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Things to think about before having sex

This section will tell you more about having sex and keeping healthy. It will also tell you about getting pregnant.

There is lots more you can find out about sex, contraception and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) from other websites so we will just focus on how having an ABI can affect you having sex.

Having sex after an ABI

When you had your ABI it is like your life stopped for a bit. All of the things you used to do as a teenager just completely stopped and you ended up very sick in hospital.

Part of this was your sexual development. Sexual development doesn't just mean starting your periods, having wet dreams and growing pubic hair. Sexual development is also about your emotions, how you feel and who you are sexually attracted to.

When you first learn to adjust to your ABI, you have to re-learn all of the other things you used to know before. This can mean that you can spend a lot of the time stressing about other things and maybe you don't think about sex as much. Maybe you do think about sex. Maybe you even talk about it a lot when before you didn't talk about it all.

Feeling disinhibited can be a big problem after getting an ABI. This can mean that you can say or do things that upset other people or that they feel are inappropriate, like masturbating in public. This can get you into all sorts of trouble. If you want to know more, look at our section on disinhibition.

Sometimes people can try and take advantage of you because you have had a brain injury. If an adult or another young person tries to get you to do anything sexual you are not comfortable with tell someone you can trust or call Childline: on 0800 1111 and ask them for help.

Why does sex mean responsibility?

First thing's first, the legal age to have straight or gay sex is 16. There is a legal age limit of 16 because having sex has a level of emotional and sexual responsibility that you need to be old enough to take on. In short, the law is there to protect you and make sure you are able to





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deal with the responsibilities of having sex. It is easy to get annoyed about this and think adults are trying to treat you like a baby.

There are lots of things to consider before you have sex:

- Am I ready to have sex?
- Is the person who I want to have sex with also ready?
- What happens if we get pregnant? (this really is 'we' as it takes two people to make a baby)
- Do I know what 'safe sex' means?
- Do I know enough about sexual transmitted infections to protect myself?
- Do I have a sexual transmitted disease that I don't know about?
- Does the person have sexually transmitted infections they aren't telling me about?
- What are my religious and moral beliefs about sex?
- Do I want to get married before I have sex?

Believe it or not, there are hundreds of other questions you might have. Sometimes you won't think of the question until you are in the tricky situation of being about to have sex or in some cases actually having sex!

It is easy to think that EVERYONE else you know is having sex. This is really untrue! Lots of teenagers boast about having sex because they want to look cool. This can then put pressure on other teenagers to have sex because they want to look cool too.

No-one can say for certain how having sex will affect you. Here are some questions that having sex might make you think about afterwards:

- We had sex last night. Are we in a relationship now?
- Does this person love me?
- I didn't know the person I had sex with was in a relationship
- I thought they loved me, now I know they just wanted sex
- Am I slag?
- I thought I wanted sex but I hated it when it happened.

You might be too embarrassed to ask other people for the answers so are left trying to work these questions out for yourself. Think about who you can talk to about this, you may not be comfortable talking to your parents but a teacher, psychologist or helpline could help. For confidential help and advice, try the Sexwise Helpline on: 0800 282930

