

Are You Ready?

Transition Skills, Tips & Tools Relationships & Sexuality Development



Now that you are getting older, your personal relationships might begin to get more complicated.

Teens with disabilities have the same feelings, needs and desires as people without disabilities

If you are a teen with a disability, you may experience a delay in or lack of information about sexual development and healthy body image. You may also experience mistrust of your own body, over protection from your family or limited peer interaction.

You may want to discuss your feelings and desires with your parent, doctor, teacher or friend before acting on them. These talks can help you fill information gaps and make healthy decisions about dating and sexual contact.

Things to Consider:

- **Treat a date like any other social situation.**
- **If you have a disability, talk about it as it naturally occurs in conversation.** If you aren't comfortable discussing your disability, think about what you want to say ahead of time.
- **Plan your response to questions.** It's important for you to know what you are comfortable with before you find yourself in a tricky situation. It's hard to make a decision when you are caught up in the moment.

Sexual consent is very important in a relationship. Sexual consent means two people both agree to take part in sexual activities, including kissing, touching or sex. Before being sexual with someone, you need to know if they want to be sexual with you, too. It's also important to be honest with your partner about what you want and don't want.

- Consenting and asking for consent are all about setting your personal boundaries and respecting those of your partner. It is important to check in if things aren't clear.
- Both people must agree to sex – every single time – for it to be consensual.
- Note that alcohol can make it harder to stop or say no when you do not want to do something.

Having sex changes your relationship and affects your life in many ways. Take the time to make the choice that is right for you.

If you decide to have sex, make sure you take precautions and know the risks involved:

- The only 100 percent effective way to avoid pregnancy and contracting sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), such as herpes and AIDS, is to not have sex.
- Condoms are the only way to help prevent the transmission of STDs. Most condoms are made of latex. If you are allergic to using latex, you must take other precautions. Talk with your healthcare provider about other safe sex options.
- Use effective birth control to avoid unintended pregnancy. Talk with your healthcare provider to find the best method for you.

More Resources:

Love, Dating, Relationships and Disability at www.easterseals.com/support-and-education/living-with-disability/love-dating-relationships-disability.html

Healthy Relationships, Sexuality and Disabilities Resource guide at www.mass.gov/doc/healthy-relationships-sexuality-and-disability-resource-guide-0/download

We're here to help.

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