

Talking to Partners about Sex, STDs, and Birth Control Handout

Before talking to a partner:

Think about your approach

- **Plan what to say.** Make a list of pros and cons. Think about what you need for yourself and from your partner.



- **Be ready to listen:** Stop texting, talking, and other activities. Really hear what your partner has to say.
- **Share your decision with friends and family:** Practicing or rehearsing helps you figure what you want to say and how others may interpret it.

How to begin:

Think about your timing and intent

- **Choose a good time:** Be sure it is BEFORE you have sex, not during or after.
- **Choose a good place:** Limit distractions and interruptions. A party is probably not the best place.
- **Say what you value about your partner:** This way you can say yes to the relationship even if you say no to sex without condoms or birth control.



Talking to Partners about Sex, STDs, and Birth Control Handout, continued

What to talk about:

Make sure you are being clear

- **Be honest:** If you think you should both get tested for STDs before having sex, say so. Do not let embarrassment stand in the way of your health!
- **Share reasons for using condoms and / or birth control:** Think ahead what your values, feelings, and goals are. How would having sex without protection harm any of these?



- **Plan ways to spend time together that don't involve unprotected sex:** Agree with your partner on things you can do to avoid STDs and pregnancy like getting tested or using condoms and other forms of birth control.
- **Ask your partner for support:** Stress that mutual care means taking care of the health of both people.

Be aware of:

Think about body language and the tone and volume of your voice

- **Communication styles of your partner:** Males and females have different anatomy, different levels of hormones, and different ways of being socialized to interact with others. Be aware that males and females may think different things in their heads when they say the same words. However, even in same sex partnerships, there may still be very different communication styles between the two people even though they share gender. And obviously, every individual is different, so do not stereotype that “all guys” or “all girls” act a certain way.



- **Culture and family upbringing:** The way we communicate has a lot to do with the home we grew up in, the role models we had when learning to talk, and the culture we are surrounded by. If you are dating across cultures, try to notice any different communication styles when your partner interacts with other people. Talk about it!

Parts of this handout were adapted from Stang, et al. (2004). *Health Facts: Reproductive Health & Pregnancy Prevention*.

Our Own Scenarios

1. Michael and Jose have been a couple for over two years. They are very religious, they love each other, and they have decided to wait to have sex until they can marry. Michael had a friend of the family who died of AIDS. And Jose's cousin has been in and out of the STD clinic over the past few years. They both want to wait to have sex until they are truly committed to each other, because they worry about STDs. But they are growing impatient.



2. Soonyee and Jin are a couple in college. They are having sex already and use condoms so they don't get pregnant or give one another STDs. Jin is getting nervous about using only condoms because one slipped off last time they had sex after he had been drinking. He wants to stop having sex until Soonyee starts using another birth control method. Soonyee is adamant that she does not want any extra hormones in her body.



3. Margarita and Roberto have been a couple for 6 months. Margarita is 16 and in high school. Roberto is 20 and in college. They've decided they want to start having sex. They live in a state where it is legal for a 16-year-old and a 20-year-old to have sex. Both have gone to the clinic and neither has any of the STDs they were tested for. Roberto is insisting that the only method they need to use is withdrawal. Margarita wants something better, more effective, and that she can control. Margarita sometimes feels like Roberto tries to control what she does.



4. Madison and Brad are engaged to be married and in their mid-twenties. Neither of them has ever done any drugs and they only drink occasionally. They are both sure that they're faithful to each other. They were high school sweethearts and neither of them has ever had other partners. Brad wants to stop using condoms, because he feels there is no risk of STDs. Madison has heard bad stories from her friend who is on birth control pills. Brad thinks Madison should start the IUD or implant, because neither of them want children for the next 4-5 years but eventually they do want to become parents.

5. Cole and Mayra have been married for 10 years. They have two children and have decided they do not want to have any more. Mayra wants Cole to get a vasectomy because it's cheaper and the recovery time is less than a tubal ligation. She's tired of always being responsible for birth control, because she was on birth control the entire time they have known each other, except when they tried to have children.



6. Lisa and Wanda have been dating for about 8 months. They met in 11th grade English class, where Wanda started sending poems to Lisa. They don't know any other lesbians in school or in their families. Wanda heard a health educator say something in their health class about dental dams and how they can stop the spread of STDs during oral sex. Lisa had 2 male partners before she met Wanda. Sometimes she still hooks up with one of those guys. Wanda wants to suggest they use dental dams for oral sex but doesn't know how to go about it.




7. Jerome and Lashanda are dating and have known each other for about 5 months. Jerome has HIV, and he has told Lashanda about his HIV status. They are both interested in having sex eventually, but Lashanda wants to remain HIV negative. She is willing to use condoms, but she is scared that something may go wrong. Jerome talked to his doctor at the HIV clinic about how he can avoid giving his partner HIV.




8. Sarah and Avi have been dating for a month after meeting each other at a work party. They started having sex soon after they became a couple, and decided not to see other people. In the beginning, Sarah said she was on the pill, so they didn't have to worry about her getting pregnant. Aaron knows that Sarah can be a little forgetful; in fact, she forgot to bring her pills when they went skiing for a weekend. He wants to start using condoms, but is worried she will think he is cheating if he suggests them. He is not interested in hooking up with other women.


9. Chris and Robyn have been a couple for three years and have a very healthy sex life. They always use condoms because Chris has a history of genital herpes, and Robyn has the implant for birth control. They both decide they want to try anal sex, because they are curious. After a romantic dinner at home, Robyn realizes there is no lube in the apartment. Chris suggests they use olive oil with the condom. Robyn knows that oil can cause condoms to break.




10. Alyssa and Travis know each other from the track team in their high school. Alyssa has had a crush on Travis for a long time and was very excited when he asked her out on a date. On their 6th date, Travis brings up the idea of oral sex. Alyssa agrees but only if he will wear a condom. Travis thinks that's ridiculous and not necessary. Alyssa knows a friend who got chlamydia in her throat and refuses to let that happen to her. She brings up the idea of flavored condoms she picked up at the local clinic.



11. Miguel and Bianca just came back from their amazing honeymoon in Hawaii. They have talked a lot about their future together. Miguel wants to go to graduate school for computer engineering. Bianca is a captain in the Army. They are very interested in having two kids after grad school and Bianca's current tour of duty. They also want there to be about three years between their kids, because they both have older siblings who are three years older and think it's a good age difference. They are talking about all the options they have for birth control.



12. Xavier and Brandi are seniors in high school. They have been dating since the end of sophomore year. They started having sex the summer after junior year. Brandi gets the Depo shot every three months so she doesn't get pregnant. But recently she has been noticing that she is gaining weight, even though she works out all the time for softball and volleyball. She wants to have a conversation with Xavier about changing methods but is embarrassed to tell him the reason why.



13. Cynthia and Sam have been best friends since 3rd grade. They are hanging out at Sam's house while his parents are away for the evening. While watching a movie, they start cuddling, as they normally do, but this time they start kissing. He asks her if this is ok because they have been friends so long. She says yes. They quickly move to having sex. Without even thinking about it, they both realize afterwards that they did not use any protection. Cynthia starts freaking out. Sam brings up emergency contraception (EC) because he heard that their friend, Mandy, had to use it last month.

Individual Homework: Blogging about Preventing Pregnancy and STDs

NAME	DATE	CLASS PERIOD
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FOR FULL CREDIT, THIS EXERCISE IS DUE: _____

Directions: Imagine you write a very popular blog that answers questions other teens send to you about trouble with relationships and questions about sex, birth control, and STDs. You should use the communication skills found on the two handouts we used in class today: *Assertiveness Handout* from Lesson 2: Abstinence and *Talking to Partners about Sex, STDs, and Birth Control Handout* when you answer the question.

Alternative: you can make a video where you read the questions and then answer them verbally. Bring it in or post it to YouTube for credit.

URL: _____

Situation 1: Hi, I am a 16 year old girl. My boyfriend and I are talking about having sex for the first time. He doesn't think I need birth control because we are both virgins. I don't want to scare him away because I really love him, but I don't want to get pregnant! I have things I want to do before I have kids. What should I tell him?

Sincerely,
Got Plans

Situation 2: Uh, this is pretty embarrassing, but I'm on the football team and my teammate and I recently realized that we like each other. Like really like each other. We are pretty excited but also scared and nervous other people will find out. We have no idea who to talk to about sex, how to get condoms, and all that stuff. I know the

pharmacist at the local drug store so I can't get them there. Both of us have messed around with other guys before. My buddy doesn't think we need them, but I think we do. Help!

Sincerely,
Helmet N Cleats

Situation 3: I feel really stuck. My girlfriend wants to stop using condoms because she is using the patch. I've known her for a long time, but I am not sure if we are ready to be exclusive with each other. I did hook up with this other girl at a party last week... anyway! That was a mistake, and I want to stay with my girlfriend. I want to insist we keep using condoms but am afraid she will think I suspect she is sleeping around or she will suspect that I am sleeping around. What do I say to her???

Sincerely,
Patched Jeans

Family Homework: Talking about Preventing Pregnancy & STDs

All Family Homework is optional. You may complete an Individual Homework assignment instead.

PURPOSE: This is a chance to share with one another some of your own (and your family's, your religion's) beliefs about sexuality and relationships. It will also give you a chance to get to know one another a little better.

DIRECTIONS: Find a quiet place where the two of you – the student and the trusted adult (parent, guardian, stepparent, adult friend of the family, best friend's parent, etc.) – can talk privately. Set aside about 10 minutes. During this time, please give full attention to one another ... no texting, watching TV and so on.

ASK THE STUDENT: What are your life goals at this time? Career, family, travel? What would a pregnancy or STD do to change those goals?

ASK THE ADULT: How do you communicate with your boss at work when you want or need something? Can you think of an example? How do you communicate with your partner (present or past) when you want or need something? Got an example?

ASK THE STUDENT: How would you say "no" if your partner wanted to have sex but you didn't want to? How would you talk about birth control and condoms with a partner?

ASK THE ADULT: What do you think I could say to my partner about preventing pregnancy or disease, if I got into a relationship and we decided to have sex? What if my partner said he or she didn't want to use birth control or condoms?



Family Homework: Talking about Preventing Pregnancy & STDs – Confirmation Slip

FOR FULL CREDIT, THIS HOMEWORK IS DUE: _____

We have completed this Homework Exercise.

Date: _____

_____ student's signature

_____ signature of family member or trusted adult