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Teens and Sex

Some things about being a teen are very confusing. Your body may feel ready to have sex—and you may feel attracted to others around you—but, emotionally, you may not feel prepared to handle the responsibility or the pressure just yet.

The choice to have sex is a very important decision; and there are certain consequences associated with that decision. If you have sex with someone of the opposite sex, pregnancy could be the result. Sexually transmitted disease—including HIV, the virus that causes AIDS—is another possible unwanted consequence of gay, lesbian, or straight sex.

Some people say they need to have sex in order to feel closer to another person. However, real closeness comes from talking and sharing your feelings with your partner. It's up to you and your partner to decide if you are emotionally and mentally ready for a sexual relationship.

Before you decide to have sex, here are twelve questions you might want to think about:

- 1.) Do you trust and respect the person you are with?
- 2.) Does the person you are with trust and respect you?
- 3.) Do you feel safe with your partner, or are you afraid he or she might hurt you?
- 4.) Can you talk with your partner openly about your concerns?
- 5.) Do you really want to have sex, or are you being pressured by your partner or friends?
- 6.) Are you pressuring your partner in any way?
- 7.) Are you prepared to handle major changes in your relationship?
- 8.) Can you and your partner be responsible for birth control and condoms each and every time you have sex?
- 9.) Are you ready to handle the consequences of an unplanned pregnancy or sexually transmitted disease?
- 10.) Is having sex at this time against your personal values or religious beliefs?
- 11.) Do you have someone in your life who you trust to give you correct information about sex, or whom you could go to if you have a question?
- 12.) Is there a doctor, nurse, or clinic you can go to for birth control or safe sex information?

If you decide you aren't ready to have sex, you're in good company. About half of all teens wait until they are older before having sex. Sometimes people find after they've had sex that they weren't ready for an intense sexual relationship. Even if you said "yes" to sex once, you can say "no" again at anytime. And it's never okay to pressure someone to have sex if they say "no."

It's important to keep in mind that alcohol and drugs can make you do things you wouldn't normally do if you were sober. This includes having sex. Therefore, if you find yourself in a situation where you or other people are drinking or taking drugs, be very aware of what is happening around you, and don't stay in a room alone with someone you don't completely trust.

If you do decide to have sex, it's important to protect yourself from unplanned pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases every single time. The best methods of birth control for teens are The Pill, Depo-Provera, or Norplant. You need to see a doctor or health care professional to use any of these methods. The Pill, Depo-Provera and Norplant do not protect against sexually transmitted diseases or HIV, however. You must use a condom with any of these methods every time you have sexual intercourse to protect yourself from disease. And you should know that, even though you can't get pregnant from oral sex or anal sex, you are still at risk for getting a sexually transmitted disease. No matter who you have sex with, protect yourself by using a condom anytime you have sexual intercourse or anal sex and a dental dam any time you have oral sex. Masturbation and touching, including masturbating with your partner, is safe from both pregnancy and disease.

You should know that, in California, all visits to a doctor, nurse, or clinic for birth control or any other treatment for your sexual health are confidential. This includes pregnancy testing, abortion, and sexually transmitted disease testing and treatment. This means that California law prohibits the doctor, nurse or anyone in their office from telling anyone—anything—about your visit without your permission. And you don't need to ask for your parent's permission to see a doctor.



For additional health information you can trust:

- Log on to our members-only Web site at www.kaiserpermanente.org/california, then click the "Kaiser Permanente Members Only" button
- Visit your local Kaiser Permanente Health Education Center
- Check your Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook
- Listen to the Kaiser Permanente Healthphone messages at 1-800-33 ASK ME (1-800-332-7563)

To get your free Handbook and Healthphone Directory, call 1-800-464-4000.

The information presented here is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of professional medical care. If you have persistent health problems or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor or other health care professional.

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