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STD/TB Services
PO Box 47842
Olympia, WA 98504-7842
360-236-3460

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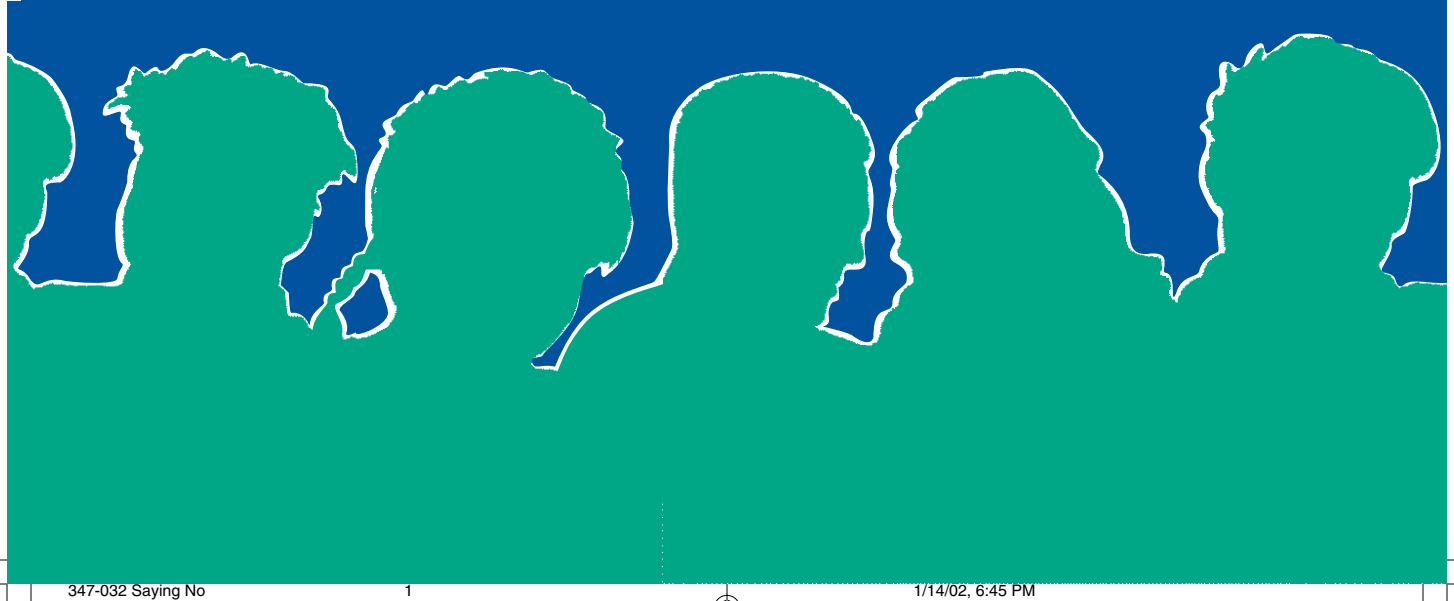
Many Teens Are Saying "NO"



WHERE CAN I GET INFORMATION THAT WILL HELP ME?

If you want more information or help, talk to someone who cares about you. Ask your parents, an older brother or sister, other family members, or an adult you feel will listen and give you sound advice. There are people and organizations in your community who want to help—your family doctor, your priest, minister or rabbi, your school nurse or counselor, or local health care providers.

Call your local health department for advice and help.

WHAT SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS?

They're great . . . but good relationships don't develop overnight. They take time. Sex is not what makes a relationship work.

Watch out for **lines** like, **"If you care about me, you'll have sex with me."**

- You don't have to have sex with someone to prove you like them.
- Sex should never be used to pay someone back for something . . . all you have to say is, "Thank you."
- Sharing thoughts, beliefs, feelings, and most of all, mutual respect, is what makes a relationship strong.
- Saying **"No"** can be the best way to say "I love you."

DON'T BE FOOLED

into thinking all teenagers are having sex.

THEY AREN'T!!

There's a lot to know before you say "yes" to having sex.

WHAT SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT MY BODY?

During the teen years you may be strongly attracted to another person. Your body may send you messages that make you want to get closer to that person. But your body **won't** tell you how having sex now may harm you. Surprised?? **Then you may not know that:**

Over one million teens become pregnant each year

Young girls have more problems during pregnancy

Babies of young, unmarried mothers are more likely to be born with serious health problems

Sexually transmitted diseases are at epidemic levels. You may have heard of herpes, syphilis, gonorrhea, chlamydia, AIDS. Some are incurable. They may cause pain, sterility, sometimes even death.

Face it! Sex for young people is pretty risky.

WHAT SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT PRESSURE?

It comes from everywhere . . . . . advertising, friends, movies, television, shows, songs, and books.

BE POPULAR

BE PART OF THE IN-CROWD

BE A MAN / BE A WOMAN

EVERYBODY'S DOING IT

SEX IS FUN

IF IT FEELS GOOD, DO IT

BUT stop and think. Will having sex really make you more popular, more mature, more desirable? Probably not. In fact, having sex may even cause your partner to lose interest. The one sure thing about having sex is that you may be in for problems you don't know how to handle.

WHAT SHOULD I KNOW IF I DECIDE NOT TO HAVE SEX?

Congratulations . . . contrary to rumor, so have lots of other teens. It's not so hard to say "NO" and still remain friends if you are careful not to hurt the other person's feelings. For example, you might say:

- "I like you a lot, but I'm just not ready to have sex."
- "I don't believe in having sex before marriage. I want to wait."
- "I enjoy being with you, bit I don't think I'm old enough to have sex."
- **"I don't feel I have to give you a reason for not having sex. It's just my decision."**

ALSO, there are different ways to show affection for another person without having sexual intercourse.

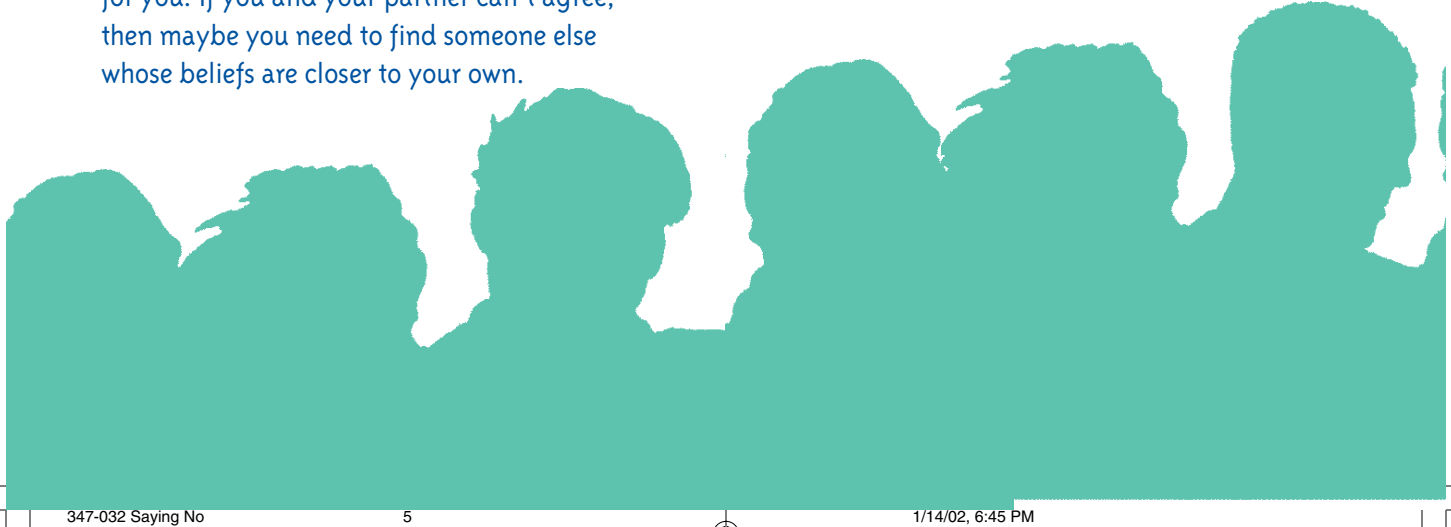
Try to avoid situations where sexual feelings become strong. "Stopping" is much harder then.

Talk about your feelings and what seems right for you. If you and your partner can't agree, then maybe you need to find someone else whose beliefs are closer to your own.

WHAT SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT MY FEELINGS?

Sexual feelings can be pretty strong! So think before you act. Think about your future. Think about the consequences. In other words, **think about yourself!** Ask yourself, "Am I ready to have sex now?" To answer this question you need to decide which is more important to you—giving in to your sexual feelings or being true to your inner feelings that may be telling you to "wait."

Turn to the next page and take the **quiz**.



SOME QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

There's a lot to know before making your decision about whether or not to say "yes" to having sex. Here's a checklist that may help you decide what is best:

	Yes	No
• Is having sex in agreement with my own moral values?	☐	☐
• Would my parents approve of my having sex now?	☐	☐
• If I have a child, am I responsible enough to provide for its emotional and financial support?	☐	☐
• If the relationship breaks up, will I be glad I had sex with this person?	☐	☐
• Am I sure no one is pushing me into having sex?	☐	☐
• Does my partner want to have sex now?	☐	☐

If any of your answers are **NO**, then you'd better **WAIT**.

WHAT SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT MAKING UP MY MIND?

Should I have sex now or should I wait?

It's true many teens decide to go ahead. But the results of this decision will fall on you.

Ask yourself these questions before making up your mind:

- Can I take responsibility for my actions?
- Am I willing to risk V.D., pregnancy, future infertility?
- Can I handle being a single parent or placing my child for adoption?
- Am I ready and able to support a child on my own?
- Can I handle the guilt and conflict I may feel?
- Will my decision hurt others—my parents, my friends?

DECISIONS ABOUT SEX MAY BE THE MOST IMPORTANT DECISIONS YOU'LL MAKE. SO, THINK BEFORE YOU ACT.

Washington State Department of Health

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