

TIPSHEET: WAYS TO TALK ABOUT SEX

Here are some tips for talking about sex, for instance for when you want to:

- talk to your boyfriend or girlfriend about abstaining from sex;
- engage in an alternative sexual activity instead of sexual intercourse;
- talk about using condoms or contraceptives.

1. Perfect timing

Work out beforehand how and when you want to talk about sex. It is difficult to talk about your decision and your feelings in the heat of the moment, in a steamy situation or without your clothes on. Choose a suitable moment when you both are still relaxed while you are taking a walk or having lunch together. You might choose to show a condom or put one where it is visible to help bring up the topic of condom use.

2. Be clear

Keep your message clear and to the point. Use clear body language that matches your words: look serious and do not smile to please the other person.

For example, you might say:

- 'I decided not to have sex yet because I want to concentrate on my studies and sex distracts me.'
- 'I like to wait until I feel our relationship is strong enough for having sex.'
- 'I have decided not to have sex with you because I don't feel ready. I don't want to risk getting an STI or getting pregnant.'
- 'I love to be close with you, but I don't want to go all the way. I love kissing and hugging so much, but going for intercourse will take longer.'
- 'I would like to have sex with you, but only when we use protection.' (Show the condom or put it where it is visible).

3. Be firm

Once you've decided what is right for you but your partner wants to go further, be firm about it. And remember, there is no need to feel ashamed or guilty!

This can be difficult because often we want to please the people we care about. But being firm is not the same as being rude or mean.

If your partner still resists or pressurises you, tell your partner how you feel.

For example, you might say:

- 'It feels as if you do not hear what I am saying.'
- 'You are not listening to me and you give me the idea that all you are thinking about is your own desires.'

4. Stick to your decision

Sticking to your decision will be an on-going process. The decision about abstinence, sex and the use of contraceptives will come up many times.

If your decision is to wait for sex until you are older, it is important to think about arguments that support your decision (see examples mentioned above). You can share these reasons with your partner to back up your decision.

Here's an example of how you can negotiate!

In this example, you see how you can negotiate to use a condom. You could use the following steps to stick to your decision to have only safe sex even if your partner doesn't want to.

Step 1: Say that you only want to have sex with a condom.

For example: 'I only have sex with a condom' or 'For me it is safe sex or no sex'.

Step 2: Doesn't the other person want to use a condom?

Be clear why you want to use a condom.

For example:

- 'I am more relaxed with a condom'
- 'You can never be sure whether it will end with a pregnancy or STI'
- 'For me sex without worries is much more fun'
- 'I do trust you, but I do not trust your exes'

Step 3: Does the other person still not want to use a condom?

Be firm, tell how you feel and suggest having sex in another, safe way, without having intercourse.

For example:

- 'If you don't listen to what I want, I am not sure whether you really love me.'
- 'To me it feels you don't care about my wishes. I do not want to go further because of that. Maybe we can massage each other with our clothes on'.

Step 4: Does the other person not want that either?

Don't let yourself be persuaded. Stick to your decision to only have safe sex.

For example:

- 'I think you don't listen to me. Are you really interested in me or not?' 'I'll only have sex with you if we use a condom. So, it's up to you'.
- 'You have heard what I said. If you do not listen or try to understand me, I'd rather go for a walk'.