

Sex - are you ready

It is normal to have a lot of mixed feelings about having sex with someone else. Don't let anyone intimidate you into having sex. You can talk to the person you are attracted to, friends and family members before you decide. You can also talk about sex to confidential services including Kids Help Line.

If you choose to have sex with someone, you should think about sexually transmissible infections (STIs), including the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) which causes acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS).

You are at risk of STI's if you have sexual contact with someone of the same sex or the opposite sex. You can reduce your risk of STIs with safe sex practises.

Sexual activity

Young people in Years 10, 11 and 12 are sexually active to varying degrees. Many teenagers have had sexual experiences, but many other teenagers have not.

Young people were interviewed in 2008 for the fourth *National Survey of Australian Secondary Students, HIV/AIDS and Sexual Health*, carried out by the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society and funded by the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing.

Selected statistics include:

- Over one quarter of Year 10 students and half of Year 12 students have experienced sexual intercourse.
- Of those who were sexually active, 30% had sex with three or more sexual partners in a year.
- Just under half the students surveyed had experienced oral sex.
- The most recent sexual encounter for about two-thirds of young people was with their regular girlfriend or boyfriend.

If you are thinking about having sex

Sex is a physical way to express love and affection for someone. Being in a sexual relationship can be rewarding and enjoyable. It is important to remember:

- Both partners need to agree to have sex
- No one has the right to force you to have sex
- You always have the right to say no.
- It is okay to change your mind.

Don't let anyone intimidate you into having sex. Some people wrongly think that they can demand that another person be sexual with them, or force them to have sex against their will. This is sexual assault or rape, and is a crime.

It is common to be unsure

In 2009, nine per cent of contacts to Kids Help Line were about partner relationships. Callers to Kids Help Line want to talk about issues including pregnancy, contraception, relationship breakdowns and pressure to have sex.

You can call Kids Help Line 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and talk to a professional counsellor. This is a free call from anywhere in Australia, even if you call from a public telephone.

Talk to the person you are sexually attracted to

You may find yourself sexually attracted to your partner, a friend or an acquaintance. Talking about sex with this person can help you both work out if you want to begin a sexual relationship. Talk about your expectations, and what you expect from the other person.

'Safe sex' is always a good idea

It is always a good idea to engage in 'safe sex' to protect yourself and your partner from:

- Becoming pregnant
- Catching a sexually transmissible infection - for example HIV/AIDS, herpes, chlamydia, syphilis or gonorrhoea. Using condoms (male or female) with water based lubricants and dental dams (a thin piece of latex placed over the anal or vulval area during oral sex) is one way to protect yourself from some of these infections.

Different sexually transmissible infections (STIs) are passed on in different ways. Talk to health workers at your local community health centre, your doctor or someone from a family planning clinic to find out more about preventing pregnancy and STIs.

Male condoms can be bought from supermarkets, chemists and other outlets. Female condoms and dams are available through Family Planning Victoria and may be available from selected shops. Latex free condoms are also available from some outlets. Male condoms and lubricant are available free from the Melbourne Sexual Health Centre, along with female condoms and dams on request.

If you are attracted to someone of the same sex

Young people can experience many new feelings which can sometimes be confusing. Some young people find they are attracted to someone of the same sex.

Being gay, lesbian or bisexual is normal for some people. It is also normal to feel confused if you are unsure about your sexuality.

You can call Kids Help Line to talk about your feelings in private. You can also obtain more information from Reach Out and from P-FLAG, a group for parents and friends of lesbian and gay people.

It is important to practise safe sex in a same-sex relationship to protect yourself from sexually transmissible infections.

Where to go for further information

Family Planning Victoria has an Action Centre for young people who need further information or advice. Other services include:

- Contraception
- Advice on safe sex practises
- Pregnancy testing and counselling
- HIV/AIDS testing
- Pap smears for women. If you decide to become sexually active, you will need to have a regular Pap smear.

Where to get help

- Your doctor
- Your local community health centre
- Family Planning Victoria Tel. 1800 013 952 or (03) 9257 0100
- The Action Centre (for youth under 25 years) Tel. 03 9654 4766 or 1800 013 952
- Kids Help Line Tel. 1800 551 800
- Lifeline Tel. 13 11 14

- Gay and Lesbian Switchboard Tel. (03) 9663 2939 or 1800 184 527
- PFLAG (Parents, Family and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) Tel. (03) 9827 8408

Things to remember

- It is normal to have mixed feelings if you are thinking about having sex.
- It is your right to say no to sex. No one has the right to force you to have sex.
- If you decide to have sex, talk to your doctor or a family planning clinic about what you should do to protect yourself from sexually transmissible infections and unwanted pregnancy.

This page has been produced in consultation with, and approved by:

Reach Out

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