

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, more than half of all teens choose to wait until they're older to have sex. If you have already had sex but are unsure if you should again, then wait before having sex again.

New feelings

Being physically attracted to another person and trying to figure out how to deal with these feelings is perfectly normal. Kissing and hugging are often accompanied by **really intense sexual feelings**. These feelings may tempt you to "go all the way."

Before things go too far, **try asking yourself the following questions:**

- Do I really want to have sex?
- Is this person pressuring me to have sex?
- Am I ready to have sex?
- What will happen after I have sex with this person?

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

Can you be sexual without having sex?

Yes. Being sexual can mean

- Spending romantic time together
- Holding hands, kissing, or cuddling

Are you ready?

Ask yourself the following questions:

- **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 condoms and other **birth control**?
- Will you **stay together** even if one of you does not want to have sex?
- Do you know if your partner has **ever 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 one that involves sex.

Know the risks

It's normal for teens to be curious about sex, but deciding to have sex is a **big step**.

Sex does increase your chances of becoming pregnant, becoming a teen parent, and getting a sexually transmitted disease (STD), and it may affect the way you feel about yourself or how others feel about you.

Some things to think about before you have sex are

- What would **your parents** say if you had sex?
- Are you **ready to be a parent**?
- Could you handle being told that you have an STD?
- Do you know where to go for **birth control methods**?
- How would you feel if your partner tells you **it's over after you have sex**?
- How would you feel if your partner **tells people at school** 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. Boys and girls need to understand that **forcing someone to have sex is wrong.**

Stick by your decision

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

- "I like you a lot, but I'm just not ready to have sex."
- "You're really 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 make the decision 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.

Better safe than sorry

If you choose to wait to have sex, try to avoid

- **Being alone with your date too often.** Spending time with your other friends is important too.
- Giving your date the wrong idea. **Stick to your limits.** It's also not a good idea for you and your date to “make out” or go too far sexually if you don't really want to have sex.
- Using alcohol or drugs. Both of these **affect your judgment**, which may make it hard to stick to your decision not to have sex.
- **Giving in to the pressure.** It may be tempting to keep up with the crowd, but keep in mind that they may not be telling the truth.

Why wait?

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

- More **special**
- More **satisfying**
- **Less risky** to their health
- **Easier** to act responsibly and take precautions to avoid infections and pregnancy
- More **accepted** by others

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

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.

From your doctor

