

HIV: Teens and Sex

This handout answers common questions you might ask about sex. We encourage you to talk to your parents about these issues. If you have any questions or concerns, you can always talk to your doctors or nurses.

It may seem like everybody's having sex; but in reality, not everyone is. Many teens choose not to have sex (abstinence). You can still have a boyfriend or girlfriend and not have sexual intercourse, but instead do other things, such as holding hands, kissing and touching, and save intercourse for later. Sex is only one part of a relationship. Respect, friendship and safety are important, too.

There is no need to rush the decision about when and why to have sex. The choice is up to you. Since you may have different ideas about what sex is, be sure to discuss them with your partner.

For any teen, deciding whether or not to engage in sexual activities with another person is a big decision. Some teens feel pressure to make decisions about sexual activities. This is not a decision you can take back if you change your mind later.

Because you are living with HIV infection, you have the added responsibility of knowing how to keep yourself safe from further infections and how to keep others safe from HIV.

What do I need to know about HIV and sex?

Making responsible decisions about having sex requires knowledge. You need to know:

- How HIV is spread
- How you can prevent the spread of HIV

- How to talk about your HIV infection to a potential partner
- About unsafe, safer and safest sex practices
- How to avoid other sexually transmitted diseases
- How to use a condom
- How to keep from getting pregnant



And, you may want to know:

- Whether a girl or woman living with HIV infection can get pregnant, and whether a boy or man living with HIV infection can father a child
- Where to learn more about sex-related issues for teens with HIV

What are my responsibilities and choices?

- Learn all that you need to know in order to make responsible choices about sex-related issues.
- Before you decide to have sex with anyone, you need to learn how to feel comfortable with telling him or her that you have HIV.
- Once you decide to become sexually active, be sure to protect yourself from infections. Remember, your immune system may not work well because of your HIV infection. Learn how to use a condom to protect both yourself and your partner.

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- Talk with your partner and plan to avoid an unwanted pregnancy.
- You can choose to talk to your parents, another trusted adult or a clinic staff member about

any questions or concerns you may have. Your doctors and nurses will answer your questions honestly and will not tell others about your questions.

What is sex?

Sex means different things to different people. Sex is:

- Intercourse (penis in vagina or rectum)
- Oral sex (mouth on penis, vagina or rectum)
- Any sexual contact whatsoever
- Outercourse (sex without penetration)

Talk to your partner, because he or she may have different ideas about what sex is. All of the activities listed above are risky and can pass HIV — even if you, or your partner, do not think of them as sex.

How do I tell my potential sexual partner about my HIV infection?

Telling someone you like that you have HIV is hard to do. Take the time to build a trusting friendship first. You may want to see if you can trust your partner with other personal and confidential information.

You are always taking a risk when you tell someone about your HIV status. For example, there is a risk that the person you tell may reject you or tell others your private information.

It is important to talk about all of the issues related to starting a sexual relationship *before* you start one. Keep in mind that after you tell someone about your HIV status, you will have new issues to discuss together.

Talk over what you need to know and do to prevent the spread of HIV to your partner. If your partner has questions, he or she may be more comfortable asking an expert or health care provider.

How is HIV spread?

HIV can be spread from an infected person to another through blood (including menstrual blood), semen, vaginal fluids and breast milk. Blood contains the highest concentration of the virus, followed by semen, vaginal fluids and breast milk.

HIV is transmitted by unprotected sexual contact, direct blood contact (including injection drug needles, blood transfusions, certain blood products and accidents in health care settings), from mother to baby before or during birth and through breast milk.

Body fluids that do not cause HIV infection are saliva, tears, sweat, feces and urine.

To learn more, read our handout on *HIV Facts*.

How can I prevent the spread of HIV?

You can help to prevent the spread of HIV by following safe sex practices and avoiding unsafe practices.

If you are not sure about whether an activity is safe or unsafe, talk to someone in the clinic *before* you take part in it.

To learn more, read our handout on *HIV: Infection Control – Guidelines to prevent the spread of HIV*.

The table on the next page explains more about unsafe, safer and safest sex.

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What are safe and unsafe sexual activities?

Unsafe	Safer	Safest
<p>You risk spreading HIV any time you exchange body fluids — blood, semen, vaginal fluids or breast milk — with someone else.</p> <p>Unsafe sexual activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vaginal, anal or oral sex without a latex condom or barrier, such as a dental dam. • Sharing needles for drugs, steroids, vitamins, tattoos or body piercing. • Not knowing how to use a condom. • Mixing drugs or alcohol with sex. Even if you mean to practice safer sex, you may not. • Having sex with someone who doesn't respect your safer or safest sex limits. • Giving in "just this time" to an unsafe sex practice, such as having intercourse without a condom. 	<p>You avoid the exchange of body fluids during sexual activities. Safer sex greatly reduces your risks of transmitting HIV.</p> <p>Staying safer means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always using a latex condom and water-based lubricant when having vaginal or anal intercourse. • Using a latex condom or barrier, such as a dental dam, to keep semen, menstrual blood and vaginal fluids out of the mouth when having oral sex. <p>To stay safer you will need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know how to use a latex condom the right way. Condoms offer the best protection against the spread of HIV and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). It is critical that you use a condom every single time you have sex. • Talk to your partner. Ask for and insist on safer or safest sex every time you have sex. 	<p>Any sexual activity that does not involve the exchange of blood, semen, vaginal fluid and breast milk is safe.</p> <p>Safe sexual activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kissing (lips or other non-genital parts of the body), hugging, touching, dancing and massage. • Choosing not to have sex at all (abstinence). • Never sharing needles for drugs, steroids, vitamins, tattoos or body piercing.

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What do I need to know about family planning and birth control?

If you are not ready to start a family and want to avoid an unintended pregnancy, then look into all of your options for birth control.

There are many birth control methods (such as the pill, shots, patch, sponge, diaphragm and condoms). You will want to find out about the effectiveness, cost and instructions for use. Some methods require a visit to a health care provider and a prescription. Ask your doctor to

answer your questions and help you select the best method or methods for you at this time. Many birth control methods do not help prevent the spread of HIV and other STDs.

How do I use a condom?

Using a condom every single time you have sex can greatly reduce the risk of getting STDs or spreading HIV or STDs. Follow the “Do’s and Don’ts” shown in the table below.

Do's	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use latex or plastic condoms. • Check the expiration date. • Use water-based lubricants such as K-Y Jelly®. • Practice how to use a condom when you are alone, before you have sex, so you can be sure you do it right. Girls can practice on their fingers or a cucumber. • Put the condom on as soon as the penis gets hard. • Put the condom on before there is any oral, anal or vaginal contact with the penis. • Put the condom on with the right side out. It has a right side, just like a sock does. • Hold the tip of the condom between your fingers and unroll in onto the hard penis as far as it will go, to the base of the penis, close to the rest of the body. • Keep out air bubbles and leave space at the tip of the condom for the fluid that comes out. • Hold the condom firmly to the base of the penis to keep the condom from slipping off. • Withdraw penis from partner right after ejaculation and/or before losing the erection. • Throw out the used condom right away. Only use a condom once. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not use natural skin condoms. If you are allergic or sensitive to latex, try plastic condoms. • Do not use oil, butter, hand lotion or petroleum jelly (like Vaseline®) as a lubricant. These items can break down condoms. • Don't keep condoms in warm places, such as near a heater or in your pocket, since heat can dry them out. • Never use the same condom for vaginal and anal intercourse. • Never use a condom more than once.

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Can a person living with HIV infection have a baby?

Yes. A woman living with HIV infection can get pregnant, and a man living with HIV infection can father a child.

If you want to become pregnant, talk to a doctor about the risks involved. Not all babies born to HIV-infected mothers are infected. In fact, if medicines are taken during pregnancy, the chance of the baby being born HIV positive is very low.

It is especially important to talk with your doctor about the best way to become pregnant if your partner is not infected with HIV.

What else do I need to know?

You need to make good decisions each time you have sex:

- Tell your partner first.
- Use a latex condom.
- Avoid unsafe sex practices.

Knowledge is power. Ask questions and make sure you understand the information that you are told or given. Don't be shy or embarrassed to ask questions. Your doctors and nurses are there to help you.

Your public library has books about the topics discussed in this handout. There are also many helpful Web sites listed in the "For More Information" box at right.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Your health care provider
- Visit these Web sites:
 - www.kidshealth.org
 - www.seattlechildrens.org
 - www.teentalk.com

Sections of this handout were adapted with permission from these Web sites:

- www.adolescentaids.org
- www.avert.org
- www.medem.com/medlb/article_detailb.cfm?article_ID=ZZZSM6BH27C&sub_cat=269
- The Centers for Disease Control's National STD and AIDS Hotline: 1-(800)-342-AIDS (2437)
Deaf Access: 1-(800)-243-7889 (TTD/TTY)

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Disclaimer: The inclusion of any Web site link (or resource accessed through a link) does not imply endorsement by Children's Hospital and Regional Medical Center. Seek the advice of your child's health care provider before you act or rely upon any information from these resources.

Children's will make this information available in alternate formats upon request. Please call Marketing Communications at (206) 987-5205.

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