

# Study shows boys are more likely to experiment with sex

By Cheri F. Hodges  
cheri.hodges@thecharlottepost.com

If young girls think their parents disapprove of sex, then they are less likely to have sexual intercourse or contract an STD, according to a study from UNC-Chapel Hill.

However, the same doesn't hold true for young boys.

UNC researchers found that girls who delayed sexual activity early had no effect on whether they got a STD six years later.

"To our knowledge, this is the first study to find a link between adolescents' perceptions of parental opinions about sex and

the chance that they have a sexually transmitted infection in young adulthood," said Dr. Carol A. Ford, lead author of the study, which was published this month.

In a January issue of The Journal of Infectious Diseases, it was reported that 4 out of 5 sexually-active adolescent girls have HPV or human papillomavirus, which is linked to genital warts and cervical cancer.

Ford, a professor in the pediatrics department at UNC's School of Medicine, said "Parents who do not approve of their adolescents having sex during adolescence should try to effectively communicate this."

Other findings in the UNC report show:

- Adolescents with higher grades were less likely to have acquired sexually transmitted infections six years after the original study than those with lower grades

- Most family, school and individual factors linked to delaying the start of sexual activity among adolescents had no effect on the respondents' likelihood of having sexually transmitted infections six years later.

"Our results suggest that effective communication between adolescents and parents about sex is important," Ford said.

The results also showed that cur-

able sexually transmitted infections are common among young adults. Researchers studied factors that are associated with delay of sex among adolescents and found that in large part they didn't decrease risk for sexually transmitted infections in young adulthood.

"Among 24-year-olds, the odds of having a sexually transmitted infection was the same whether sex was initiated at age 13 or 17," said Ford. "Efforts to reduce rates of sexually transmitted infections among adolescents and young adults should consider these nuances."

# Website helps kids deal with issues

By Sommer Brokaw  
THE CHARLOTTE POST

WARM2kids.com is an online community started by N.C. native and former Boston Celtics great M.L. Carr. The site is an offshoot of his experience working with children in New England. Carr delivered the message of "standing tall against drugs" to middle and high school students and allowed them to ask questions. Impressed by his celebrity, some asked simple questions like "how tall are you?" or, "how many championships did you win?" However, others sought advice. For instance, a girl wrote him a letter that said:

"M.L., I know you said that if your friend is on drugs, you won't get them in trouble by telling your teacher because they're already in trouble...but what about if my mom sells drugs from our house, and my stepfather touches

me in places he shouldn't. Should I tell on them too?"

WARM2Kids.com was born out of a quest to help kids with the tougher questions. It is now an online membership community for parents and children that feature 100 celebrity role models and over 200 topics. The acronym WARM stands for "We are all role models." Role models range from country singer Tim McGraw and R&B singer Mario, to comedian Bill Cosby. Topics range from suicide and self-confidence issues to adoption and the importance of family.

"We hope kids learn that they are not alone and no matter what you're faced with you can overcome whatever those issues are," Carr said. "We also hope parents will become more involved in how to connect with their kids and be supportive."

Dr. Lonnie Carton, a psy-

chologist and broadcaster, helps young people who may feel trapped by their circumstances giving with advice on where to go for help. The website also has referral sites on where to go for help on various issues.

"We are looking to make a dramatic difference in the lives of young people in the course of crises prevention," she said.

The scenarios on the site are designed to help youth avoid situations that will hurt them in the future. For example, a 16-year-old with a driver's permit is driving without an adult and sees a blue light. Speeding up may seem good in the short-term, but the long-term possibilities aren't so good.

Carr, a minority partner in the NBA Charlotte Bobcats, is working on expanding the program to Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools.

WARM2Kids.com urges educators to use content from the site such as celebrity interviews and everyday role models to reach out to kids. The goal is to help students physically, socially and emotionally, not just academically.

"We teach things other than mathematics and reading, we fill in the holes that are no longer taught," said Donald Johnson, the program's vice-president of business development.

Carr plans to spread the program nationwide. "We eventually would like to have students all over the country participating in the program," he said. "If we can help someone better their lives along the way that would be a good legacy."

# Blacks drown at a higher rate

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CLEVELAND — A newspaper analysis reveals that blacks are far more likely than whites to be drowning victims.

In Ohio, blacks drown at an approximately 133 percent higher rate than whites, according to an analysis of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data by The Plain Dealer. Nationwide, blacks drown at a 45 percent higher rate.

"You're not going to get killed from being black and not knowing how to golf," said Dennis Harris, who runs a summer program for inner-city youths here. "But this, this will kill you."

Amid the deaths of five black men and boys in the Cleveland area in recent weeks, some say the lack of aquatic acumen among blacks — perhaps stirred by fewer swimming pools in black neighborhoods or a cultural aversion to water — is a problem that needs to be addressed.

Swimming is the only mandatory sport at Harris' summer program. Harris says the black community hasn't addressed the high number of drownings nor embraced swimming as an essential life skill.

For many white, suburban children, swim lessons are a rite of passage; that's not the case for many blacks.

In East Cleveland, the predominantly black, poorest city in the state, there is no public pool, and community activists say there are more pressing concerns to be addressed.

"We're seeing swimming as recreational — not as a life skill like we are these other things," Stanley Miller, executive director of the Cleveland NAACP, which also is offering a summer camp for inner-city kids.

Computer training as well as team-building and self-esteem classes are mandatory at the camp, but swimming is optional. The focus should be primarily on helping children pull themselves out of poverty, Miller said.

"As people change their lifestyles, move up an economic level, this (swimming) will move up as a priority, too," he said.

But some public health experts see a growing problem that needs to be addressed now.

A National Institute of Health study four years ago found black males ages 5 to 19 were 12 to 15 times more likely to drown in swimming pools than white males in the same age group.

Researchers expect similar findings in another study to be released next year, said Gitanjali Saluja, a research fellow at the institutes.

Some say the problems

reach beyond having a pool nearby or access to swimming lessons.

Some black families have a deep, entrenched fear of the water that some historians say could date to when white plantation owners forbade slaves from learning how to swim. And until the civil rights movement of the 1960s, blacks weren't allowed to swim in many city pools or even at public beaches.

There also is the hair issue — many black women who wear their hair straight would have to spend more than an hour on post-swim styling unless they want to go natural or braid their hair.

Ayanna Traylor is the director of the Euclid YMCA. When she started her career 10 years ago, Traylor said she was one of only 13 black YMCA aquatics directors nationwide.

She learned how to swim because her mother knew how, but said her first job in Philadelphia showed her how differently swimming was viewed among whites and blacks.

"Learning how to swim, it's just what you did (in the white community). You had play group during the day and then swim group," Traylor said. "But so often, learning to swim is still looked at as a luxury in the black community and that needs to change."

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