

WHAT IF A NEW WAY OF THINKING IS THE ANSWER?

Here's why it matters what you do: every time you have sex (oral, anal, or vaginal), you put yourself at risk for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and emotional upset. Vaginal intercourse also puts you at risk for pregnancy. Any of these consequences can radically change the rest of your life.

That's why it's best to hold off on sex for now – so you can be free. Free to pursue a happy, healthy future. But even if you've done things you wish you could change, you can still decide to do things differently in the future. It's ok to start saying "no." It's hard when everyone else seems to be having sex all around you, but in reality there are fewer than you might think.¹

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WHAT? IF YOU COULD START OVER

SO YOU'VE ALREADY HAD SEX, MAYBE YOU WANTED TO, MAYBE NOT. EITHER WAY, YOU MAY NOW BE THINKING, "SINCE I'VE ALREADY HAD SEX, IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT I DO ANYMORE;" ... NOTHING COULD BE FURTHER FROM THE TRUTH.





**TODAY YOU HAVE SOME THINGS
TO THINK ABOUT
AND SOME SMART DECISIONS TO MAKE**

CONSIDER THIS...

STIs

Viral STIs, such as herpes, HPV, and HIV have no cure. Once you have the infection, you will have it for life. Other bacterial STIs can be cured, but they can sometimes cause lasting effects, including problems getting pregnant later on when you want to have children.

Condoms can reduce your risk, but do not eliminate your risk of getting STIs. So even if you use them correctly every time, you're still at risk. When you hear that condoms offer "protection," keep in mind that they only cut your risk in half for most bacterial STIs.² Condoms are even less effective with anal sex.³

You should also know that most STIs can be passed by both oral sex and anal sex and some are passed by skin to skin contact. Half of all new STIs are found in young people under the age of 25.⁴ And with every new sex partner, you increase your risk of getting infected with an STI.⁵

THEN THERE'S PREGNANCY

Neither condoms nor birth control are 100% effective in preventing pregnancy.⁶ So, the more times you have sex, the more likely you are to get pregnant or get someone else pregnant. Suddenly, you're a parent. Suddenly, life isn't about your dreams anymore. It can change forever just like that.

HOW DO YOU FEEL?

Besides STIs and pregnancy, there are other good reasons to consider a break from sex. They have to do with your feelings. Sex is a powerful, intimate act. If you separate it from lifetime commitment and faithfulness, you can end up feeling empty inside. Truth is, if you feel some regret, you're not alone. Of those 15-19 year olds who have had sex, 55% say they wish they had waited longer.⁷ Sex will not guarantee a longer or closer relationship, so think honestly about your reasons for having sex and how it makes you feel the next day.^{1,8,9}

WANNA TRY SOMETHING DIFFERENT?

Your past is past. Maybe you made some mistakes. Haven't we all? Let's deal with today. For starters, go see your doctor or visit an STD clinic. Be honest. Tell your health care provider how many partners you've had. That way, he or she can take good care of you.

This is about second chances. And now you've got a decision to make. Starting today, make a commitment that you will wait to have sex (oral, vaginal and anal) again until you're in a lifelong, faithful relationship, such as marriage. Then you can enjoy all the benefits. Be the kind of person that prevails in difficult situations, and stand by your new commitment without compromise.

YOUR NEXT STEP.

Tell your friends and a trusted adult about your decision and ask them to help you keep it. You need to have support in this one. And let the people you date know where you stand on this issue. It will help you find out who cares about you, not just your body. Consider spending more time in groups and less time alone with a date. And avoid situations that include any use of drugs or alcohol. They can cloud your judgment and numb your ability to stay in control.

Are you tired of casual sex, changing partners or relationships without commitment? Do you want to try something different? Be open-minded and give waiting a try. You won't regret it.

