

ABSTINENCE

What is abstinence and how does it work?

Abstinence means different things to different people. For many people, abstinence means not having sexual intercourse (vaginal, anal or oral sex). For some, kissing is the limit. For others, everything but vaginal or anal intercourse is the limit. Others have limits somewhere in between. If choosing abstinence, you need to think about what it means to you. You and your partner will need to talk about setting your limits.

How effective is it?

Abstinence is 100% effective in preventing pregnancy if there is no vaginal contact of any kind. Abstinence is 100% effective in preventing sexually transmitted infections (STIs) if there is no oral, anal or vaginal contact of any kind.

What do you need to do to use abstinence?

- Decide what your limits are before you are in a sexual situation.
- Talk with your partner about your limits.
- You may wish to avoid situations where you feel pressured or unable to stick to your limits. For example, being alone with a partner, getting drunk or high or feeling pressured because “everyone is having sex” may alter your judgement.

Advantages to using abstinence

Abstinence has many advantages that you may not have considered. These include:

- no worries about getting pregnant
- some protection against STIs (depending on your limits!)
- no cost
- no need to see a doctor
- allowing you to focus on other things such as sports, school, friends, and to spend time on your relationship without having intercourse
- no guilt about going against your religious beliefs or cultural practices.

Disadvantages to abstinence

If you decide to use abstinence, you may feel:

- pressure from your friends and your partner
- like you do not fit in
- an inability to express some of the physical aspects of sexuality

Feel good about what you choose to do or not to do. It's your decision.

It's a fact:

By grade 12, 50% of teens have not had sex. (*Student Health 2005: A Peel Health Status Report*)

If you do decide to have some sexual activity, use condoms to help prevent the spread of STIs, HIV and hepatitis B

**For more information, call Peel Public Health 905-799-7700
and ask for Sexual Health Information
or visit
intheknowpeel.ca peelsexualhealth.ca peelregion.ca/health**