

Abstinence, Delaying & Saying No

Abstinence means choosing not to have sexual intercourse. Abstinence can mean either choosing not to have or delaying sexual acts for a certain period of time.

Whichever you choose, **stand up for what you believe is right for you**. You don't have to defend your reasons to not have sex now, later on, or at all.

Always remember:

- It's your **right** to be in control of your body and your sexuality.
- It's your **right** to take your time in making decisions that affect you for life.
- It's **wrong** for your partner or friends to force choices on you.

Delaying Sex

Delaying sexual intercourse or other forms of sexual intimacy can be difficult to commit to, especially when you feel like you're being pressured.

Delaying sexual activity can allow you and your partner to get to know one another before moving forward with sex. Choosing to abstain or delaying sexual activities can give you time to share feelings and fears and to talk about where your relationship is going.

It's easier to follow through with your choice when:

- You've thought through your reasons and you're sure about what's right for you.
- You are confident in your decision to delay sex and have practiced using assertive language to get your message across to your partner.
- Your words and actions are the same.

Reasons for Delaying Sex

Everyone has their personal reasons for engaging in or delaying sex. You might choose to delay sexual activity because:

- You don't feel ready.
- You know legally the age of consent is 16 and you do not want to break the law
- You have other priorities and goals such as concentrating on education, family, sports or leisure pursuits

- You feel confused and overwhelmed.
- It doesn't fit with your moral values and religion.
- You want to be sure of your relationship and commitment to one other.
- You'd prefer to wait until marriage.
- You want to discuss what having sex means first.
- It's not worth risking pregnancy or [sexually transmitted infections \(STIs\)](#).
- You don't know enough about preventing pregnancy and STIs.
- Your partner isn't willing to use methods to prevent pregnancy and STIs.
- For you, abstinence is a birth control choice and a [safersex](#) option.

Talking About Your Sexuality

- It's often hard to talk about your sexuality, but [open communication](#) is important for a satisfying and healthy relationship for you and your partner.
- Agreeing on sexual limits beforehand sets the tone for a healthy relationship.
- If you're not comfortable talking about sex with your partner, **don't have sex.**
- Wait until you're certain that you know your own feelings and what a sexual relationship means to you.

Key Points to Remember

You have the right to be in control of your body and your sexuality. When you're feeling pressured to have sex, say to yourself:

- "My body is **not** something to give away. Sex is not something to just give in to"
- "Everyone is **not** doing it, no matter what they say."
- "I'm entitled to discuss my reasons and feelings. If my relationship is healthy, it will survive me saying **no.**"
- "It's my right to say **no** even if I've already had sex."

(www.peelregion.ca/health/sexuality)