

Planning and Support

- What you do sexually is an important decision. Think it through carefully
- If your partner can't respect your decision, or has different needs, then consider that s/he may not be a good match for you at this time in your life
- Find someone you trust, respect, and feel safe with to discuss your decision
- Show confidence with your decisions and communicate well with your partner. You may need to think ahead about ways to handle any pressure to have sex
- Some churches and similar groups have support programs for young people wanting to wait until marriage before having intercourse. If this is your decision, you might find one of these groups helpful to you
- If you choose to have sex, make sure you learn about the ways you can reduce your risk of unintended pregnancy and STIs (birth control, condoms, etc.)



Points to Think About

- You have the right to choose to have sexual activity, or not
- You have the right to change your mind. You can say “no” even if it’s in the middle of the act or if you’ve done it before
- Talk about your choices BEFORE you become sexually active with your partner

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Abstinence



What is it? Is it for me?

SEXUAL HEALTH CENTRE
Lunenburg County

Your source for sexual health information

What is abstinence?

Abstinence comes from the word abstain, which means to refrain, withhold, or go without. From a non-judgemental sexual health standpoint, abstaining means not having sexual contact, including intercourse, oral and anal sex. It means no mixing of body fluids and no skin-to-skin contact in the thighs and genital areas (the area that a pair of shorts covers). If you are fully abstinent, you have no chance of getting pregnant and getting sexually transmitted infections (STIs).



The term “virgin” does not always go hand-in-hand with ‘abstinence.’ You might have already had sex or sexual activity, and then choose to be abstinent with another partner. “Virgin” means different things to different people. Some believe it means absolutely no sexual contact, as described above. Others think it means someone who hasn’t had penis-

vagina sex. So some people who consider themselves virgins may have done other sexual activities and still have been exposed to STIs. If your partner tells you he or she is a virgin, it would be a good idea to find out exactly what they mean.

Some people have strong feelings about abstinence, one way or the other. Some feel it is important to wait to have sex until you love a person or until you are married. Some feel that people should have sex before making a commitment to know if they are compatible. Some choose not to have sex at all. Others think that as long as you are being safe and responsible then sex is your choice no matter what the situation. It’s up to you to take this information and apply it with your own values and beliefs to choose what is right for you. If you are a young teen, talking to your parents will help you find out what their values are about sex.



Does it work?

Abstinence is the only 100% way to prevent pregnancy, disease and infection, when used consistently and correctly.

Advantages

- Abstinence is free and available to all
- Abstinence is extremely effective at preventing STIs and pregnancy
- Abstinence can be started at any time in one's life (you do not have to be a ‘virgin’ to start practising abstinence)
- Abstinence encourages people to build relationships in other ways
- Abstinence may be the course of action which you feel is right for you and makes you feel good about yourself



Disadvantages

- If you change your mind in the heat of the moment, you might not have birth control or a condom nearby
- Some people find not having sex too frustrating or difficult