

Deciding to Wait

No matter what you've heard, read, or seen, not everyone your age is having sex, including oral sex and intercourse.

In fact, about half of all teens choose to wait until they're older to have sex. If you feel confused about having sex, even if you've had sex before, considering a few of the following things can help you decide whether you are truly ready.

New Feelings

Being physically attracted to another person, as well as trying to figure out how to deal with these feelings, is perfectly normal. Kissing and hugging are often accompanied by intense sexual feelings.

Before things go too far, take a moment and ask yourself...

- Do I really want to have sex?
- Is this person pressuring me to have sex?
- Am I feeling pressure from my friends to have sex?
- Am I ready and prepared to have safe sex?
- What will happen after I have sex with this person?

Remember, you can show how you feel about someone without having sex (by being abstinent) with him or her.

Can You Be In a Relationship Without Being Sexual?

Yes, being in a relationship can mean

- Sharing your opinions and feelings with each other
- Taking interest in each other's interests and hobbies
- Spending time together by doing activities or hobbies
- Holding hands, kissing, or cuddling

Are You Ready?

Ask yourself...

- How do you feel when you are with this person?
- Is this person kind and caring?
- Does this person respect you and your opinions?
- Have you talked together about whether to have sex?
- Have you talked together about using some form of protection (for example, condoms) to prevent infections and about using condoms or other forms of protection to prevent pregnancy?
- Will you stay together even if one of you does not want to have sex?
- Do you know whether your partner has had sex with other people?
- Do you feel pressured to have sex just to please your partner?

If you and your partner find it hard to talk about sex, it might be a sign that you are not ready to have sex. Open and honest communication is important in any relationship, especially in one that involves sex.

Know the Risks

Although it's normal for teens to be curious about sex, deciding to have sex is a big step. It is important to consider what can happen if you have sex without being prepared. Having sex increases your chances of becoming pregnant, becoming a teen parent, and getting a sexually transmitted infection (STI). It may also affect the way you feel about yourself.

Some things to think about before you have sex are

- What would your parents say if you had sex?
- Are you ready to deal with pregnancy?
- Could you handle being told you have an STI (for example, herpes)?
- Do you know where to go for birth control methods?
- How would you feel if your partner told you the relationship is over after you have sex?
- How would you feel if your partner told people at school that the two of you had sex?
- How would you handle feeling guilty, scared, or sad because you had sex?

Set Your Limits

If you don't want to have sex, set limits before things get too serious. Never let anyone talk you into doing something you don't want to do. No one should be pressured or forced to have sex! If you are ever pressured or forced to have sex, it's important to never blame yourself and to tell an adult you trust as soon as possible. Medical and counseling supports are available to help someone who has been forced to have sex.

Stick by Your Decision

If you don't know what to say, here are some suggestions.

- "I like you a lot, but I'm not ready to have sex."
- "You're fun to be with, and I wouldn't want to ruin our relationship with sex."
- "You're a great person, but sex isn't how I prove I like someone."
- "I'd like to wait until I'm older before I decide to have sex."

Remember, "No" means no, no matter how far you go. If you feel things are going too far sexually, tell your partner to stop. If your boyfriend or girlfriend doesn't support your decision to wait, he or she may be the wrong person for you.

Why Wait?

People who wait until they are older to have sex usually find out it's

- More special
- Less risky to their health
- Easier to act responsibly and take precautions to prevent infections and pregnancy

Be patient. At some point, you will be ready for sex. Move at your own pace, not someone else's.

Remember

If you choose to wait to have sex,

- Limit your time alone with your boyfriend or girlfriend, and spend time with other friends.
- Stick to your limits.
- Be true to yourself.
- Hang out with people who feel the same way you do.

American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN®



The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) is an organization of 67,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists, and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety, and well-being of infants, children, adolescents, and young adults.

Any websites, brand names, products, or manufacturers are mentioned for informational and identification purposes only and do not imply an endorsement by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). The AAP is not responsible for the content of external resources. Information was current at the time of publication. The information contained in this publication should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

© 2020 American Academy of Pediatrics. All rights reserved.