**15 things you should know about sex**

There are so many stories around sex, it's hard to know what to believe. Find out the facts – it's the best way to make sure you have safer sex.

1. Can you get pregnant the first time you have sex?

Yes, pregnancy is possible even if it's the first time you have sex. A boy can get a girl pregnant the first time he has sex with her.

If you're female and have sex, you can get pregnant as soon as you start ovulating (releasing eggs). This happens before you have your first period.

Read more about [periods and the menstrual cycle](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/periods/).

Using contraception protects against pregnancy. Using male or female condoms will also protect both men and women against sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

Before you have sex, talk to your partner about contraception, and make sure you have got some.

Find out about [getting contraception](https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sexual-health/getting-contraception/) and [tips on using condoms](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/contraception/how-do-i-use-condom/).

2. Can you get pregnant if a boy withdraws (pulls out) before he comes?

Yes, you can. There's a myth that a girl can't get pregnant if a boy withdraws his penis before he ejaculates (comes).

The truth is, pulling out the penis won't stop a girl getting pregnant.

Before a boy ejaculates, there's sperm in the pre-ejaculatory fluid (pre-come), which leaks out when he gets excited. It only takes 1 sperm to get a girl pregnant.

Pre-come can contain [STIs](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/sexually-transmitted-infections-stis/), so withdrawing the penis won't prevent you getting an infection.

If a boy says he'll take care to withdraw before he ejaculates, don't believe him. Nobody can stop themselves leaking sperm before they come.

Always use a condom to protect yourself against STIs, and also use other contraception to prevent unwanted pregnancy.

3. Can you get pregnant if you have sex during your period?

Yes, a girl can get pregnant during her period. The truth is, she can get pregnant at any time of the month if she has sex without contraception.

Sperm can survive for several days after sex, so even if you do it during your period, sperm can stay in the body long enough to get you pregnant.

4. Can you get pregnant if you have sex standing up?

Yes, a girl can become pregnant in any position that she has sex.

It's a myth that a girl can't get pregnant if she has sex standing up, sitting down, or if she jumps up and down afterwards.

The truth is, there's no such thing as a "safe" position if you're having sex without a condom or another form of contraception.

There are also no "safe" places to have sex, including the bath or shower.

Pregnancy can happen whatever position you do it in, and wherever you do it. All that's needed is for a sperm to meet an egg.

5. Can you get pregnant from oral sex?

No, a girl can't get pregnant following [oral sex](https://www.nhs.uk/common-health-questions/sexual-health/what-is-oral-sex/), even if she swallows sperm.

But you can catch STIs through oral sex, including [gonorrhoea](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/gonorrhoea/), [chlamydia](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/chlamydia/) and [herpes](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/genital-herpes/).

It's safer to use a condom on a penis if you have oral sex.

6. Does alcohol make you better in bed?

No, alcohol doesn't make you better in bed. The truth is, when you're drunk it's harder to make smart decisions.

Alcohol can make you take risks, such as having sex before you're ready, having sex with someone you don't like, or forgetting to use contraception.

Drinking won't make the experience better and you might be more likely to regret having sex if you do it when you're drunk.

[Find out more about sex and alcohol](https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sexual-health/15-things-young-people-should-know-about-sex/)

7. Can you use clingfilm as a condom?

No, you can't use clingfilm, or a plastic bag or a crisp packet instead of a condom.

Only a male [condom](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/contraception/male-condoms/) or [female condom](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/contraception/female-condoms/) can protect against STIs.

You can get condoms free from:

* community contraceptive clinics
* sexual health and genitourinary medicine (GUM) clinics
* some young persons' services

You can also buy them from pharmacies and shops. Make sure they have the CE mark or BSI kite mark on them, as this means they have been tested to high safety standards.

[Find sexual health services near you](https://www.nhs.uk/servicedirectories/Pages/ServiceSearchAdditional.aspx?ServiceType=SexualHealthService), including contraception clinics.

8. Will a boy's balls explode if he doesn't have sex?

No, this isn't true. Not having sex doesn't harm boys or girls, and a boy's balls won't explode.

Boys and men produce sperm all the time. If they don't ejaculate, the sperm is absorbed into their body.

Ejaculation can happen if they masturbate or have a wet dream. They don't have to have sex.

[Find out about boys' bodies](https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sexual-health/boys-bodies-faqs/)

9. Can you wash condoms and use them again?

No, condoms should only be used once. Don't believe anyone who says you can wash condoms and use them again.

If you have used a condom, throw it away and use a new one if you have sex again. This is true for [male condoms](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/contraception/male-condoms/) and [female condoms](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/contraception/female-condoms/).

Condoms need to be changed after 30 minutes of sex because friction can weaken the condom, making it more likely to break or fail.

[Get tips on using condoms](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/contraception/how-do-i-use-condom/)

10. Can you get pregnant if you have sex only once?

Yes, it's possible to get pregnant even if you only have sex once.

You may have heard the myth that you have to have sex lots of times to get pregnant. The truth is, all it takes is for 1 sperm to meet an egg.

To avoid pregnancy, always use contraception, and use a condom to protect against STIs.

11. Do you always get symptoms if you have an STI?

No, you might not know if you have an STI.

Sometimes you might have symptoms, such as it hurting when you pee, or an usual discharge, smell or soreness.

But many people don't notice signs of infection, so you won't always know if you're infected.

You can't tell whether someone has an STI just by looking at them.

If you're worried that you have caught an STI, visit your GP or local sexual health clinic. Check-ups and tests for STIs are free and confidential, including for under-16s.

[Find sexual health services near you](https://www.nhs.uk/servicedirectories/Pages/ServiceSearchAdditional.aspx?ServiceType=SexualHealthService)

12. Can women who have sex with women get STIs?

Yes, women who sleep with women can get or pass on STIs.

If a woman has an STI, the infection can be passed on through vaginal fluid (including fluid on shared sex toys), blood or close bodily contact.

Always use a new condom on shared sex toys. If a woman is also having sex with a man, using contraception and condoms will help prevent STIs and unintended pregnancy.

Read more [sexual health advice for lesbian and bisexual women](https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sexual-health/sexual-health-for-lesbian-and-bisexual-women/).

13. Do all gay men have anal sex?

No, anal sex, like any sexual activity, is a matter of preference.

Some people choose to do it as part of their sex life and some don't, whether they're gay, straight, lesbian or bisexual.

Having penetrative sex isn't the only way to have sex or show your feelings for someone.

According to the Third National Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles (published in 2013), 18.5% of men and 17% of women in the 16 to 24 age group had had anal sex in the previous year.

Whatever kind of sex you decide to have, use a condom to protect yourself and your partner against STIs.

14. Does starting her periods mean a girl is ready to have sex?

No, starting your periods means that you're growing up and you could get pregnant if you were to have sex.

It doesn't mean that you're ready to have sex, or that you should be sexually active.

People feel ready to have sex at different times. It's a personal decision. Most young people in England wait until they're 16 or older before they start having sex.

Read more about [deciding if you're ready to have sex](https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sexual-health/are-you-ready-for-sex/).

[Find out more about periods and the menstrual cycle](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/periods/)

15. Can I get help and information on sex if I need it?

If you want to talk to someone in confidence, you can call the national sexual health helpline on 0300 123 7123.

[Find sexual health services near you](https://www.nhs.uk/servicedirectories/Pages/ServiceSearchAdditional.aspx?ServiceType=SexualHealthService)

To find your nearest young people's service, visit the [Ask Brook website](http://www.askbrook.org.uk/).

[Find out where to get help when sex goes wrong](https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sexual-health/when-sex-goes-wrong/)

[Condom, no condom?](http://www.youtube.com/condomnocondom) is an interactive video on YouTube where you decide what happens.

Just choose which button to click at the end of each section to continue the story, and see the consequences of your choices.