

Making Decisions about Sex

Illinois Department of Public Health

Am I ready, or Not?

When it comes to having sex, only you can answer this question.

Before you make a decision it's important to think about...

- how you feel about yourself.
- your reasons for wanting to have sex or for not wanting to have sex.
- your partner's reasons for wanting or not wanting to have sex.
- the risks you face if you have sex.
- the values that are important to you.

*Thinking about these things is important – even if you have had sex before!

Many young people have sex for the wrong reasons.

For example, it's not a good idea to have sex:

- to "prove" you're a man or woman.
- to keep a boyfriend or girlfriend interested in you.
- to hurt a person you're mad at (your parents, your friends, etc).
- to be part of a group.
- to escape loneliness.
- after drinking or taking drugs.

Having sex for these reasons can cause personal and health problems..

**It's easy for young people to think everyone else is "doing it."
The truth is, not everyone is having sex!**

Having sex could be a big mistake.

For example, you could:

- get pregnant (or get your partner pregnant).
- be forced to quit school to support a child.
- feel guilty.
- feel "used" if your partner leaves.

You also risk getting a sexually transmitted disease (STD).

Your partner could have an STD and not know it.

Some STDs (like HIV) can't be cured. HIV causes AIDS. AIDS can kill you.

It's your right to say no to sex!

People choose not to have sex for lots of reasons.

For example:

- *They want to be married first.
- *They are not willing to risk getting pregnant or getting a Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD).
- *They want to stick to their own values.
- *They want sex to be special.
- *They had sex before and wish they hadn't.
- *They're just not ready or just don't want to.

**Someone who pressures you is being selfish –
not thinking about you or your feelings!**

Sex isn't the only way to feel close, love, and needed.

People can show they care by:

- holding hands.
- hugging.
- kissing.
- sharing fun times.

Helping each other through hard times is also part of being close. Being able to talk openly is very important. True feelings begin with honesty.

If you do have sex, make it safer sex.

Use a latex condom ever time you have vaginal, anal, or oral sex. Do this even if you use other forms of birth control. Follow the directions on the box or label.

Latex condoms can reduce your risk of pregnancy and disease. But, the only **sure** way to prevent pregnancy and disease is to not have sex.

It's also smart to make sure you both:

- know and trust each other.
- understand how your bodies work.
- respect and care about each other.

Before you do anything, get all of the facts.

Do your research about sexual activity, safe sex, pregnancy and STDs.

Talk to:

- a parent.
- your health-care provider.
- the school nurse.
- your school counselor.
- a person at the health department.
- someone at a family planning clinic.

It's OK to wait if you're not ready for sex!

Spring Grove Wellness: Children's Relationships