

ABSTINENCE

WHAT IS ABSTINENCE?

Abstinence means not having sex with anyone. You can be abstinent if you've had sex before, are in a relationship, or have never had sex.

HOW IT WORKS

It is your decision to have sex or to wait.

The first time you are thinking of having sex, and every time after, you should ask yourself *why* you are doing it. Make certain it's not because of pressure from your partner, your friends, or because of what you've seen online or in the media. Pressure to have sex, and pressure to wait, comes from everywhere!

You need to feel comfortable about your decision to go ahead or wait. To help you make your decision, it is important to get all the information you need and then consider both the benefits and the consequences.

Once you've made your decision, you need to allow your partner to make their own decision. Be respectful of their decision, whether it is the same decision as yours or not.

Remember you or your partner can also change your mind at any time. Forcing someone to have sex when they've said no is a crime. Talk to your partner and be clear about your sexual limits and boundaries.

Party safe! It's harder to stick with your decision when you have been drinking alcohol or using drugs. Hang out with friends who support your decision.

ADVANTAGES

- No risk of unplanned pregnancy
- Less risk for sexually transmitted infections STIs
- More time to build your relationship together
- Allows time to express affection and sexuality in other ways (e.g., hand holding, kissing, hugging)
- Affords time to act according to your values and beliefs

Remember a decision to wait may be for any length of time and at any time in your life. You've got the power. Sex should be a pleasure, and it is not a pleasure if it is **not what you and your partner both want**, whether it is your first time – or any time.