



## Sex – deciding whether you are ready or not

It is normal to have a lot of mixed feelings about having sex with another person. If you choose to have sex with someone, you should think about sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), which causes acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS).

### Sexual experience

In 1995, a survey of the sexual activities of Australian students was conducted by the National Centre in HIV Social Research at the University of New South Wales. The study found that:

- Of the 3,848 young people aged 15–24 years who responded to the survey, 3,195 had had sexual intercourse (83 per cent).
- The median age at first intercourse was 16 years.
- 58 per cent of 15 year olds were sexually experienced.
- 75 per cent of 17 year olds were sexually experienced.
- By 20 years of age, 91 per cent had had intercourse.
- Those who lost their virginity at later ages were more inclined to have completed their high school education.
- Those who lost their virginity at an early age were more likely to have left school before the end of Year 10.

### If you are thinking about having sex

Sex is a physical way to express love and affection for someone. Being in a sexual relationship can be very rewarding and enjoyable. It is important to remember:

- Both partners need to agree to have sex
- No one has the right to force you to have sex
- You always have the right to say no.
- Don't let anyone intimidate you into having sex. Some people wrongly think that they can demand that another person be sexual with them, or force them to have sex against their will.

### It is common to be unsure

Kids Help Line, a confidential telephone counselling service, receives about 7,000 calls each year from young people who want to talk about sex issues. About 27 per cent of these callers state they are unsure about beginning a sexual relationship.

### Talk to the person you are sexually attracted to

You may find yourself sexually attracted to your partner, a friend or an acquaintance. Talking about sex with this person can help you both work out if you want to begin a sexual relationship. Talk about your expectations, and what you expect from the other person.

### 'Safe sex' is always a good idea

It is always a good idea to engage in 'safe sex' to protect yourself from:

- Becoming pregnant.
- Catching a sexually transmitted infection – for example HIV/AIDS, herpes, chlamydia or gonorrhoea. Using condoms with water-based lubricants and dental dams is one way to protect yourself from some of these diseases.
- Different STIs are passed on in different ways.

Talk to health workers at your local community health centre, your doctor or someone from a family planning clinic to find out more about preventing pregnancy and STIs.

### Where to go for further information

Family Planning Victoria has an Action Centre for young people who need further information or advice.

Other services include:

- Contraception.
- Pregnancy testing and counselling.
- HIV/AIDS testing.
- Pap smears. If you decide to become sexually active, you will need to have a regular Pap smear.

### Where to get help

- Your doctor
- Your local community health centre
- Family Planning Victoria Tel. (03) 9527 0123
- Action Centre for young people (part of Family Planning Victoria) Tel. (03) 9654 4766, 1800 013 952 (free from anywhere in country Victoria)
- Kids Help Line Tel. 1800 551 800
- Lifeline Tel. 131 114

### Things to remember

- It is normal to have mixed feelings if you are thinking about having sex.
- It is your right to say no to sex. No one has the right to force you to have sex.
- Talk to the person you are sexually attracted to before deciding to have sex. Make sure you both want to have sex.
- If you decide to have sex, talk to your doctor or a family planning clinic about what you should do to protect yourself from STIs and unwanted pregnancy.

This page has been produced in consultation with, and approved by Reach Out. The Better Health Channel is part of the Department of Human Services, Victoria