

# SEXUAL ACTIVITY ~ A PERSONAL CHOICE

Not everyone is sexually active. It's for you to decide when or if you wish to be sexually active. Deciding whether or not you are ready to be in a relationship or to have sex is an important decision and takes thoughtful consideration. Sexuality is a normal part of being human and should be enjoyed, but you have to keep in mind what your values are. What are your goals and priorities in life at the moment? Ask yourself what sexual activity means to you and if you are ready. Sexual activity is a personal choice and you need to do what is best for you.

## UNPLANNED PREGNANCY

So you just found out you're pregnant. You may experience common feelings of shock, anger, sadness, anxiety, confusion or happiness. It is important you first sort through your emotions in order to start thinking realistically and weighing your options out.

### **Things to think about before making a decision about what to do:**

1. Think carefully about what your responsibilities are.
2. Talk to someone you trust, like your parents, boyfriend, doctor or a friend.
3. Never let anyone talk you into a decision. The decision must be your own!
4. What are your goals in life?
5. What kind of life can you offer a child?
6. What are the financial realities?
7. What are your personal religious beliefs and values?
8. Do you have the time to raise a child and study?
9. Do you have social support of family and friends?

## 10. Are you in a stable relationship? Or does that even matter to you?

There are many aspects of your life that will have to be considered as you deal with this important issue. Trying to sort out everything on your own is very difficult. We suggest that you contact your student health clinic and student counselling office as soon as possible to get the help and support you may need.



<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/hp-gs>

<http://sexualityandu.ca/adults>

## BIRTH CONTROL

There are many different types of birth control methods available, however it is recommended that you discuss your options with your doctor so you can make an informed decision on what will work best for you. Remember that protection from STIs and birth control are two different things. If you are not using condoms, you will not be protected against STIs.

Below is a list of birth control methods:

METHOD	HOW IT WORKS	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
<b>Birth Control Pills (Females)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Affects hormone levels, prevents egg from being released</li><li>- Take pill every day.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- It is 98% effective against pregnancy.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Doesn't protect against sexually transmitted infections.</li><li>- Have to remember to take it every day.</li><li>- May experience spotting, nausea, tender breasts, moodiness, headaches and weight gain.</li><li>- Some other medications may interfere with the pills' effectiveness.</li></ul>
<b>Birth Control Patch (Ortho Evra) (Females)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Thin patch that is placed on your skin.</li><li>- The patch is changed each week, with 1 week off after 3 weeks on.</li><li>- It affects hormone levels, prevents egg from being released.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Do not need to remember to take a pill each day.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Doesn't protect against sexually transmitted infections.</li><li>- May experience nausea, moodiness, headaches or weight gain/loss.</li><li>- Not as effective for women over 198 lbs.</li></ul>

<b>The “morning after” pill (Females)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- This method is for emergency use only.</li> <li>- Must be used within 72 hours (3 days) of unprotected sex to prevent pregnancy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Does not affect future fertility and is easy to use.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Doesn't protect against sexually transmitted infections.</li> <li>- May experience nausea.</li> <li>- Can be difficult to obtain, often need a prescription, depending on where you live and some doctors don't give it out.</li> </ul>
<b>The Ring (NuvaRing) (Females)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A flexible 2-inch ring that is inserted into the upper part of the vagina once a month.</li> <li>- It releases hormones that prevents an egg from being released.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 99% effective.</li> <li>- Easy to use and you don't have to remember to take a pill every day.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Doesn't protect against sexually transmitted infections.</li> <li>- May be uncomfortable to insert.</li> <li>- May experience nausea, moodiness, headaches or weight gain/loss.</li> </ul>
<b>Condoms (Females)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It is a pre-lubricated pouch that lines the walls of the vagina.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Easily obtained from any drugstore.</li> <li>- Can be used by people with latex allergies.</li> <li>- Reduces risk of sexually transmitted infections.</li> <li>- They are 79% - 95% effective against pregnancy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- They can be uncomfortable to insert and are usually more pricey than male condoms.</li> </ul>
<b>Condoms (Males)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Latex or polyurethane sheath that fits over an erect penis.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It is 88% - 98% effective against pregnancy and is one of the best forms of protection against sexually transmitted infections.</li> <li>- Easy to obtain and are often free.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sometimes condoms may reduce the sensation for either partner.</li> <li>- Some people are allergic to the latex.</li> </ul>
<b>Depo-Provera injections (Females)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Affects hormone levels, prevents egg from being released.</li> <li>- Injection 4 times a year.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No estrogen related side effects.</li> <li>- Injections are only needed 4 times a year.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Doesn't protect against sexually transmitted infections.</li> <li>- May experience spotting, weight gain, mood changes and headaches.</li> </ul>

<b>Cervical Cap (Females)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A cervical cap is a small piece of rubber with domed top. It stays in place over the cervix.</li> <li>- It can be inserted up to six hours before intercourse, and must not be removed until six hours after ejaculation.</li> <li>- It blocks sperm from entering the uterus.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It is 82% to 94% effective against pregnancy.</li> <li>- It only needs to be replaced every 6 to 12 months or after weight change of more than 10 pounds.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Doesn't protect against sexually transmitted infections.</li> <li>- Sometimes women can get toxic shock syndrome from leaving it in for long periods of time.</li> </ul>
<b>Withdrawal (Males)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- This method is when the man pulls his penis out of the vagina before he ejaculates.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No cost and easy.</li> <li>- It is approximately 73% effective.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Doesn't protect against sexually transmitted infections or pre-ejaculation.</li> <li>- Requires self-control, experience and trust.</li> </ul>

Resource: Calgary Sexual Health Centre. (July 2007) <http://www.cbca.ab.ca>

## WHAT IS GENDER IDENTIFY?

Have you felt like you're trapped in a body of the wrong gender?

Sexual and gender identity development is unique in all of us and is merely a feature of you as a whole person. Your gender identity is just as natural to you as your sex. Your sex is defined by your physical characteristics, while gender identity is the gender you feel you are, regardless of your physical characteristics.

### Transgender

Sometimes people who are born male identify themselves more with females, or vice versa. This characteristic is inborn and is known as transgender. This doesn't mean you are gay, and has nothing to do with your sexual attraction preferences.

### Cross-Dressers

This is quite different from transgender as cross-dressers don't actually identify themselves as another gender, but like to wear the clothes of the opposite gender.

## **Transsexual**

People who surgically alter their body to suit the gender they feel is better fitted to them.

Whether transgendered or not, gender is in your mind, not your body. It's just as normal a part of life as the air we breathe and is not considered a mental disorder.

## **HOW DO I KNOW IF I'M GAY, LESBIAN OR BISEXUAL?**

Sexual orientation can be complex and multidimensional. Some people may be solely sexually attracted to their own sex and they are considered gay or lesbian. However, some homosexuals have heterosexual attractions and some heterosexuals have homosexual attractions. There are also people who are sexually attracted to both sexes equally and they are called bisexual. The feelings that attract them to the same sex have been there since they were born and are perfectly normal.

Although some gay or lesbian people may have some attraction to the opposite sex, the attraction to the same sex is much more intense and significant in homosexuals. However, just because you're attracted to the same sex doesn't necessarily mean you're gay or lesbian.

**If you are not sure if you are gay or lesbian, you may want to ask yourself a few questions:**

- 1.** Do you have frequent sexual fantasies about persons of the same sex?
- 2.** Do you feel more emotionally connected to persons of the same sex?
- 3.** Are you more attracted to persons of the same sex?

If you don't have a clear answer to the above questions, that's ok. Sexual orientation develops over time and there is no reason to rush into labeling yourself! Sometimes people experiment during their college/university years, and that's ok; just practice safe sex. Eventually you will just know what your main sexual orientation is.

# COMING OUT (GAY, LESBIAN, BISEXUAL OR TRANSGENDER)

It is important to share your feelings with people you can trust or with a local support group. Talking will help you to accept yourself and deal with the public transition when the time is right. Remember to be proud of who you are and for having the courage to be who you were meant to be. Often coming out can be a stressful situation. If there is a local gay, lesbian, bisexual organization in your community, they may be able to help you.

## HERE ARE SOME TIPS TO MAKE COMING OUT EASIER:

- Tell the truth to yourself and others.
- Say aloud “I AM GAY!” and see how it feels.
- Never come out to others when you are angry or to hurt someone.
- Be sure to be in a private, comfortable environment.
- Join a gay/lesbian support group; if there are none in the community there are a million online!
- Make sure you’re sober when you tell your family and friends.
- Don’t bring your partner with you when you tell your family, that may be too much all at once.
- Know that there are always going to be people who will never accept it.
- Be ready to give people their space to accept things.
- Be prepared for loving acceptance even if you don’t expect it; people can surprise you.
- Be prepared for an earful of questioning.
- Be prepared for ANY reactions.
- Have resources for them like brochures etc.
- Don’t expect immediate acceptance from everyone.
- Never doubt your own self-worth!



### *CHECK THESE OUT:*

<http://www.outproud.org>

<http://www.reachout.com.au>

<http://www.pflag.org>

<http://www.youthresource.com>