



The American College of
Obstetricians and Gynecologists

FAQ

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
FAQ042
ESPECIALLY FOR TEENS

You and Your Sexuality

- **What changes happen during puberty?**
- **Is it normal for teens to question their sexuality?**
- **What happens during sex?**
- **What is birth control?**
- **What other forms of sex are there besides vaginal intercourse?**
- **What should I consider when I decide whether to have sex?**
- **What can I do if someone pressures me to have sex?**
- **What are sexually transmitted diseases?**
- **What is the correct way to use a condom?**
- **Glossary**

What changes happen during puberty?

Between the ages 8 years and 10 years, most girls' bodies start to change (see the FAQ [Growing Up](#)). These changes are called **puberty**. The **hormones** that cause these changes also cause strong feelings, including sexual feelings. You may get these feelings for someone of the other sex or the same sex. Thinking about sex or just wanting to hear or read about sex is normal, so is wanting to be held and touched. But you must decide how far you are ready to go with these sexual feelings.

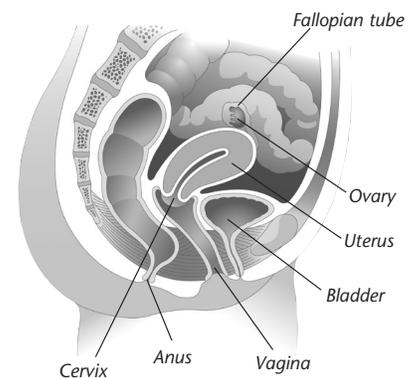
Is it normal for teens to question their sexuality?

Homosexuality (or "being gay or lesbian") is being emotionally and sexually attracted to a person of the same sex. Bisexuality is being attracted to both sexes. Being homosexual is not a choice a person makes or something that can be changed. Some people may have a hard time talking about being gay or lesbian. Some may not be accepted by their families and friends. This may lead to feeling lonely, depressed, or even considering suicide. If you think you may be homosexual or bisexual and feel confused or unhappy, talk to someone you know well and can trust.

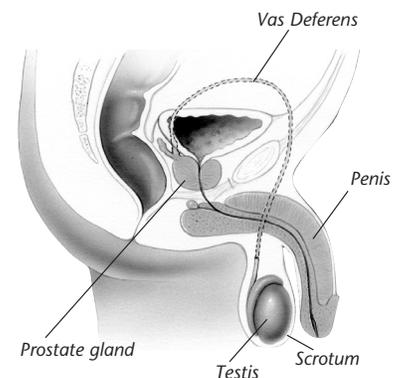
What happens during sex?

During **sexual intercourse**, or vaginal sex, the boy's hard **penis** goes into the girl's **vagina** and moves in and out. This can lead to **orgasm**. Orgasm also can occur during oral sex or **masturbation**. During vaginal sex, when a boy has an orgasm, he spurts semen, which contains millions of **sperm**, into the girl's vagina. The sperm can swim up into the **uterus** and then a **fallopian tube** where one can fertilize an egg. If the couple is not using any birth control, the girl can become pregnant.

Female Reproductive System



Male Reproductive System



What is birth control?

Birth control is used to prevent pregnancy. If you have sex and do not want to get pregnant, use birth control every time. Learn about the different kinds of birth control (see the FAQ [Birth Control](#).)

Some birth control methods, such as a latex condom, help prevent pregnancy and **sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)**. Your doctor can help you choose birth control that is right for you.

What other forms of sex are there besides vaginal intercourse?

Touching or rubbing your own **genitals** (**clitoris** and vagina in girls and penis in boys) can give you pleasure. This is known as masturbation. It can help you learn what kind of touch makes you feel good.

Touching your partner's genitals or other parts of his or her body can provide sexual pleasure. Touching will not cause pregnancy and is less likely to cause an STD than other forms of sex.

Oral sex is when one partner's mouth comes into contact with the other partner's genitals. Although this form of sex does not cause pregnancy, it can spread STDs. Some teens believe it is not really sex and do not protect themselves. They may even have oral sex with more than one person or with a person they do not know well. This behavior increases the risk of getting an STD.

Another form of sex is anal sex, in which the penis is placed into the partner's anus. This form of sex also does not cause pregnancy, but it can greatly increase the risk of getting an STD, including **human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)** infection. Anal sex can cause tiny tears in the anus. A virus or bacteria causing the STD may enter the body through these tears and spread or sperm may leak into the vagina when the penis is withdrawn.

What should I consider when I decide whether to have sex?

Ask yourself what your feelings are about sex. Are you really ready for sex? If you are dating, do you know how the other person feels about sex? Make up your own mind about when is the right time to have sex. Do not have sex just because

- you think everyone else is
- you think it will make you more popular
- you are talked into it
- you are afraid the other person will break up with you if you do not
- you feel that it will make you a "real" woman

If you are not ready for sex, say so, and stick to your decision. It is okay to say "no." If the other person truly cares about you, he or she will respect your decision.

What can I do if someone pressures me to have sex?

If someone tries to pressure you into having sex, say no. Think ahead of time about what the person may say and how you will respond. The following examples can work for girls or boys:

- "If you love me, you will have sex with me."
Answer: "If you really love me, you will not pressure me."
- "You are the only one I will ever love."
Answer: "Good, then we will have lots of time later."
- "Do not tell me you are still a virgin!"
Answer: "That is not the point. I just do not want to have sex now."

You should not feel pressure to have sex with someone, even if the person is an adult. Do not be afraid to forcefully say no on a date. Be aware that using alcohol or drugs may cause you to lose consciousness or that rape can occur.

What are sexually transmitted diseases?

Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are diseases that are spread by sexual contact—having oral, anal, or vaginal sex with someone who has an STD. Some of the types of STDs include the following:

- Gonorrhea and chlamydia
- Human papillomavirus
- Syphilis
- Genital herpes
- Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)
- Trichomonas
- Hepatitis

Some STDs can make you unable to have a baby later on. Some are painful, and HIV can even kill you. HIV causes acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). Many STDs, like gonorrhea, can be cured. Others, like herpes and AIDS, can be treated but not cured.

Anyone who has sex, even one time, can get pregnant or get an STD. The only way not to get an STD is not to have sexual contact with a person who is infected. If you already are sexually active, be sure you know your sexual partner and use a condom every time you have sex.

What is the correct way to use a condom?

Using a condom the right way can prevent pregnancy and protect you and your partner against STDs. A condom should be put on before you have sex, not during.

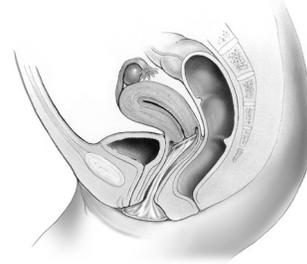
To use the male condom, place the rolled-up condom over the tip of the erect penis. Hold the end of the condom to allow a little extra space at the tip. With the other hand, unroll the condom over the penis.

Right after ejaculation, hold the condom against the base of the penis while it is withdrawn from the vagina. Then throw the condom away.

To use the female condom, squeeze the inner ring between your fingers and insert it into the vagina (like a tampon). Push the inner ring into the vagina as far as it can go. Let the outer ring hang about an inch outside your body. Guide the penis through the outer ring.

Right after ejaculation, squeeze and twist the outer ring and pull the pouch out gently. Like the male condom, it should be thrown away—never use it again.

Do not use the male and female condom at the same time. It makes both condoms more likely to break.



Glossary

Clitoris: An organ that is located near the opening to the vagina and is a source of female sexual excitement.

Fallopian Tubes: Tubes through which an egg travels from the ovary to the uterus.

Genitals: The sexual or reproductive organs.

Hormones: Substances produced by the body to control the functions of various organs.

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV): A virus that attacks certain cells in the body's immune system and causes acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS).

Masturbation: Self-stimulation of the genitals, usually resulting in orgasm.

Orgasm: The climax of sexual excitement.

Penis: An external male sex organ.

Puberty: The stage of life when the reproductive organs become functional and secondary sex characteristics develop.

Sexual Intercourse: The act of the penis entering the vagina (also called "having sex" or "making love").

Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs): Diseases that are spread by sexual contact.

Sperm: A male cell that is produced in the testes and can fertilize a female egg cell.

Uterus: A muscular organ located in the female pelvis that contains and nourishes the developing fetus during pregnancy.

Vagina: A tube-like structure surrounded by muscles leading from the uterus to the outside of the body.

If you have further questions, contact your obstetrician–gynecologist.

FAQ042: Designed as an aid to patients, this document sets forth current information and opinions related to women's health. The information does not dictate an exclusive course of treatment or procedure to be followed and should not be construed as excluding other acceptable methods of practice. Variations, taking into account the needs of the individual patient, resources, and limitations unique to institution or type of practice, may be appropriate.

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