



Health Communication and the Internet: An Analysis of Adolescent Language Use on the *Teenage Heath Freak* Website

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Adolescent health care

- Primary care: GPs and adolescents:
Communication barriers exist
 - Fear of confidentiality breaches
 - Embarrassment

(Jacobson et al. 2001; McPherson 2005)



Teenage Health Freak Website

Provides complete anonymity and confidential advice

Popularity: 52,864 visits per day

www.teenagehealthfreak.org

Homepage of the Teenage Health Freak Website



Introducing Dr Ann

Doctor Ann's Virtual Surgery



I'm sorry there doesn't seem to be anything on the site that answers your question. Click the link below and I will try and make sure new content goes on the site or reply.

I'm afraid I can't reply to everyone though.

[Click here to send your question to Doctor Ann](#)


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Doctor Ann's Virtual Surgery

Doctor Ann's Virtual Surgery



Ask Dr Ann

If you have a health question and can't find the answer to it on my website, just ask. I'll do my best to answer, but as I receive a lot of emails, I can't answer all of them - just a selection each week. Ask away...


Sex:

Age:

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Methodology

A quantitative corpus approach

- Word frequencies
- Keywords – words which occur with a statistically greater frequency in the teenage health emails than in our general reference corpus



Corpus Summary

	All	Male	Female
Total Messages	113,481	41,830 (37%)	59,885 (53%)
Total Words	2,194,418	659,964 (30%)	1, 427976 (65%)
Avg. Words per Message	19	15	23

Frequencies of top 20 keywords in the 'teenage health email' corpus

N	Key word	Freq.	%	Keyness
1	I	154,207	6.96	422,351.34
2	MY	59,777	2.70	219,749.14
3	SEX	17,368	0.78	100,670.93
4	AM	21,215	0.96	98,783.43
5	DO	35,108	1.58	87,646.09
6	I'M	21,070	0.95	75,674.23
7	ME	28,437	1.28	74,365.61
8	PENIS	8,658	0.39	62,311.52
9	WHAT	30,490	1.38	59,432.77
10	HAVE	39,284	1.77	47,771.84
11	PREGNANT	6,629	0.30	41,219.82
12	PLEASE	9,048	0.41	40,364.82
13	ANN	6,400	0.29	40,142.99
14	HELP	11,854	0.53	38,240.11
15	REALLY	12,211	0.55	35,827.87
16	BOYFRIEND	5,374	0.24	35,596.28
17	HI	5,075	0.23	32,154.75
18	HOW	14,569	0.66	30,287.97
19	GET	14,431	0.65	29,312.62
20	WORRIED	4,513	0.20	22,451.35



I MY SEX AM DO I'M ME PENIS WHAT HAVE PREGNANT
PLEASE ANN HELP REALLY BOYFRIEND HI HOW GET
WORRIED DON'T GAY WANT VAGINA CAN FEEL NORMAL
WHY DEAR BUT DR SCARED MASTURBATE FRIEND MUM
PERIOD IS YOU PILL CONDOM FRIENDS GIRLFRIEND
GIRL SHOULD SMOKING BOY THINK STARTED SPOTS
PERIODS WEIGHT I'VE BECAUSE STOP BOOBS DOCTOR
CAN'T KNOW LIKE WHEN SMOKE TELL IT DOES FAT
GETTING FORESKIN GIRLS ABOUT IF HELLO CUM
HAVEN'T SPERM PUBERTY BREASTS BAD WRONG
HAVING MASTURBATING DRUGS UR PUBIC MYSELF
DISCHARGE LOVE WONDERING HURT EAT OK
FINGERED BULLIED BUM BOYS STRESSED JUST HURTS
THANKS UNPROTECTED AGE



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Topical Keyword Summary

Group	Types	Tokens
Sex/Pregnancy/Relationships	180	67,582
Sexual Body Parts	81	24,638
Puberty	55	21,102
Weight/Eating	55	15,759
Smoking/Drugs/Alcohol	56	13,887
Mental Health	29	5,117



Euphemisms and Orthophemisms

- Dr-patient face to face encounters:
Euphemisms used to refer to sexual body parts to save face
- Can hamper effectiveness of medical advice/lead to miscommunication
(Stewart 2005; Weijts et al. 1993)
- Current emphasis on 'openness' in Dr-patient communication in the NHS
(Tayler & Ogden 2005)



	Freq	Per 100,000 words
Penis	8375	382
Willy	853	39
Knob	509	23
Dick	245	11
Cock	112	5
Vagina	2454	112
Fanny	580	26
Pussy	210	10
Minge	47	2
Down there	284	13
Down below	174	8
Downstairs	34	2
Privates	29	1



I have found an abnormal lump on the side of my penis, it is especially noticeable when it is erect. I have no idea what the lump is and it has really freaked my girlfriend out. It is making me feel insecure about myself and I don't know what to do. Please help.

Male 15 yrs. – 2004

I am 17, my penis is around 6 inches when erect and 4.6 in circumference. Most sites say this is within average but it looks thin and I worry about being able to satisfy a partner. Is this normal or small?

Male 17 – 2009



dear dr ann im really worried abt my vagina! as it is a total mess down there, well i develop these big painful bumps just near the skin at the side of my vagina and after a week or so the melt away by themselves. i also develops these sort of bumps on my buttock also my pubic hair is very course and when i shave it it becomes very sore!! help!!

Female 13 yrs. – 2004

i have a small round brown spot on my vagina. is this something i need checking out or is it a normal spot ???

Not supplied – 2007



Online Disinhibition Effect

- Is the disinhibition effect the reason for the elevated levels of candour among the emailers
- Research Indicates that people disclose more intimately online than they do face to face
- Do young people communicate more explicitly than other generations?