

## Am I ready for sex?

### Young people hands up



Whether you're a virgin or you've had sex before, it's perfectly natural to ask yourself the question 'should I have sex?' There are no set rules, but there are some things you can think about to help you decide.

### How will I know when I'm ready for sex?

Deciding when to have sex is a very personal thing. It needs to feel right for you and for the person you're with, so that you can make a joint decision. This is known as sexual consent.

Remember that consent applies every time you have sex. Even if you have consented to sex before - with a previous partner or your current one - it doesn't mean you automatically want to do it again. Be aware of how your partner feels and let them know what you're thinking too.

Consent applies to any type of sexual activity, not just intercourse. If you decide to be intimate in any way, it's completely fine to stop at any point, or not to do it again if you don't want to.

### What are the wrong reasons to have sex?

To please your partner

Is this your decision, or are you thinking about having sex because of someone else? If any of these phrases sound familiar then think carefully - they could be pressuring you:

- "You would if you loved me!"
- "Everyone else is doing it!"
- "It will make our relationship stronger"
- "You'll have to do it sometime - why not now, with me?"
- "I'll be gentle, and it'll be really great!"

## You don't want to look immature

Having an age gap in your [relationship](#) doesn't make sex right – in fact, if your partner is older than you they should be mature enough to wait until you are ready. There is no set age or stage to start having sex, and losing your virginity at a young age doesn't necessarily make you mature.

## You think you 'should'

Your friends all seem to be having sex and know lots about it – do you recognise any of these phrases?

- "You mean you've never done it?!"
- "I lost it when I was 12..."
- "Yeah, I've had sex loads of times"
- "You're a virgin, you wouldn't understand"

Your friends may be saying these things because they want to sound more experienced than they really are. Be brave and tell them that you're happy to wait.

***"I still haven't had sex. I have felt tremendous pressure to just have random sex to get it over with and because my friends have lost their virginity but I wanted to wait to have sex with someone I love and who loves me." - Dakota***

## You are going against your beliefs

We all have different attitudes to sex. Some people think sexual intercourse should only happen within marriage, others see sex and love as different things.

Your views on sex could be linked to your faith or beliefs and that's fine, as long as you're clear about what you believe in and your partner understands.

You may have a different attitude to sex than your family or friends. Ultimately, the decision to have sex should be an agreement between you and your partner, and while other people may help or influence your decision, they shouldn't make it for you.

## How can I be prepared and protected?

If you know you're ready, make sure your first time (and every time after that) is safe. This means protecting yourself and your partner against unwanted pregnancy and the risk of [sexually transmitted infections \(STIs\)](#) including [HIV](#). The best way to do this is to always use a [condom](#).

If you're ready to have sex then you should be able to talk about it first. It can be awkward to introduce condoms in the heat of the moment, so ease the embarrassment by discussing protection beforehand and decide who will bring the condom. Having it discreetly on the side or under the pillow may help.

It's also a great idea to get clued up on the other contraception methods available. Just remember that they will only protect you against unwanted pregnancy, so using a condom is still important to make sure you're also protected against STIs, including HIV.

## What if it all goes wrong?

No one can predict how sex will turn out, and many factors - such as your mood, the atmosphere and timing – can all affect it, no matter how experienced you are. However, the more open you are with your partner, the more likely you are to feel at ease.

***"The first time me and my girlfriend of six months tried having sex I got so nervous that I***

*couldn't get an erection. I tried so hard to "encourage" it, that I ended up ejaculating before I'd even put the condom on. I laugh about it now but it was probably the most embarrassing experience of my life at the time. We tried again a week later and it was great!" - Tom*

It's natural to feel a little awkward the first time, but it's more important to trust each other than to know a lot about sex. Don't worry if it doesn't go perfectly, so long as you and your partner are comfortable with each other you can practice together.

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### Sources:

NHS Choices (2013) 'Are you ready for sex?'

The Site (2012) 'Am I ready for sex?'

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