



Am I normal?  
Am I alone?  
Am I ready?

Take your time finding out what is comfortable and natural for you. If you don't feel ready to have sex, you are not alone.

There's more to sexuality than having sex. Thoughts, feelings, and relationships can also be part of your sexuality. You might be attracted to someone because she or he is cute, funny, smart, exciting, different or for some other reason that you can't explain. People experience their sexuality in different ways, including:

- having a crush on a teacher
- having fantasies about someone famous (like a singer or an actor)
- dating someone

You might start to have sexual feelings before you are ready to do anything about them (like holding hands, kissing, or having sex). Take your time figuring out what is comfortable and natural for you. If you don't feel ready to have sex, you are not alone. Most teens do not have sex until they are out of high school.

**Do you ever wonder . . .**

- Am I normal?
- Does anyone else have sexual feelings like I do?
- How can I deal with the feelings I have?
- Are people going to judge me if I am different?

If you have questions and concerns about sexuality, you are not alone. Everybody has questions. Nobody has all the answers.

**What is sexual orientation?**

It is important to understand that you may be attracted to different types of people and have a variety of different types of relationships. You may have feelings for . . .

- people of the same sex
- people of the opposite sex
- people of both sexes

Sexual orientation is one way of thinking about sexuality. Having some words to talk about sexual orientation can be a way to start understanding sexuality.

- People who are mostly attracted to or have sex with the opposite sex may call themselves *straight*.

- People who are mostly attracted to or have sex with both sexes may call themselves *bisexual*.
- Females who are mostly attracted to or who have sex with other females may call themselves *lesbian*.
- Males who are mostly attracted to or have sex with other males may call themselves *gay*.

Whether or not you are having sex . . .

- you may not know what your sexual orientation is
- you may already be sure about what your sexual orientation is
- your sexual orientation may change once or many times in your life
- your sexual orientation may not ever change

**Keep an open mind**

Sexual orientation is only a part of someone's identity. Get to know the whole person. Keeping an open mind about others can help you work out some of your own questions and concerns. Remember, prejudice against people because of their sexual orientation is no different than racism, sexism, or other types of discrimination.

You may have friends or family members who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or unsure about their sexual orientation. You can show your support and learn more by:

- Not accepting jokes or put-downs about sexual orientation.
- Joining or starting a Gay/Straight Alliance at your school.
- Joining the organization PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) in your community for more information.

## Who can I trust?

All people need to be safe and feel accepted for who they are, whether they are gay, lesbian, bisexual, straight, or unsure. You need to be comfortable with yourself and with the people you care about.

Sometimes people feel bad about themselves, get depressed, or try to hurt themselves because they feel no one will accept them as they are. Do not hurt yourself because you feel lonely or different. There are people out there who will not judge you and who can appreciate you the way you are. Anyone who wants to change you is not the best person to turn to with your questions or concerns.

Look for people who respect others. Listen to what they say about sexuality and sexual orientation. Pay attention to how they treat people who are different from them.

Sexual activity should happen when you feel ready. If you are in a situation where you are being forced to engage in sexual activity or you are experiencing other violence, tell an adult (a family member, doctor, teacher, or counselor) right away.

If you decide to have sex with someone (whether male or female), practice safer sex every time. Use condoms and dental dams to help protect you against unwanted pregnancies and STDs (sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV).

## Who can I talk to?

If you do not feel comfortable talking to your friends and family about your questions and concerns, you are not alone.

If you do not know where else to turn, you can call a telephone crisis line for youth. Teen telephone hotlines and youth groups can help you find people to talk to who understand what you are thinking and feeling. You can also get information about special programs and other resources (books and videos) to find out more about sexuality issues that are important to you.

## Getting help from Kaiser Permanente

Teens can make their own appointments and come in to see a doctor, nurse or counselor at Kaiser Permanente clinics. Some Kaiser Permanente facilities have a teen clinic with information and services especially for teens. All facilities have doctors, nurses, health educators and mental health professionals who see teen patients.

To make an appointment or to talk with an advice nurse, call your local Kaiser Permanente facility.

## Other resources

### Web sites

- Kaiser Permanente [kp.org](http://kp.org)
- KidsHealth Teen Page [kidshealth.org/teen/index.html](http://kidshealth.org/teen/index.html)
- Planned Parenthood's Teen Page [teenwire.com](http://teenwire.com)

### Phone numbers

- California Youth Crisis Hotline  
1-800-843-5200
- Child Abuse Hotline  
1-800-4 A CHILD
- LYRIC Lavender Youth Talkline  
1-800-246-7743  
Call this number for questions or concerns about lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or peer support issues.
- National Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual Youth Hotline  
1-800-347-TEEN
- National STD Hotline  
1-800-227-8922
- National Alcohol/Drugs Helpline  
1-800-662-HELP
- Emergency Contraception Hotline  
1-888-NOT-2-LATE

*Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook*

Visit your local Health Education Department or Center.