

Abstinence

Abstinence is the choice to refrain from some or all sexual activity. It is the only method that is 100% effective in preventing unintended pregnancy and STD transmission when used consistently and correctly. Be sure you and your partner have the same definition of abstinence. You might want to abstain from all kinds of sexual activity, but your partner may think certain activities (oral sex or genital touching for example) are allowed.

Why choose to be abstinent?

People choose to be abstinent for a number of reasons. Cultural, religious, family and personal values may come into play. For others it is simply about waiting for the right person or the right time (graduation, marriage, etc.) to become sexually active. It's also important to note that for many college students, abstinence is the best option for their sexual health.

How does abstinence prevent pregnancy & decrease STD transmission?

Since practicing abstinence involves refraining from activities in which bodily fluids (such as semen and vaginal secretions) are transferred from partner to partner, sperm cannot reach the vagina and pregnancy is prevented. Preventing the transfer of bodily fluids through abstinence can also decrease STD transmission, since STDs are typically (but not always) transmitted through fluid exchange. Couples who refrain from penetrative intercourse can still transmit certain STDs from skin to skin contact.

What are the advantages of Abstinence?

As a birth control method, abstinence is safe, free and effective. There are no side effects and no financial costs for either partner. Being abstinent can also be a great way for you and your partner to develop intimacy without being involved sexually.

What are the disadvantages of Abstinence?

Limiting sexual activity for an extended period of time may be hard for some people. Couples who choose abstinence for pregnancy and STD prevention may not be prepared to protect themselves once they stop practicing abstinence. Because of this, it is crucial to research other methods of birth control and STD prevention when reevaluating your decision to remain abstinent.

Talk with your partner about abstinence.

It is best to have this discussion before things get sexual—many people find it more difficult to have this conversation once sexual activity begins. Consider what abstinence means for you and what limits you'd like to set. Then, discuss this with your partner. It is important to be straightforward about your own wants and needs while still considering your partner's feelings. Abstinence can only work when both partners agree to it, so strong communication is the key to its success.

Communicate!

As your relationship grows and changes, you may change your mind about abstinence. Therefore it is important to remember that communication doesn't stop at your initial decision—be sure to check in with your partner frequently to make sure you are both on the same page.

For More Information:

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