

Sexual Relationships ~ Get it On

Deciding to have sex

There are heaps of different types of relationships and if you decide to have sex with someone, the best thing you can do is talk honestly with them about what you want, what you feel comfortable with and what you want from a relationship.

It is up to you to decide when you want to have sex and what you want physically and emotionally.

Your sexual health

You can look after your sexual health.

Learn to negotiate safe sex, take precautions to protect yourself from getting or passing on sexually transmissible infections (STIs), reduce your risk of unplanned pregnancy by using contraception, get tested for STIs and HIV if you've had unprotected sex, and carry condoms.

Respect your yourself and your sexual partner.

- **Talk honestly about what you want**
- **Protect yourself from getting or passing on an STI**
- **Be aware that your ability to make safe decisions can be affected by alcohol and other drugs**

Talk about it

When things start to hot up with a partner, particularly a new partner, it can be hard to talk about safe sex. You may find they are struggling to bring up the topic too. Even if you feel embarrassed, it saves you worrying later about whether you could have caught an STI or could be pregnant.

Be clear about what you want to happen and stick to it. It's easier to talk about safe sex early on, before you get naked.

It's good to practice putting on condoms in private. The more experienced you are at this the less likely the condom is to break and the more confident you'll feel.

It is also important to remember that you have a right to choose not to have sex. You CAN say no.

Forcing someone to have sex is a crime, your partner has a right to say no to sex at any time and this decision should be respected.

STIs (sexually transmissible infections)

"You can't tell by looking if someone has an STI"

The safest way to protect yourself from HIV and other STIs is to use condoms and dams with water based lubricants. This stops body fluids (like blood, semen, vaginal fluids and discharge from blisters, sores or cuts) being exchanged and water based lube will help to stop the latex in the condoms from breaking. Using condoms can also reduce your risk of unplanned pregnancy.

While there is no cure for HIV, STIs like chlamydia can be treated with a simple course of antibiotics.

However if left undetected chlamydia can lead to infertility in both men and women. If you have had unprotected sex, get tested.

"I don't have any infections, I'd know if I did."

Unless you and your partner have both been tested, you won't know if either of you have an STI.

Some STIs like herpes and genital warts are hard to avoid if you are sexually active as they can be passed on through skin to skin genital contact. Condoms and dams will only protect the areas they cover - blisters and sores can form outside these areas. Talking openly with your partner about anything unusual you notice (eg a rash or discharge) can also reduce these risks.

Using condoms and dams will decrease your risk of catching or passing on the viruses that lead to herpes and genital warts.

Alcohol and drugs

Ever woken up and regretted having sex with someone, or forgotten to use a condom in the heat of the moment? Drinking alcohol and taking drugs can lead to unsafe sex, or having sex and regretting it, and also

reduces your ability to protect yourself against sexual assault. If you do take drugs or drink when you're out, know your own limits so you can make the same SAFE decisions that you would if you were sober. No one has the right to force you to have sex if you don't want to or if you are out of it. Respect other people - you are always responsible for what you do, even when you are under the influence of alcohol and drugs. Sharing equipment used in drug use (such as needles, tourniquets, spoons and straws) can put you at risk of contracting HIV and Hepatitis B and C.

Emergency contraception

Emergency contraception (morning after pill) is available if the condom or female condom breaks or is not used correctly. Emergency contraception needs to be taken as soon as possible after unprotected sex (best results are within 72 hrs but it can be taken up to 120 hours). Unprotected sex can also put you at risk of HIV and other STIs. Screening for these infections can be done at FPWA or by your doctor, and is recommended if you are worried. If you have had unprotected sex with someone who is HIV positive, drug treatment can reduce your risk of acquiring HIV. Contact your doctor or FPWA straight away on 9227 6177.

Enjoy yourself!

Be honest with yourself and your partner about what you want and make responsible decisions about your sexual health...and enjoy yourself!

Practising safe sex reduces the risk of contracting HIV and other sexually transmissible infections (STIs).

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For further information on sexual health visit the family planning website:
<http://www.fpwa-health.org.au>

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