

## 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

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 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 practise putting on condoms in private. The more experienced you are 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 always use condoms and dams with water-based lubricant. Condoms and dams stop body fluids (like blood, semen, vaginal fluids and discharge from blisters, sores or cuts) from being exchanged, and water-based lube helps stop the latex in the condoms from breaking. Using condoms also reduces your risk of unplanned pregnancy.

While there is no cure for HIV, STIs like chlamydia can be treated with a simple course of antibiotics. If left undetected however, chlamydia can lead to infertility in both men and women. If you've 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 has 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 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 decreases 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 (EC) can be used to prevent pregnancy when sex has occurred without contraception or when contraception has failed (eg condom breakage). It is available over the counter at pharmacies. The sooner EC is taken after unprotected sex the more effective it is at preventing pregnancy, and its effectiveness is significantly increased when taken within 24 hours. It can be taken up to 120 hours (5 days) after intercourse, however, effectiveness decreases as time passes.

Having unprotected sex can put you at risk of STIs. A doctor or FPWA clinician can organise testing for you.

### 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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Sexual Health Helpline (08) 92276178 or 1800 198 205 (Country Callers)

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Quarry Health Centre for under 25s

7 Quarry Street, PO Box 378, Fremantle, WA, 6959

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