

How to Have Safer Sex

Expert
Reviewed

Four Methods: [Avoiding STIs](#) [Consulting Your Doctor](#) [Preventing Unwanted Pregnancies](#) [Choosing Responsible Behaviors](#)

Sex is an important part of life. Whether you are a virgin contemplating your first time, or a more experienced person looking for a new partner, sex can be both exciting and a little nerve-wracking. Practicing safe sex means that you can more easily enjoy having sex with a new partner. You can feel confident in the knowledge that you're protecting your body and your health. You need to learn to stay safe when it comes to sexually transmitted infections or diseases (STIs or STDs), unwanted pregnancies, and other risky sexual behaviors. Remember, you need to take care of both your mental and physical health.

Method
1

Avoiding STIs

1 Use latex condoms. Male condoms should be used for any kind of sex, including vaginal, anal, and oral contact. The male latex condom is easy to use, efficient and cheap. It is also widely available for free at Planned Parenthood locations, other counseling services, and many schools. Consistently and correctly using latex condoms during sexual intercourse can reduce the risk of STIs and pregnancy with up to 99% reliability.

- If you're allergic to latex, you can also use polyurethane condoms, which offer some protection against STIs. Natural or lambskin condoms offer reliable protection against pregnancy, but the material isn't fine enough to prevent the transmission of some infections, making them less reliable for that purpose.
- Make sure to properly place the condom on the erect penis. Doing this together can create a more intimate experience.
- Remember, both partners are responsible for safe sex. If you are sexually active, you should always have a supply of condoms on hand. Make sure to regularly check the expiration date, too.
- Condoms do not typically break when used properly; however, if the condom rips or tears during intercourse, make sure that both partners get tested within 10 days.

2 Consider using a female condom. Female condoms can be used for vaginal penetrative sex. They are effective against most STIs and can help reduce the chances of pregnancy. Though the failure rate is higher than with hormonal contraception, female condoms can be very effective when used in combination with other protection.^[1]

- You should never use a female and male condom at the same time. That can cause friction that will tear one or both of the condoms, making them ineffective.
- Make sure to carefully read the instructions on the packaging. You want to ensure that you properly insert the female condom.
- You will insert the female condom in a similar manner as inserting a tampon. The penis should be inside the female condom during intercourse.
- It is unlikely that the female condom will break if used correctly; however, if there is a tear, make sure to visit your physician to get tested within 10 days.

3 Use a dental dam for oral sex. Dental dams are latex sheets, or condoms that have been cut open to form squares. When used correctly, dental dams have been proven to reduce the risk of passing blood and other fluids to the mouth from the genitals. These are effective in preventing STIs and HIV. You can use them when performing oral sex on both the vulva and the anus.^[2]

- Make sure the latex doesn't have any holes, tears, or other damage. Rinse off any cornstarch if necessary, as this can promote vaginal infection. Cover the genitalia or anus while performing oral sex.
- Never switch back and forth between the vagina and anus without first replacing the dental dam. Discard after use.

4 Try a lubricant. While friction can be a pleasurable feeling during sex, it can also heighten the risk of infection.

Friction is often the cause of broken condoms or dental dams. To prevent too much friction, try using a lubricant during intercourse.^[3]

- Make sure to read the ingredients on the package. Don't use an oil-based lube on a latex condom. It will break down the latex.
- Instead, choose an water-based lubricant. Silicon-based lubes are also a good choice. You can also use lubricants to make dental dams more supple and less likely to tear.

5 Find other ways to be intimate. You and your partner can engage in sexual activities that carry absolutely no risk. Be creative and explore new ways to turn each other on. You can use words and fantasies to arouse one another. Some no risk sexual acts include:^[4]

- Phone sex or sexting
- Mutual masturbation
- Cyber sex

6 Try low-risk activities. Anal and vaginal intercourse are considered "high risk" sexual activities. The risk of infection when having intercourse anally is greater because the skin of the anus is thinner, making infection and disease transmission more of a possibility. Likewise, sexually transmitted diseases and infections are transmittable between the mouth and the genitals, making unprotected oral sex also a risky behavior. You can still be intimate without engaging in intercourse. Talk to your partner about trying out some new sexual activities. You could try:^[5]

- Deep kissing
- Fondling
- Experimenting with sex toys such as dildos or vibrators.
 - Keep sex toys clean. Always wash them between uses, and never use one that you're not sure is clean. A weak solution of disinfectant in a bowl of water is a cheaper option.
 - Rinse the toys well and be sure to dry them before storing them in a sealed bag in a clean and dry environment. Do not share sex toys with partners you aren't fluid-bonded with since you can spread infections this way.

Method
2

Consulting Your Doctor

1 Get tested regularly. Go to your doctor or a free clinic regularly to get screened for HIV and other STIs. Get tested together with a monogamous partner before deciding to stop using protection. You should continue to get tested regularly even when you are in a relationship, to be on the safe side. It is better to get tested than to unknowingly be infected with an STI.^[6]

- Ask your partner to go with you if you're nervous. It's not lame to request that your partner do this enthusiastically and willingly.
- If your partner doesn't want to go together, ask them to go on their own and share the results with you. You can try saying, "I respect your need for privacy. But please remember that this affects both of our bodies and health. We need to share this information with each other."
- If your partner is not willing to practice safe sex, find another partner.^[7]

2 Learn specific symptoms. Educating yourself can help keep you safe. One of the best ways to protect yourself is to boost your knowledge. Take some time to learn about different STIs. You can learn about methods of contraction, and symptoms. Your doctor is one of your best resources. Ask your doctor for some information or look at a reputable website.^[8]

- For example, you should know that one of the most common STIs, chlamydia, often has no symptoms. For that reason, it is often unknowingly passed to others. Ask your doctor to test for all STIs before you sleep with a new partner.
- Genital warts are another common STI. These warts are easily spread by skin-to-skin contact. The flesh-colored bumps may look similar to cauliflower. Your doctor can help you find the best treatment plan.
- Many STIs don't have visible symptoms; however, if you see any abnormalities on your partner's genitalia, you

should avoid having sex until they have visited the doctor.

- Know your body. If you notice any changes in your body, visible or not, don't hesitate to contact your doctor. You're always better safe than sorry.

3 Get vaccinated. One of the best ways to prevent certain STIs is by getting vaccinated. There are currently vaccines that can be used to prevent hepatitis A and B, and human papillomavirus (HPV). Talk to your doctor about whether these vaccines are right for you.^[9]

- Females between the age of nine and 26 should be given the HPV vaccine. It is given in three doses over six months. The CDC states that this vaccine is safe for all women between those ages. The HPV vaccine is also recommended for boys, given at age 11 – 12 years
- The CDC recommends the Hepatitis A vaccine for all children, men who engage in intercourse with other men, and illegal drug users.
- There are many populations who should receive the Hepatitis B vaccine. These groups include:
 - Children under 19 who have not previously been vaccinated
 - Intravenous drug users
 - Men who have sex with men
 - Individuals with HIV or chronic liver disease

4 Get treated. Part of having safe and responsible sex is making sure that you are not passing a disease to your partner. If you have contracted an STI, you need to make sure that you receive the proper medical treatment. If you receive a negative diagnosis, ask your doctor about the best treatment option for you.^[10]

- For example, maybe you learn that you have contracted gonorrhea. Your doctor will prescribe a course of antibiotics as a treatment.
- For this, and any infection, make sure to take the medicine exactly as instructed. Ask your doctor if you have any questions, or are concerned about side effects.
- Tell your partner. You need to say, "I need you to know that I was recently tested for STIs. I have gonorrhea. You need to get tested as soon as possible."

5 Ask about high-risk sex. You might find yourself in a situation where you want to knowingly engage in high-risk sex. For example, maybe your partner was previously diagnosed with HIV. Talk to your doctor before engaging in sexual activity.^[11]

- Ask a lot of questions. You can say, "My partner is HIV-positive. What extra steps can we take to make sure that I remain negative?"
- Keep the lines of communication open. If you or your partner have questions, make sure to ask.
- It is possible to have a healthy and happy sex life with someone who has tested positive. You just need to make sure that safety is always part of your routine.

Method
3

Preventing Unwanted Pregnancies

1 Try the pill. Hormonal contraception methods regulate a woman's fertility cycles to prevent pregnancy. The most common type of hormonal birth control is often referred to as "the pill" and is taken orally every day. When taken correctly and regularly, hormonal birth control is 99% effective. If you're interested in hormonal birth control, talk to your gynecologist or general care provider about a prescription.^[12]

- Always take hormonal birth control correctly. Hormonal birth control is incredibly effective, but only when taken properly and consistently. You need to take your pill at the same time each day, and avoid smoking, which can increase your blood-pressure and other cause dangerous health concerns.
- Pay attention to how your body responds to the hormones, and discuss any concerns. It sometimes takes some experimenting to get the right medication.
- Set an alarm on your phone to remind you to take your pill and do it at the same time each day.

Consider alternative hormone therapies. Other hormonal methods are also available and quite reliable, up to 99%

- 2** effective. Hormonal patches, the [NuvaRing](#), and implants can last for weeks or several years and are quite effective.
- The Depo-Provera shot is another option, administered every few months. Intrauterine devices/systems (IUDs or IUSs) are also options to consider.
 - Use both birth control and condoms to reduce the risk of pregnancy and STIs. Using other kinds of contraceptives in addition to condoms is the best way to practice the safest kind of sex. You can have fun with your partner in a more worry-free environment.

3 Use barrier contraception. The following methods offer no protection against the transmission of HIV and other sexually-transmitted diseases, but are somewhat effective at preventing pregnancy. Diaphragms, contraceptive sponges, and cervical caps are placed over the cervix and should be used together with a spermicidal gel. These methods of contraception are typically worn for at least six hours after intercourse.

- At most, these methods are about 90% effective, on average, making them somewhat less reliable than other methods of birth control. The fact that they offer no protection against STIs and are typically more difficult to obtain than condoms makes them a less recommended, but still a useful method.^[13]
- Ask your doctor to fit you for a diaphragm. You can purchase sponges at most drug stores. Make sure to follow the directions very carefully.

4 Know your options. If you are a female who is sexually active, it is possible that you could inadvertently become pregnant. Part of having safe sex is knowing what you will do if you have an unplanned pregnancy. Think ahead and know where you can find resources.^[14]

- Be aware that the counselors at Planned Parenthood can talk to you about options that include terminating or continuing with your pregnancy.
- Talk to your partner. If you are in a serious relationship, say, "What would we do if we became pregnant?"
- Make use of emergency contraception. Drugs like Plan-B, Next Choice, and ella can decrease the possibility of pregnancy after unprotected sex when no contraceptive is used. Most don't require a prescription, though some do have age limits that vary depending on the country and state.

Method
4

Choosing Responsible Behaviors

1 Be monogamous. Monogamy means being in an exclusive relationship with only one sexual partner. Monogamy can help you to reduce the risk of contracting STIs. If you are going to be sexually active, consider being monogamous.^[15]

- Make sure that your relationship is mutually monogamous, which means you are both committed to only having sex with each other.
- Trust is a big part of monogamy. Make sure that you and your partner are open and honest with each other about your sexual activity — past and present.

2 Always take time to talk with your partners before and after sex. Each time you enter into a new sexual relationship, it's important to take time to talk to your partner before jumping between the sheets. Be honest about your own sexual experiences and your own desire to practice safe sex. If your partner doesn't want to practice safe sex, or isn't forthcoming with you about their sexual history and experiences, don't have sex with them.^[16]

- You don't need to have the "numbers" talk, necessarily, but you do need to find out if your partner has regularly engaged in risky sexual behaviors. Get tested together before you decide to have sex.
- Have consensual sex. Make sure your partner is capable of consenting to sex and that both people in the relationship agree to the sexual activity each and every time.
- Consenting once doesn't mean consenting to future sexual encounters, and likewise consenting to one activity in no way suggests the consent of another. Never assume consent.

3 Put your safety first. Avoid mixing drugs and alcohol with sex. Having sex under the influence of drugs or alcohol is never a safe idea. Your safe sex practices can be compromised and less effective if you're drunk/high and you

might misread the other person's signals or they might misread your signals, potentially resulting in non-consensual sex.^[17]

- If you go to parties and want to get drunk or use drugs, it's safest to be with friends. Look out for one another.
- Don't share drinks. Don't accept a drink from someone you don't know. Keep your hand over the top of drink and keep it with you at all times — don't leave it sitting exposed if you go to the bathroom. Being mindful of your safety can help you avoid falling victim to "date rape drugs."
- Common date rape drugs are rohypnol (roofies), GHB, and ketamine. Common symptoms include dizziness, confusion, and difficulty with motor skills.
- Get medical care if you suspect you have been drugged.

4 Protect your emotions. No one has the right to pressure you into having sex. This applies to intercourse, but also other forms of sexual activity. If you feel uncomfortable, remove yourself from the situation.^[18]

- Common pressuring tactics include threatening a break up or trying to influence you with drugs or alcohol.
- You can say, "I don't feel comfortable. Please stop."
- You can also say, "I was really enjoying kissing you. I'd like to keep things on that level."

5 Figure out if you are ready for sex. Whether you are a virgin or just starting a new relationship, you might be nervous to have sex with someone new. That's perfectly normal. It's a good idea to take a self-assessment. Reflecting on your feelings can help you decide if you're ready to take the next step.^[19]

- Ask yourself a series of questions. For example, are you prepared to talk to your healthcare provider about your sexual activity?
- Additionally, you should ask yourself if you feel comfortable discussing intimacy with your partner. Moreover, do you feel comfortable saying that you don't want to have sex?
- If you can't confidently answer "yes" to these questions, it might be a good idea to hold off on having sex. Remember, every relationship moves at its own pace.

Community Q&A

Is it safe to have sex with more than one woman at a time if they are willing?

Carrie Noriega, M.D.
Yes it is safe to have sex with more than one partner at a time but you should use a new condom for each woman. You also should not share sex toys between the two women.
Flag as duplicate

Not Helpful 13 Helpful 31

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Is it safe to lick a vagina while having oral sex?

Carrie Noriega, M.D.
Unless you are in a monogamous relationship and know that you are not at risk for an STI, you should use a dental dam to have oral sex.
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Not Helpful 9 Helpful 18

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Do I need to use a condom to have sex?

wikiHow Contributor
No, but it is strongly advised to wear one for safe, protected sex. If used correctly, condoms help protect you from pregnancy and STD's. But if all you are trying to do is prevent pregnancy, there are a few other options. A condom plus an additional contraceptive will do nothing but make you that much safer.
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Why can't I have sex after having a baby?

wikiHow Contributor
Your vagina and genitals will be sensitive leading to pain.
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Not Helpful 15 Helpful 57

If I want my wife to get pregnant, should either of us use a condom?

Ayame.Chan  If you want to get pregnant, you shouldn't wear a condom. Condoms are used to prevent pregnancy.
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Does using a condom during sex prevent pregnancy?

wikiHow Contributor  Yes, but its not 100% safe, so always use the "pull out" method even when wearing a condom, just to be on the safe side.
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Can I get infected by HIV if I finger an HIV positive female?

wikiHow Contributor  Hiv is passed through the exchange of bodily fluids, primarily blood or sexual fluids. If all you are inserting are your fingers, without any cuts on your fingers that are touching your partner's blood or sexual fluids, you should be fine. If you're really that cautious you can always wear a latex/polyurethane glove!
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Will condoms help me be safe during sex?

wikiHow Contributor  They will help, but it is still good to use birth control pills and keep an extra box of condoms on the nightstand.
 Flag as duplicate Not Helpful 12 Helpful 34

My partner and I are planning on having sex for the first time soon. How do I avoid getting pregnant?

wikiHow Contributor  You can take birth control pills with a prescription from your doctor. Also, have your partner use a condom.
 Flag as duplicate Not Helpful 7 Helpful 22

Does it feel as pleasing if you use a condom?

wikiHow Contributor  Not for most. But using lubricant in your condom or even tighter/thinner ones will heighten the pleasure.
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Can you answer these readers' questions?

 Refresh

On **How to Perform Lakshmi Pooja on Diwali**, a reader asks:

Is laxmi puja done at home or at the business center?

Your answer...

Reply

On **How to Become an Automotive Engineer**, a reader asks:

What can I do if I want to design cars?

Your answer...

Reply

On **How to File Divorce Papers Without an Attorney**, a reader asks:

If I have had the paper work already signed and notarize three months ago, can I still file them?

Your answer...

Reply

Tips

- Do not use petroleum- or oil-based products, as these will weaken the condom. There are lots of good water-based lubricants on the market.
- Carry condoms with you just in case, but try to avoid keeping them close to your body (e.g. in your wallet), as heat will

accelerate the breakdown of latex.

- Sex includes other options besides vaginal and anal sex. Manual and oral sex also allow for sexual activity without the need for contraception. Bear in mind that diseases like HIV can still be transmitted over the smallest injuries in your mouth, for example. Use a condom to be totally safe, especially if your partner has not been tested for HIV recently.
- It is a good idea to put on a condom as soon as possible. While traces of sperm in Cowper's Fluid ("precum") are believed to be unlikely to cause pregnancy, this is essential to prevent the spread or contraction of STIs.
- In the UK, condoms are available free of charge from family planning clinics and all forms of contraception are free on the NHS.
- If a guy you know isn't allergic to latex says he is, don't have sex with him.

Warnings

- There is no sex without some form of risk. No form of contraception is 100% reliable. Not having sex is the most reliable way to not get STIs.
- Never pleasure yourself or your partner with fruit such as bananas or other forms of phallic-like objects that are not solid. Failure to take this into account may lead to a situation where medical professionals may need to be involved.
- Sexually transmitted diseases do not discriminate on grounds of marital status, age, sexual orientation, class or skin colour.

Sources and Citations

1. <http://www.avert.org/sex-stis/safer-sex-hiv/female-condoms>
2. <http://www.hiv.va.gov/patient/daily/sex/condom-tips.asp>
3. <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/stds-hiv-safer-sex/safer-sex>

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