Teenage pregnancy has become a very controversial topic in almost every country in the developed world. This issue has increased in the number of single, uneducated mothers who rely on state benefits for their financial help. Countries like the USA have 57 out of a 1000 teenage women getting pregnant every year. This report looks into the medical effects, society causes and attitudes towards teenage pregnancy.

Medical risks:
"During pregnancy, women are affected with many unique medical risks. Teenagers have a higher risk of being affected by one of these", was stated by Dr. Hue Walker in a link to the website www.about.com. Doctors and nurses have found out that teenagers have a higher risk of being affected by medical problems during pregnancy than women older in age. In an interview with her, Dr. Bindhu Manohar said that one of the main medical risks that hit a teenager while pregnant was the lack of prenatal care. This is because teenagers are not aware of the checkups and medication that need to take up as they go through. Dr. Manohar pointed out that there is usually a higher risk for teenagers who are pregnant because teenagers' bodies are not quite ready for a baby. Low birth-weight babies are mostly born to teenage parents. This all means that teenagers who are getting pregnant at early ages like 15 or 16 are going to have many complications before and during pregnancy because of their not yet-developed body. Postpartum depression and general depression is very common in pregnant teenagers, says Dr. Manohar. This can lead to many serious problems and the depression can affect the baby a lot. This suggests that teenagers need a lot more support during their pregnancy than an older woman as without it many complications can arise, which can affect both the baby and the mother.

Society causes:
"Although there are many causes, such as contraceptive failure, I think that our society is the main push behind teenage pregnancy". This opinion was put forward in an interview with Taylah in a book by Suzie Hayman. Her research and the follow up interviews I read in her book and in Mary Nolan's and in my talks with the guidance counselor and Barbara (who was a pregnant teenager) showed me that most cases of teenage pregnancy are the result of the kind of attitudes of the western society we live in. "It was hard for me to accept that reality was very different from what was shown in TV, because what happened to me did not happen to them", was said by Kylie who was also interviewed by Suzie Hayman. This suggests that most teenagers who get pregnant don't expect it to happen to them as they see people get away with it in many movies and serials.

Teenagers can also be influenced by the type of "mixed messages" they receive from all around them. In some places, access to contraception is difficult. Sex education is forbidden in some countries, some by governments and some by parents. However, a book by Mary Nolan has shown that countries like the Netherlands and Germany, where sex education is started at pre-school have lower rates of teenagers getting pregnant. This made me realize that some societies in our world shower kids with sexual messages rather than teach them responsibility and the consequences of early sexual activity. You could say we are hypocritical in that we talk about it, show it in magazines and movies, but don't want to actually do anything serious about it. Governments could step in to make sure that proper sex education was available to everyone because to get pregnant because you did not know enough is not good enough in the twenty first century which is also called the knowledge age.

In some other cases, sex is not wanted but is a result of peer pressure. "it seemed to be the normal thing to do. It seemed, every one around me was doing it", was said by Charlotte in the book by Suzie Hayman, although a link in the website www.about.health.com showed that only 1 in 5 teenagers had sex before the age of 20. This tells us that it is our society, and particularly media and the movies, that has influenced the problem of teenage pregnancy so much and made it worse. Some responsibility needs to be taken by these media organizations and this is where governments could do something to help.

"Teenagers are usually looked down on when they are pregnant", was said by Mrs. Jones, a guidance counselor at my school, in an interview. Attitudes towards teenage pregnancy vary in different places. In the book by Mary Nolan it also shows that in the Western world, teenage parents are looked down on and often criticized and laughed at. In some countries, the government is not so willing to help teenage mothers financially, especially if they are not married. People don't like their tax being spent on these parents and politicians often express their disapproval of teenage parents. This suggests that teenage parents are not valued in the developed world, even though it is society's influence that has got them into this situation. In other countries, however, getting pregnant in an early age is regarded as very good because it shows that you are fertile and mature enough to be regarded as an adult. This suggests that teenagers in these countries find it more 'normal' to have babies in their teenage years and also have better conditions and support for having a baby.

Teenage pregnancy has been increasing in numbers rapidly in the past decade. Even though in most cultures, teenage pregnancy is seen as the problem of the teenager and that the country or society itself has no responsibility, I do not believe that society can take this attitude. These young people are affected hugely by medical risks which are higher in teenagers, and because attitudes vary in different places, pregnant teenagers are treated differently in different places. It is time that we as a society realize that we are partially responsible for the increase in teenage pregnancy. Investigating this topic, I have found that teenage pregnancy has many effects on teenagers (and their babies) that are usually forgotten by the public. These effects can affect them seriously or slightly, but either way, a baby being born to a teenager in her early years has a huge effect, that will last for her whole lifetime.