

Facts About **Abstinence "Deciding to Wait"**

What is abstinence ("deciding to wait")?

Complete abstinence is not having any kind of sex (oral, vaginal or anal sex) with a partner. A person who decides to practice abstinence has decided not to have sex.

The decision to have sex or not have sex (abstinence) is your choice. Only you can decide if having sex is right for you.

Not everyone is having sex. If anyone tries to pressure you into a choice that does not feel right - walk away. Many people regret having sex before they are actually ready to have sex.

Abstinence can mean different things to different people. Some definitions of abstinence are:

- No sexual activity - vaginal, oral or anal intercourse
- No sexual touching at all
- No skin-to-skin contact
- Everything but vaginal intercourse
- Some sexual touching

How does abstinence prevent pregnancy?

Complete abstinence every time from oral, vaginal and anal sex prevents pregnancy by keeping sperm out of the vagina.

How effective is abstinence?

Complete abstinence every time from oral, vaginal and anal sex is 100 percent effective in preventing pregnancy. It also prevents sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

What are the benefits of abstinence?

- Free, always available, and has no side effects
- No risk of unplanned pregnancy
- Less risk for sexually transmitted infections; Some sexually transmitted infections (STIs) such as human papilloma virus (HPV) and herpes spread through oral and anal sex or even intimate skin-to-skin contact without actual penetration
- More time to build your relationship together
- Helps you to learn how to express affection and sexuality in other ways (such as holding hands, kissing, hugging)
- Helps you maintain your values and beliefs

IT'S YOUR CHOICE

If you decide abstinence is the right choice for you:

- Know what your sexual limits and boundaries are.
- Talk to your partner and have a clear understanding that abstinence is your choice and what your limits and boundaries are.
- Drinking alcohol and using drugs decreases your inhibitions and makes it harder to stick to your decision to not have sex.
- When you are in a situation with a lot of pressure to have sex, have a back-up plan to help change the mood (tell a joke, ask for some water, etc.).
- Hang out with friends and do more group activities for fun.

REMEMBER:

- Abstinence is the best protection against unintended pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).
- If you choose to have sex (oral, vaginal or anal), use a vinyl or latex condom to protect yourself.
- Remember some STIs like herpes (HSV) or genital warts (HPV- human papilloma virus) can be acquired in areas not covered by a condom.
- The choice to have sex or not have sex is yours and you can make that choice at any time.

