

AGE
16-24

Deciding when
to have sex



There are many reasons why young people have sex – not just love or desire. Some feel pressured or forced to have sex. Others do it for money, power or to fit in with a group. Some young people want to wait until they're older or married before they have sex.

In a loving relationship with someone we trust, sex can be a wonderful way to express how we feel. But many young people have sex without thinking carefully about what it could lead to. And the consequences could be unwanted pregnancy and/or a sexually transmitted infection (STI), like HIV.

That's why it's important to decide if you want to have sex with someone.

Making the right decision



Not sure if you should have sex?

Then think about these questions:

- ▲ Are you attracted to the other person?
- ▲ Do you and the other person respect each other?
- ▲ If you do have sex, why would this be?
- ▲ Have you made the decision together? Have you talked about it? Are you sure you both want sex?



- ▲ Have you been drinking alcohol? Or using drugs?
- ▲ Do you want to have a child with this person? Do you want to have a child now? If not, how will you prevent pregnancy?
- ▲ Is safe abortion available, if needed?
- ▲ Could one of you have an STI, including HIV?
- ▲ Can you talk to the other person about using a condom?
- ▲ Do you know where to obtain condoms?
- ▲ Do you know how to use them correctly?
- ▲ Do you feel that either of you can say 'stop' at any time and the other person will agree?



Still unsure? Then wait until it feels right.

Being able to say no

It's your body. So it's up to you if you have sex – or sexual contact of any kind – with someone else.

You have the right to say no. And you have the right to change your mind. Everyone needs to understand this, especially girls and young women. Girls can say what they want, in the same way boys can.



This means that:

- ▲ Just because you like kissing someone doesn't mean that you have to have sex with them. You might not want to.
- ▲ Just because you agreed to have sex with someone half an hour ago doesn't mean that you can't change your mind now and say no. You can stop sex at any time and for any reason.
- ▲ Just because you had sex with somebody last week doesn't mean that you have to have sex with them again this week.
- ▲ Just because you have a boyfriend or girlfriend doesn't mean that you have to have sex with them. It's your choice.
- ▲ Just because you don't want to have sex with someone doesn't mean that you don't love them.

No. I don't
want to have
sex.

Saying no – refusing consent – isn't always easy. So it's a good idea to practise saying no firmly and clearly.



Being able to hear no

If somebody says no, the other person must respect their choice and not force them, otherwise this could be sexual assault or rape. This is never OK.

If someone is asleep, unconscious, drunk or high, they can't agree to have sex.

Sometimes it's not as simple as 'yes' or 'no'. The other person might not actually say no: they might just say, "I'm not sure" or "not yet". Perhaps they don't say anything at all. But that doesn't mean they're saying yes!



- ▶ **No doesn't mean yes.**
- ▶ **Maybe doesn't mean yes.**
- ▶ **Yes means yes.**

Both of you need to be clear about you've agreed when it comes to sex or sexual activity. This is a shared responsibility: it's about actively seeking consent as well as giving it. If you're not sure, ask. Talk about it.