



SEX WITHOUT RISK a fact sheet for teens

Sex is a natural, pleasurable part of life. It is normal to want sex and to like it. But waiting to have sex, or taking a break from sex, can also be positive and enjoyable. Read this fact sheet to learn more about why someone would make that choice and how to experience sexual pleasure without the risk.

Choosing not to have sex Not having sex is a birth control method that prevents pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Not having sex means different things to different people. For some, it means no sexual contact with another person. For others, it means only having sex play that has no pregnancy or STI risk. You can decide what feels right for you and what sex contact you want to have.

You can choose not to have sex at any time in your life and for any reason. Just because you have had sex in the past, doesn't mean you always have to be sexually active. You can not have sex for a day, a month, a year or more. And it's a choice anyone can make – man or woman, gay or straight.

Advantages

- Always available
- Free
- Can be started at any time
- Does not change your menstrual cycle
- No hormones
- Does not affect future fertility
- Something for both men and women

Challenges

- Some feel that not having sex is frustrating
- If you change your mind, you might not have birth control ready

There are many reasons why someone would decide not to have sex. Here are a few:

- Prevent pregnancy
- Protect against STIs
- Follow religious or personal beliefs
- Want to wait until marriage or an older age
- Focus on career or education goals
- Aren't ready for a sexual partner
- Waiting for the right person
- Don't want the responsibilities that come with sex

Sometimes, not having sex can be hard. There can be pressure to have sex when you don't want to. But it is your decision when you want to have sex. What might be a good choice for one person may not be right for another.

Be Ready Learn about birth control and STI protection so that you are ready for when you do have sex. Keep condoms on hand, just in case. Pick a birth control that makes sense for your life - the best birth control is the one that you will actually use. To learn more about your birth control options, check out our birth control resource page at www.birth-control-comparison.info and our CONNECT Birth Control packet available at www.cedarriverclinics.org/connect.



Relationships Without The Sex You are still a sexual person even if you are not having sex. You can date, be in a committed relationship, have sexual desires or be attracted to someone. You choose how intimate you want to be. Decide ahead of time, before you are in the heat of the moment. And talk with your partner about your decision. Together, agree what your boundaries are.

You can do things together that help build your relationship and your friendship. You might want to kiss, hold hands, eat dinner, go to the movies, listen to music, talk, dance, hike, share fantasies, hug, take a walk and many other things you do with someone you care about. If you are comfortable, you and your partner can also give and receive sexual pleasure using hands, sex toys or other body parts. This can help sexual partners learn to better communicate and please each other. And it can be fun and satisfying. There is no risk of pregnancy, unless sperm is in or near the vagina. To prevent STIs, wash your hands before touching, or use condoms or latex gloves. Don't forget: You can also pass an STI, like HPV and herpes, by skin-to-skin contact in the genital, oral or anal area.

Sex – Just For You Your sex life does not stop when you are on your own! You can have exciting sexual experiences without a partner. One way is to masturbate, which means giving yourself sexual pleasure. Masturbation is a completely normal and healthy thing to do for both men and women. Maybe someone told you that only people who are desperate masturbate. That is not true! Most people masturbate and enjoy it, even when they are in relationships. Masturbation can also teach you a lot about your body, and what you like and don't like during sex. Knowing this can help you be a better communicator and a better lover to a partner in the future. Some people masturbate more than once a day, once a month or not at all. There are a lot of different ways to masturbate. Do whatever feels comfortable and pleasurable. Explore your body and learn what excites you. Masturbation has no risk of pregnancy and STIs.

For More Information

- **Cedar River Clinics** provides birth control, abortion, STI treatment and gynecological care. 1-800-572-4223
www.CedarRiverClinics.org
www.Birth-Control-Comparison.info
- **Scarleteen** shares thoughtful advice and accurate sexual information. www.scarleteen.com
- **I Wanna Know** answers teen questions about STIs and sexual health. www.iwannaknow.org

Tips

- **Think positive.** What do you gain from not having sex? Remind yourself why you made this choice.
- **Be sexual.** Even if you aren't having sex, it is normal to have sexual thoughts and desires. Explore these without putting yourself at risk.
- **Decide what you want and stick to it.** Choose which sexual behaviors you are comfortable with and how long you want to wait before having sex.
- **Be clear.** Be open with your partner about your decision not to have sex.
- **Have a back-up plan.** Learn about birth control so that you have protection when you are ready.
- **Avoid drugs and alcohol.** Being high or drunk can make it harder for you to stick to your decision.
- **Be prepared to stand up to pressure.** Surround yourself with friends and family who respect you and your choices.

Visit www.CedarRiverClinics.org/Connect to download and order more CONNECT sexual health resources.

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