

Wellness

Safer Sex

Let's talk about sex

Many people see sex as a personal topic that they're not comfortable talking or hearing about in public. But it's important to be open about sex and relationships. To make better choices in relationships, you need reliable, trustworthy information and people you can turn to for support.

The truth about sex

There can be many healthy reasons for having sex. This ranges from wanting to express intimate emotions, to having a positive, pleasurable experience.

There are also reasons for having sex that can be unhealthy. Some examples include: pressure from a partner, peer pressure, or making poor choices when you're drunk or high.

It's important you live by your own values and beliefs. It's okay to have sexual feelings and want to have sex; it is also okay to choose not have to have sex, whether you talk about it or not.

How can I have safe and healthy sex?

Generally having safe and healthy sex involves taking steps to:

- make sure all people involved have given their consent, and it's mutually satisfying
- avoid unintended pregnancy
- prevent sexually transmissible infections (STIs) e.g. chlamydia, herpes, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

How can I look after my sexual health and wellbeing?

It's generally easy, free or inexpensive to prepare for safe sex. The smart things to do to stay safe is to:

- use condoms
- use contraception

- get screened for STIs when required
- get treated for a STI if you have one.

There are many people who can help you talk over any or all these options in detail in a private way. University health services, doctors, pharmacists, and sexual health/family planning clinics are a few examples.

Condoms

Condoms provide a 'barrier' that prevents body fluids (semen, blood, etc.) from entering the vagina, mouth or anus. Condoms are 98% effective at preventing pregnancy if used right, and even more so if used in combination with another contraceptive. Use a new condom once only each time you have vaginal, anal or oral sex.

Contraceptive implant

This is an implant that a doctor inserts under the skin of the upper arm to help prevent an egg implanting. It's effective for long periods of time and can be left in place for up to 3 years. The effects are reversible and will not cause infertility.

Contraceptive pill

Oral contraception (often called 'the Pill') usually contains one or two type of hormones that are natural to the body. It doesn't contribute to infertility. It is generally effective if used right – that is, taken around the same time each day, and within 24 hours of the previous one.

Emergency contraception

This is often known as the 'morning after pill' (or 'plan B'). It helps prevent pregnancy after sex if other forms of contraception weren't used or were ineffective e.g. condom broke. The morning after pill is available from pharmacies without a prescription. You can take it up to 5 days after but

it's most effective if taken as soon as possible. If you are already pregnant it is unlikely to harm the foetus. It is not the same as an abortion and is not used to terminate pregnancy

What if I think I'm pregnant?

There are options if you become pregnant without intending to. These can include: keeping the baby, putting the baby up for adoption, or terminating the pregnancy.

If you think you might be pregnant or are worried about the possibility, you don't have to do it alone. A good starting point is to talk with someone you trust. This can be a doctor, pharmacist, or appropriate people at your campus health service.

How can I avoid sexually transmissible infections (STIs)?

Most STIs are passed on through genital contact or exchange of body fluids.

Many people with an STI won't experience obvious symptoms, but there can be some warning signs:

- an unusual discharge from your vagina, penis or anus
- sores, blisters, warts, or rashes near your genitals or anus
- pain on passing urine
- unusual pain during sex.

If you experience any of these symptoms, see your university health services or doctor. Some STIs can lead to serious health problems including infertility and cancer, so it's important to get it checked out.

STI screening

Using a condom is one of the best ways to lower your risk of STIs. But if you're sexually active, consider getting a STI screening at least once a year. It's also a good idea whenever you start a new relationship or change sexual partners.

A STI screen usually involves giving a urine sample for testing, and then a discussion of the results. It's generally quick and conveniently available at campus health services, sexual health/family planning clinics, and at the doctors. It's vital to find, diagnose and treat STIs to prevent ongoing and serious health problems. It also stops the spread of the infection. So get checked out and treated for a STI just as you would with any other infection.

Further Information



Doctor or university health service



**Sexual Assault & Domestic Violence
National Help Line**
1800 Respect (1800 737 732)



**Family Planning organisation in your
state or territory**
familyplanningallianceaustralia.org.au/services

Sources:

Australian Government Department of Health. Sexual Health [Online] (2022) Available at: www.sti.health.gov.au [Accessed Oct 2022]

Family Planning NSW. Your best defence: keeping an eye on STIs [Online] (2022) Available at: www.fpnsw.org.au [Accessed Oct 2022]

Queensland Government. Sexual health checks [Online] (2022) Available at: www.qld.gov.au [Accessed Oct 2016]

True. Contraception overview [Online] (2022) Available at: www.true.org.au [Accessed Oct 2022]

Last updated: October 2022

We are here to help you manage your health and help you stay well.



**To find out more about your Overseas
Health Cover visit your local Bupa store**



**Not a Bupa member?
Call 1300 617 149**



Visit bupa.com.au/students



Health & Care