

Chapter**12****Parent Letter and Activities**

Dear Parent or Guardian,

In health class, your teen is currently studying communicable diseases—those diseases that are spread to a person from another person, animal, or object. Specifically, we are discussing the pathogens that cause communicable diseases, how pathogens are spread, and how the immune system works against pathogens. We will be studying the characteristics of some communicable diseases, including mononucleosis, hepatitis, and strep throat. We will also examine several types of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV and AIDS. We will conclude by identifying habits that help protect against communicable diseases.

Some questions your teen will answer as we study these topics include: *What types of germs can cause disease? How are germs spread? How does the immune system work? How do antibodies protect the body from pathogens? How can I develop immunity to a disease? What is the difference between a cold and the flu? What are some common communicable diseases? Which communicable diseases can be prevented by vaccination? What are some common STIs? How do people become infected with HIV and develop AIDS? What is being done to fight AIDS? How can I protect myself from STIs? How can I protect myself from pathogens? How can I avoid spreading pathogens to others when I am sick?*

I would like to call your attention to one question in particular—*How can I protect myself from STIs?* The answer we provide is abstinence—avoidance of sexual activity. Abstinence will be emphasized as one of the most important health decisions young people can make. Your teen will also learn specific ways to resist being pressured into engaging in sexual activity.

To support and extend our classroom work, please set aside some time during the next few weeks to complete one or more of the following activities with your teen:

- Discuss the guidelines for protection from pathogens that your teen has learned. Decide if family members are following these guidelines. If there is room for improvement, devise a plan for change.
- Discuss what you can do when you have a cold or flu to reduce the chance of spreading it to other family members.
- Make yourself available to answer questions and discuss concerns your teen may have about sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS.

Any other activities that you think will help your teen develop a greater understanding of communicable diseases are, of course, a welcome addition to our efforts here. As always, do not hesitate to contact me for further information.

Sincerely,

Health Teacher