

## Am I ready for sex?



### FAST FACTS

- Sexual consent applies the first time and every time you have sex.
- Making a decision on if and when to have sex is always yours and should never be to please your partner or anyone else, to appear mature, or because you think you 'should'.
- If you know you're ready, make sure you protect yourself and your partner against [sexually transmitted infections \(STIs\)](#) including [HIV](#) and unwanted pregnancy.

It could be your first time or you may have had sex before. You may be thinking about whether you're gay or straight, or whether you're bisexual. You might not be sure yet and you don't have to be. Whatever's going on, it's natural to ask yourself if you're ready to have sex with your partner. There are no set rules, but there are some things to consider that will help you decide.

## Am I ready for sex?

Deciding if and when to have sex with someone is a very personal decision and is known as giving your 'sexual consent'. You also need to get your partner's sexual consent. It should feel right for you and for the person you're with, as you're making a joint decision.

If you decide to be sexually intimate in any way, it's completely within your rights to stop at any point, or not to do it again.

# What is sexual consent?

**Sexual consent** means agreeing to take part in any kind of sexual activity, not just penetrative vaginal or anal sex. It applies every time you have sex and it's an ongoing process – you might agree to sex earlier on and then change your mind – that's okay.

Sometimes, it's not clear what consent means. You have the right to say 'no' at any time – it doesn't matter if you've had sex with your current partner before or anyone else.

Too much verbal can kill the moment but there are other ways to check in with your partner for consent and to understand what they like, for example, eye contact, sounds and touch. Finding other ways to communicate with each other to get consent can also heighten pleasure and make you both feel even better!

# What are the wrong reasons to have sex?

To please your partner

Is this your decision, or are you thinking about having sex to please your partner? If any of these phrases sound familiar then think carefully – they could be pressuring you:

- "You would if you loved me"
- "Everyone else is doing it!"
- "It will make our relationship stronger"
- "You'll have to do it sometime – why not now, with me?"
- "I'll be gentle, and it'll be really great"

You don't want to look immature

If there's an age gap in your **relationship** it doesn't mean that having sex is the right thing to do – in fact, if your partner is older than you they should be mature enough to wait until you're ready. There is no set age or stage to start having sex, and losing your virginity at a young age doesn't automatically make you mature.

You think you 'should'

Your friends all seem to be having sex and to know lots about it – do you recognise any of these phrases?

- "You mean you've never done it?"
- "I lost it when I was 12... "
- "Yeah, I've had sex loads of times"
- "You're a virgin, you wouldn't understand."

Your friends may be saying these things because they want to sound more experienced than they really are. Be brave and tell them that you're happy to wait.

*"I still haven't had sex. I have felt tremendous pressure to just have random sex to get it over with and because my friends have lost their virginity but I wanted to wait to have sex with someone I love and who loves me." - Dakota*

You're going against your beliefs

We all have different ways of thinking about sex. Some people think sex should only happen within marriage, others view sex and love as different things. Your views on sex could be linked to your beliefs and that's okay, as long as you're clear with your partner and they understand.

You may have a different way of thinking about sex to your family or friends. Ultimately, the decision to have sex should be an agreement between you and your partner, and while other people may influence your decision-making, they shouldn't make it for you.

## How do I prepare for sex and protect myself?

If you know you're ready for sex, make sure your first time (and every time after that) is safe. That means protecting yourself and your partner against [sexually transmitted infections \(STIs\)](#) including [HIV](#) and unwanted pregnancy. The best way to do this is to always use a [condom](#).

Some people find it awkward to introduce a condom in the heat of the moment, so talk about protection with your partner beforehand and be clear on who will provide the condom(s). Putting it discreetly to one side or under a pillow is a good idea.

If you need to protect yourself against unwanted pregnancy then it's good to find out about other [contraception methods](#). Remember that they will only protect you against unwanted pregnancy, so using a condom is still important to make sure you're also protected against STIs, including HIV.

## What if it all goes wrong?

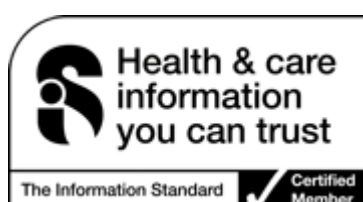
You can't predict how sex will go, and many factors - such as your moods, the atmosphere and timing - can all affect how it goes, no matter how experienced you are. However, the more open you are with your partner, and the better the communication, the more likely you are to both feel at ease.

*"The first time me and my girlfriend of six months tried having sex I got so nervous that I couldn't get an erection. I tried so hard to "encourage" it, that I ended up ejaculating before I'd even put the condom on. I laugh about it now but it was probably the most embarrassing experience of my life at the time. We tried again a week later and it was great!" - Tom*

It's natural to feel nervous and a little awkward the first time you have sex, or the first time you have sex in a new relationship, but consent, trust and good communication with your partner is more important than knowing a lot about sex.

Also, don't worry if it doesn't go as you thought it would and don't make assumptions about how you or your partner should behave or what you'll both like - you're not expected to know! It's all about communicating and that starts with consent. As long as you and your partner are comfortable with each other you can practice again and again!

*Photo credit: Avert. Photos are used for illustrative purposes. They do not imply any health status or behaviour on the part of the people in the photo.*



Sources:

[NHS Choices \(accessed April 2018\) 'Are you ready for sex?'](#)

[The Mix \(accessed April 2018\) 'Am I ready for sex?'](#)

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