

# Abstinence

## How abstinence works:

Abstinence means different things to different people. Abstinence is generally defined as no sexual intercourse or genital contact. You may define abstinence differently.

## How to use abstinence:

Decide how you want to define abstinence for yourself. Make this decision when you feel clearheaded, sober and good about yourself. If you have a partner, discuss this decision together. Decide in advance what sexual activities you will say "yes" to and those you will not. Avoid high-pressure sexual situations.

Avoid using drugs and/or alcohol. Learn more about birth control and safer sex practices so that if you change your mind, you can be prepared. Emergency contraception is available as a back-up.

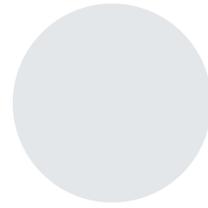
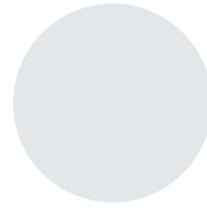
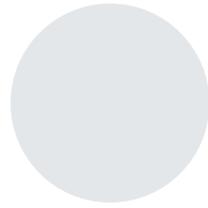
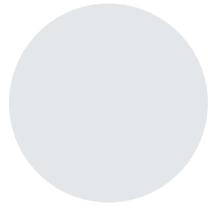
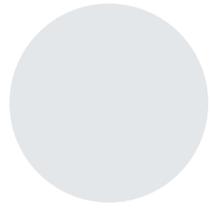
Abstinence is a choice people can use at any time and at any age.



**Center for Health Training**  
1809 Seventh Avenue, Suite 400  
Seattle, WA 98101-1341  
(206) 447.9538 *tel*  
(206) 447.9539 *fax*  
[www.centerforhealthtraining.org](http://www.centerforhealthtraining.org) *website*  
[seattle@jba-cht.com](mailto:seattle@jba-cht.com) *email*

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### **Effectiveness:**

Abstinence is very effective protection against pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). When both partners are completely committed and practice abstinence (no genital contact) 100% of the time, it is 100% effective. Typically, however, 25 out of 100 women get pregnant in a year while practicing abstinence, because they are not abstinent all of the time.

### **Some benefits of abstinence:**

Abstinence is free and available to all, at any time.

Abstinence can encourage people to build relationships in other ways.

### **Potential disadvantages of abstinence:**

A person may choose to use abstinence and then change his or her mind in the “heat of the moment.” It is important to have another method of birth control available for pregnancy and infection protection.

### **Ask about:**

If you have unprotected sex unexpectedly, ask a doctor, a health provider, or a pharmacist about Emergency Contraceptive Pills (ECP), or call 1-888-NOT-2-LATE for more information.

### **Potential risks:**

No health risks.

