

**T** is for Television. TV, movies and videos are fun to watch, but they shouldn't tell us how to live. Everybody hops into bed with everybody else all the time! No mention of birth control, or STD, or responsibility, or even love! Come on, get real!

**U** is for Unsure. If you're unsure about whether to have sex, or unsure about what your partner wants, then it makes a lot of sense to wait. And even if you've had sex before, you always have the right to decide not to have sex now.

**V** is for Virgin. It's not a bad word! If you've made the decision not to have sex, it's a decision you can be proud of! Feel good about it! Pat yourself on the back!

**W** is for Wimp. Not having sex doesn't make you a wimp or a geek or a nerd or any other weird thing. Not having sex simply means you haven't had sex. That's no big deal.

**X** is for Control and Power. It's your life. You and you alone have the power to decide what you will and won't do. You have control over your own body. Have we talked about this already? Well, X-cuse me!

**Y** is for You Would If You Loved Me. Yeah, right! It's one of the all-time ridiculous lines. A good reply is, "If you really loved me you wouldn't be pressuring me!"

**Z** is for Zillion. There are probably a zillion good reasons not to have sex if you're a teenager. Whichever ones make sense to you are the reasons that are right! Remember, it's okay not to have sex! It really is!



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SEXUAL HEALTH SERVICES

# The ABCs of Abstinence



**A** is for Abstinence. This means not having sexual intercourse; in other words, waiting to have sex until you're ready.

**B** is for Before. Before you get into an intimate situation, make a plan for sticking with your decision not to have sex. Know the times and places when sexual feelings might be too strong, and learn how to avoid them.

**C** is for Communication. Some teenagers think it's easier to "do it" than it is to talk about it. Maybe that's true. But, hey, if you can't talk to your partner about sex, then you probably shouldn't be having it.

**D** is for Decisions. Sex is complicated. Deciding whether or not to have sex can be pretty intense. There's a lot of thinking to do before you figure out what is best for you.

**E** is for Everybody. You've heard, "Come on, everybody's doing it!" Definitely not true! Maybe everybody is thinking about it. Maybe everybody is talking about it. But everybody is definitely not doing it!



**F** is for Fact. A proven scientific fact: you don't have to have sex by the time you get out of high school. People have sex in their 20s, 30s, 50s even 70s! So what's the rush!

**G** is for Genius. It doesn't take a genius to figure out there's more to a good relationship than just having sex. If that's all the person you're going out with is looking for, then it's probably time to start looking for someone else to go out with.

**H** is for Hormones. Sure, they may make you crazy. Sure they may make your body scream "SEX!" while your brain whispers "WAIT!" Do yourself a favour and trust your brain. It's usually right!

**I** is for It Won't Happen to Me. The great myth. Try telling that to the 3,000 American teenage girls who got pregnant today – and the 3,000 future fathers.

**J** is for Jam. We mean the sticky kind you don't want to get yourself into, such as pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease (STD), including HIV. If you have sex, these are the things you risk and have to think about. Abstinence is a good and safe choice!

**K** is for Know. That's as in just say "know." Before you make any decision about whether to have sex, know the facts about diseases, birth control and safer sex. When it comes to sex, what you don't know can hurt you.

**L** is for Love. Love is one of the most important things in the world. Did you know you can have a boyfriend or girlfriend, be totally in love and not go all the way?! "Making love" is a big deal, so be sure it's what both of you really want to do.

**M** is for Morals. You're the only one who can figure out what is right and wrong for you. Think about your own values, beliefs and morals when making decisions about sex.

**N** is for Normal. It's normal to feel confused about sex. One person tells you one thing; someone else tells you the exact opposite. With all the crazy, mixed-up messages out there, it's amazing how well so many teens handle sexuality!

**O** is for Options. There are ways to be close without having sex. Kissing, hugging, holding hands, touching and talking are all fun and exciting and won't result in pregnancy or sexually transmitted disease (STD).

**P** is for Pressure. That's pressure from your boyfriend or girlfriend to have sex, or from your friends, TV, music - you name it. Sometimes it may seem like it'll never let up. Stay strong! You're in control!

**Q** is for Questions. If you have questions about any of this sex stuff – ask! Your parents, uncle, sister, counsellor or partner can all help you find the answers. The only stupid questions are the ones that don't get asked.

**R** is for Relationship. Sharing, caring, talking, laughing, getting through the tough times – these are some of the ingredients of a good relationship. Figuring out where sex fits into all this is tricky. Make sure you do what's right for you.

**S** is for Sexual Intercourse. When the right time comes, sex can be a wonderful part of your life. But keep in mind that the only 100% effective method of birth control, and the best protection against STD, is not having intercourse.