential because "teen mothers might live with their parents during the first years or rely on their mother for assistance and information" (Durham et al, 2023, p 434 pg. 9).

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