
Sex – are you ready

Summary

- There are questions that a person can ask themselves to help figure out if or when they're ready for a sexual relationship.
 - The decision about whether a person is ready to have sex (or not) is theirs to make, based on what is right for them.
 - If a person has decided they are ready and they are going to have sex, they and their partner must always give consent (free agreement without fear, force or pressure).
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About sex – are you ready?

People have sex for all sorts of reasons – for emotional reasons (for example, to express love and affection), for physical reasons (for example, sexual pleasure), to achieve particular goals (for example, to have a baby) and for social reasons (for example, to boost their self-esteem, or because they're pressured into it).

Sex can mean different things to different people. Everybody will define sex in the way that feels right for them. This might include kissing, hugging, touching, fingering, oral sex, vaginal sex, anal sex, and so on. Being in a sexual relationship can be rewarding and enjoyable.

Some healthy reasons for having sex include:

- to express loving feelings
- you're feeling sexy
- you feel ready to take this step in your relationship
- you want to have a baby (and are ready for this responsibility)
- it's part of your own personal values.

Sex should be a positive experience. Sometimes people are pressured into having sex before they are ready, or forced to have sex against their will. If sex without consent happens, it's not okay – and it's against the law. So, as well as thinking about if a person is ready to have sex, they need to talk to their partner and make sure they feel ready too. People in sexual relationships need to give their **consent**, every time.

How does a person decide if they're ready for sex?

Key steps to help a person decide if they are ready to have sex is to ask themselves questions and talk to the person who attracts them. Talking to trusted friends or family members can also help a person to decide what is right for them.

The decision about whether a person is ready to have sex is theirs to make.

They should never feel pressured into having sex or pressure anyone else to have sex with them.

Some questions a person may ask themselves if they are thinking about having sex include:

- How do I feel about my partner?
 - What is the nature of our relationship?
 - Are we 'on the same page' about having sex?
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- Am I feeling comfortable about the idea of having sex?
- Am I thinking about having sex because I want to, and I'm feeling ready, or because I'm feeling pressured, or like I 'should' be doing this?
- How does the decision to have sex align with my values or faith?
- Am I comfortable about showing my body to my partner and being touched by them?
- Am I comfortable communicating my feelings, expectations, preferences and concerns around sex with this person?
- How will I communicate my consent to my partner? How will I ask them for consent?
- What happens if either of us changes our mind?
- Have I spoken to my partner about how far I'm willing to go, and how far they are?
- Do I respect my partner's preferences, boundaries, concerns and expectations, and do they respect mine?
- Am I prepared to deal with unintended consequences of sex such as pregnancy, STIs, awkwardness, disappointment or discomfort with my partner?
- Has my partner asked themselves these questions too?

Practical questions to consider include:

- Have we taken steps to ensure we have **safe sex**? Making sure you are protecting yourself from **sexually transmissible infections (STIs)** is relevant for all sexual relationships.
- Have we discussed **contraception** to prevent pregnancy? (This is relevant for penis-in-vagina sex.)
- Do I know how to correctly use condoms (internal and external) or dental dams?
- Do I know how to access sexual and reproductive health care (for example, for STI testing and treatment, contraception and pregnancy options)? (Better Health Channel has comprehensive information on **women's sexual and reproductive health services**. For information about men's sexual health services, visit **Melbourne Sexual Health Centre**.)

A person should not make assumptions about how a partner feels about them, and about having sex. Ask them how they feel, and how they see the relationship. Do they feel ready to have sex? Do they want to have sex with you and, if so, what does having sex mean to them? Talk to them about the questions you have asked yourself from the lists above.

Remember, both partners must consent to having sex and continue to consent throughout the sexual contact. A person can change their mind and withdraw consent at any time.

Where to get help

- Your **GP (doctor)**
- Your school nurse or school welfare coordinator
- Some secondary schools provide access, on site, to a GP trained in adolescent health
- Your local community health service
- **1800 My Options** Tel. **1800 696 784** (in Victoria) for information about sexual health, contraception and pregnancy options
- **Family Planning Victoria** – comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services for people of all ages Tel. **1800 013 952** or **(03) 9257 0100**
- **Melbourne Sexual Health Centre** Tel. **(03) 9341 6200** or **1800 032 017** or TTY (for people with a hearing impairment) **(03) 9347 8619**
- **Victorian Supercare Pharmacies** – open 24 hours, 7 days, and with a private consulting room and free registered nursing service from 6 – 10 pm daily
- **Kids Helpline** Tel. **1800 551 800**
- **Lifeline** Tel. **13 11 14**
- **Minus18**
- **Thorne Harbour Health** Tel. **(03) 9865 6700** or **1800 134 840**
- **Ballarat Community Health Sexual Health Clinic** Tel. **(03) 5338 4500**

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- **Bendigo Community Health Sexual Health Clinic** Tel. **(03) 5434 4300** or **(03) 5448 1600**
- **Gateway Health Clinic 35**, Wodonga Tel. **(02) 6022 8888** or **1800 657 573**
- **Sunraysia Community Health Services** Tel. **(03) 5022 5444**
- **Barwon Health Sexual Health Clinic** Tel. **(03) 5226 7489**

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