

A Teen's Guide to Abstinence



Abstinence means not having sex.

- ✓ Abstinence doesn't mean you don't have sexual feelings. It means you've decided not to act on those feelings.
- ✓ Both young men and young women are choosing abstinence.
- ✓ Even if you've had sex before, you can choose abstinence now.

Why is abstinence a good idea?

- ✓ There are many different reasons young people choose not to have sex.
- ✓ Some of those reasons include:
 - Not wanting to risk a pregnancy.
 - Wanting to protect themselves from HIV (the virus that causes AIDS) and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs or STIs).
 - Wanting to wait until marriage.

Everyone is not doing it.

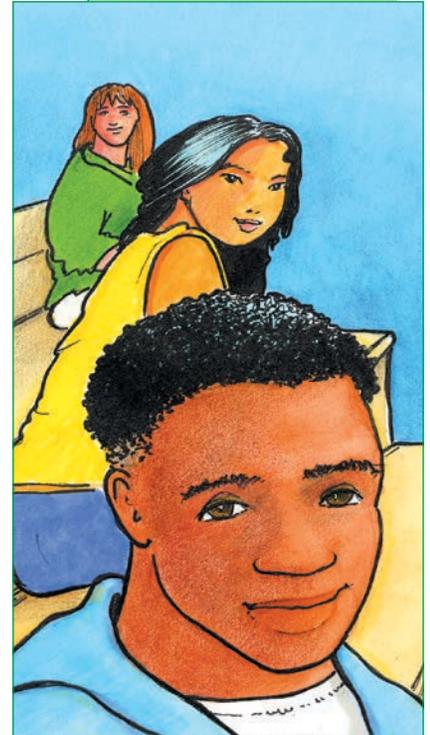
- ✓ TV shows, movies, friends or family members may make it seem like many young people are having sex.
- ✓ In fact, studies show that a majority of teens have not had sex by the time they turn seventeen.
- ✓ TV and movies don't always show the risks: unplanned pregnancy, HIV or other STDs, and emotional stress.

Abstinence is a good way to protect yourself.

- ✓ Abstinence gives you protection from STDs, including HIV.
- ✓ Abstinence is the only 100% effective form of birth control. It means you won't have a baby before you are ready.
- ✓ Choosing abstinence also means you won't have to deal with the emotional complications of having sex.

You can be abstinent and still have a boyfriend or girlfriend.

- ✓ Abstinence gives you time to learn about relationships in a safe way.
- ✓ Spend time together doing other things – go dancing, go to the movies, take a bike ride or just hang out.
- ✓ You'll have time to learn what you want and what you don't want from a relationship.



What can you do if someone you really like is pressuring you to have sex?

- ✓ Be clear about your decision to be abstinent.
- ✓ Say, "I really like you, but I don't want to have sex."
- ✓ Let your partner know you care in other ways. Write a love letter or call just to say you care.
- ✓ Avoid alcohol and other drugs. They may make it harder to say no to sex.
- ✓ If your partner continues to pressure you, it's time to call it quits. Don't hang out with someone who doesn't respect your choices.

Lots of young people are choosing abstinence. Why? Unplanned pregnancy, STDs and HIV, and emotional stress are just a few of the reasons.



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