
▶ **What is abstinence?**

Abstinence means choosing not to do something such as eat certain foods, do drugs or drink alcohol.

Sexual abstinence means choosing to not have any sexual activity that involves the exchange of body fluids. It is the only 100% effective way to protect yourself from sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or pregnancy.

Abstinence can mean:

- No sexual activity (vaginal, oral or anal contact)
- No sexual touching at all
- No skin-to-skin contact
- Some sexual touching but no vaginal or anal sex

▶ **Why do people choose to be abstinent?**

- Some choose abstinence for personal, religious or moral reasons.
- Others abstain because it is a safe way to avoid pregnancy or STIs.

▶ **It's Your Choice**

- Saying *No* to sex doesn't mean:
 - the end of your relationship
 - you are less desirable
 - you will never have sex
- Saying *Yes* to sex won't:
 - make your relationship work
 - prove you like someone
 - make you more popular
 - make your partner want you more
 - show that you are more of a person

▶ **What are the advantages?**

- It's free.
- No physical side effects
- No need to see a health care provider
- No risk of getting pregnant
- Can be started at any time in a person's life
- Less chance of getting a STI, if there is no oral, anal, or vaginal contact of any kind.
- Chance to build a relationship in a non-sexual way

▶ **What are the drawbacks?**

- Both partners must be committed to abstain.
- Not having proper protection if you change your mind.
- Trying to find non-sexual activities to replace sexual energy
- Some people find it difficult to abstain from sex for long periods of time.
- Pregnancy is still possible if semen gets on or near the vagina.

▶ **Important Things to Think About**

If you decide abstinence is the right choice for you:

- Know your limits and set boundaries.
- Talk with your partner about your decision and discuss other ways to be intimate. The decision for a couple to be abstinent needs to be mutual.
- Plan ahead. Decide with your partner on how far you will go and how to stick with that plan.
- Avoid situations that make it hard to abstain; like drinking alcohol or using drugs.

- Avoid activities where any sperm enters the vagina. Pregnancy can happen without actually having sex
- Talk with friends who support your decision to be abstinent

▶ **Questions to Ask Yourself...**

- Does my partner want to have sex now? Do I?
- Am I being pressured into having sex?
- How important is sex? What about love?
- Am I prepared to use birth control every time I have sex?
- Am I ready to use a condom/barrier every time to protect myself from STIs?
- Will I feel good about myself if I have sex now?
- Have I decided what I will do if I do get pregnant or get an STI?
- How will an unplanned pregnancy or serious STI impact me, my family and my future?

▶ **Remember**

- Not everyone is having sex.
- You can say no to sex even if you've said yes in the past.
- A decision to not have sex can be for any length of time and at any time in your life.
- You can't build a good relationship on sex alone.
- A good relationship doesn't need sex to make it work

▶ **Resources**

[Peel Regional Health Unit
Sexuality and U](#)

Updated August 2015

▶ **Who can you talk to if you have more questions?**

If you have concerns or questions, call and ask for Sexual Health, or visit the health unit website below.



**simcoe
muskoka**
DISTRICT HEALTH UNIT

Tel: 705-721-7520
Toll free: 1-877-721-7520
www.simcoemuskokahealth.org

Abstinence is a good way to avoid taking sexual risks.

Consider waiting until you are ready to handle the risks.

It's Okay
to Say NO

Abstinence

