

ARE YOU READY FOR SEX?

A HANDBOOK ABOUT SEXUALITY FOR YOUNG MEN



SIX FUNDAMENTALS

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PREFACE

The idea of this handbook comes from reports of young men in Iceland. It responds to their call for more information about sexual and reproductive health. Icelandic studies among young men have shown that they may find it challenging to approach another person sexually and to know what to say or do. Some have mentioned that they lack guidance, like one said: “There’s no handbook on how you’re supposed to behave.”

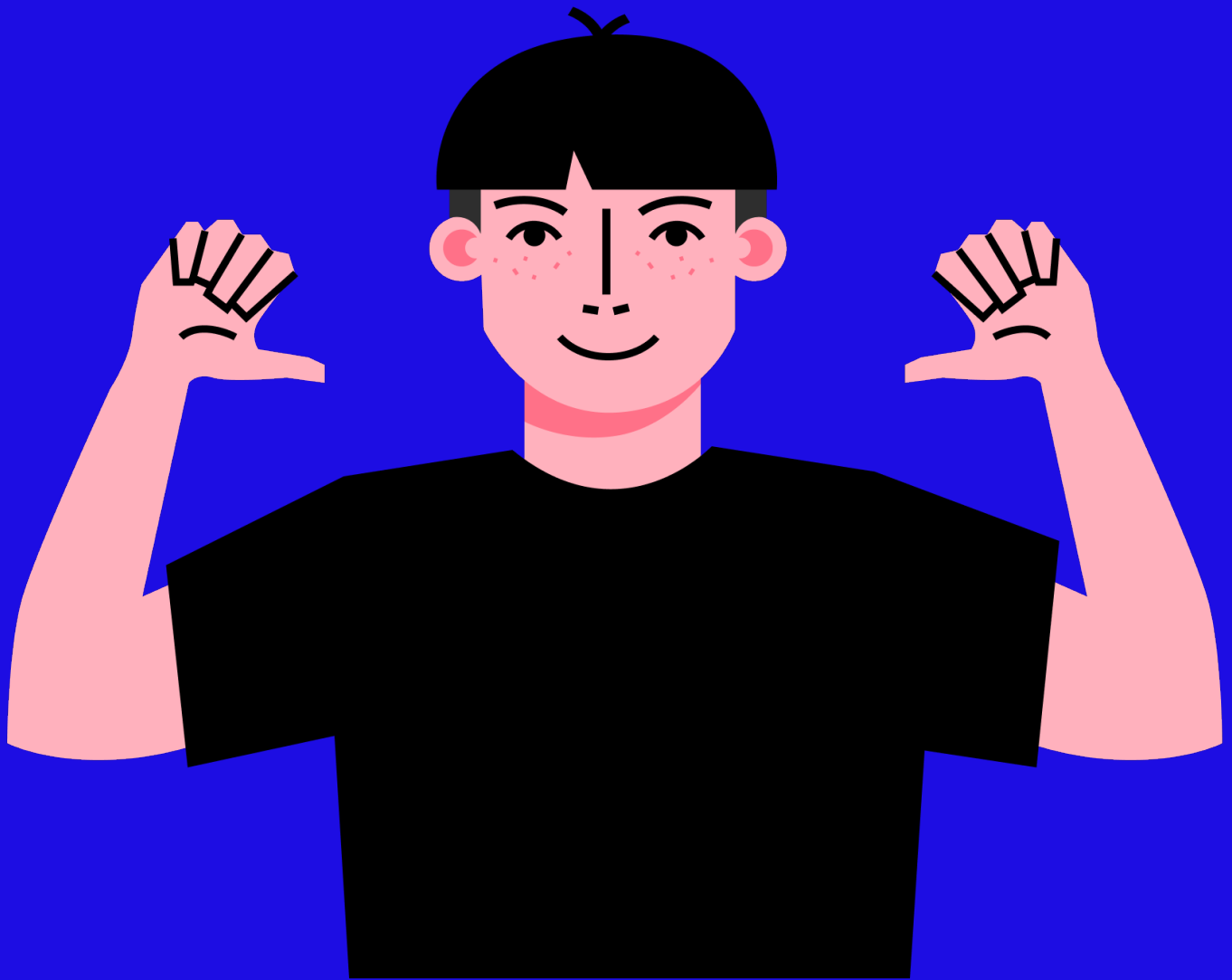
This handbook is mainly intended for young men aged 16–24. It covers six fundamentals of sexual and reproductive health: Self-Confidence, Talking about sex, Consent, Relationships, Condom use, and Having sex.

The handbook is largely based on three research projects conducted by the authors, where interviews were conducted with young men. One study examined their general attitudes toward sexual and reproductive health, while the other two focused specifically on condom use and related factors. The material, therefore draws directly from the voices of young men in Iceland, and each chapter includes direct quotations from their stories.

We, the authors, want young men to feel confident in their sexual interactions and to enjoy sex that is safe, consensual, and built on respect. We live in a diverse society where gender identity and sexual orientation take many forms, and sexual relationships are just as varied.

We hope you, young man, will enjoy reading this handbook and can take its key points to heart.

Warm regards to you,
The Authors



SELF-CONFIDENCE

1

Self-confidence involves building a certain level of self-assurance and in interactions with others. With increased positive sexual experiences, a person gains more self-confidence. Like most things in life, this is learned by experience. Young men in Iceland have discussed that their self-confidence varies. Some feel very confident, while others feel insecure when hitting on someone or when having sex. Many young men said that they wish there was a handbook on how to behave and have sex. Everyone, however, agrees that self-confidence increases with knowledge and experience. You can prepare yourself, for example, by reading this handbook to be ready for sex!

SELF-CONFIDENCE REGARDING SEXUAL ACTIVITY INCREASES WITH POSITIVE SEXUAL EXPERIENCE.

THE MORE OFTEN YOU HAVE SEX AND IT GOES WELL,
THE MORE CONFIDENT YOU BECOME
WITH YOURSELF.

YOUR CHECKLIST

Think about the following questions related to confidence:

- Do I search for knowledge?
- Am I ready to have sex?
- Do I want to have sex?
- Do I need to practice putting on a condom?
- Do I feel brave enough to talk about sex with a potential sexual partner?
- Do I know what I enjoy in sexual activity?
- Do I see new experiences as opportunities to learn new things?
- Do I realize what pleasurable sexuality means to me?

Insecurity

Everyone can feel insecure at times, both in communicating with sexual partners and in sexual situations. Certain things can lower your self-confidence, such as feeling awkward or unsure in interactions with a sexual partner. This is especially true at the beginning of sexual relationships, during the first sexual experiences, or when something doesn't go quite as planned. Insecurity can be reduced with increased knowledge, practicing communication skills, and gaining positive experience.

What Can You Do to Become Self-Confident Before Your First Sexual Experience or With a New Partner?

Possible solutions:

- Be prepared to receive a „no“ and think ahead about how you will respond calmly and respectfully.
- Do remember that open conversation and getting consent help prevent negative experiences.
- Avoid “getting burned” by communicating with your sexual partner. We do not read minds, so it is always best to discuss things openly.

**DO NOT HAVE SEX UNTIL YOU ARE
READY,
THEN YOU ARE MORE LIKELY TO FEEL
CONFIDENT IN WHAT YOU ARE DOING.**

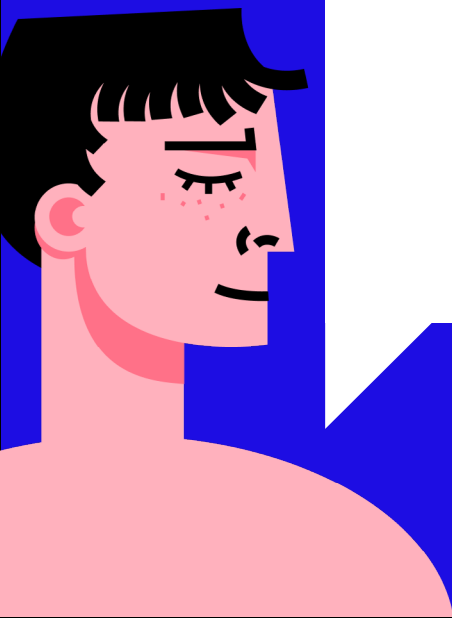
WHAT DO YOUNG MEN IN ICELAND SAY ABOUT WHAT NEGATIVELY AFFECTS SELF-CONFIDENCE?

“Someone says no to you.”

“Negative experiences can have a negative impact on self-confidence.”

“At first, you don’t necessarily know what the sexual partner wants, which can cause insecurity.”

“It can be confusing how you should behave in sexual relations, because everyone is different, what one likes, another may not.”



A Few Tips on Self-Confidence in Sexual Situations

- Engage in sexual activity only when you are ready, whether it is your first time or with a new sexual partner.
- When you can have good relations and are able to talk about sex, desires, boundaries, and expectations, you are more prepared for sexual activity.
- Stand by yourself — do not let friends or anyone else pressure you to have sex.
- It is okay to get a “no” — everyone does experience it at some point.
- You need to experiment and learn from experience.
- Always remember to show respect for your sexual partner.



TALKING ABOUT SEX

2

Communication about sex is a fundamental aspect of pleasurable sexual experiences. Some may think it is very difficult and awkward to talk about sex and condom use with a sexual partner. The good news is that most people find it easier to talk about sex the more often they do it. Enjoy practicing talking together, thereby increasing trust, safety, and well-being.

Let's Talk About Sex

Talk together about what you want and do not want. Perhaps there is something you particularly enjoy in sexual activity that your partner has no idea about unless you talk together.

Avoid talking around the subject or assuming you know what the other person is thinking. Just talk to each other!

If the conversation becomes awkward (which EVERYONE experiences), try to make the best out of it by acknowledging that it is not always easy to talk about sex.

YOUR CHECKLIST

Think about the following questions related to discussing sex:

- Do I know how to start a conversation about sex?
- Shall I take the initiative to talk about condom use?
- Can I talk with a sexual partner about sex?
- Can I talk with my partner about sexually transmitted infections (STIs)?
- Can I talk about my own sexual desires with my partner?

"Chatting" on Social Media

Most of us use social media to talk with others, and it can be an easy way to connect with someone you're interested in. By "adding" someone and starting a chat, it can even lead to talk about sex. Whether the chat happens in person or online, respect is important.

**IT BECOMES EASIER TO TALK
ABOUT SEX THE MORE YOU DO IT.**

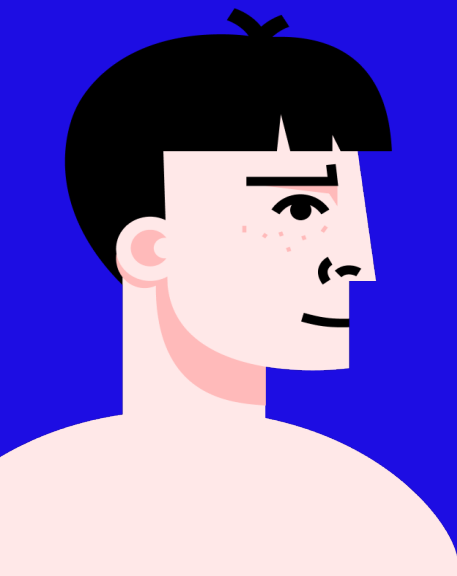
WHAT DO YOUNG MEN IN ICELAND SAY ABOUT DISCUSSING SEX?

“At first, it was a bit difficult, but not anymore.”

“I often just ask, do you want to go all the way, or take it further, or something like that.”

“As long as everyone is on the same page and people talk to each other and know what’s going on, there is just a good communication flow... then sex should be perfectly healthy.”

“In the end, I think sex will always improve.”



How Do We Talk About Condoms?

Talking about condom use is part of having sex, especially with a new partner. The condom is the only protection against both sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and pregnancy. Simple and easy, right?

We all know this, yet it can feel harder than climbing Mount Everest to talk about using a condom.

Talking about condom use is not necessarily something we are taught, so it is understandable to have thoughts like:

- Will this just be awkward?
- Will I kill the mood?
- Do I need to mention the condom at all?
- Will I escape getting chlamydia?

Do not worry, talking about condom use does not have to ruin the moment. In fact, it can make things better because both partners are on the same page regarding safety and well-being. For many, talking about condoms is related to discussing sexual consent.

What Should I Say About Condoms?

You might say, for example:

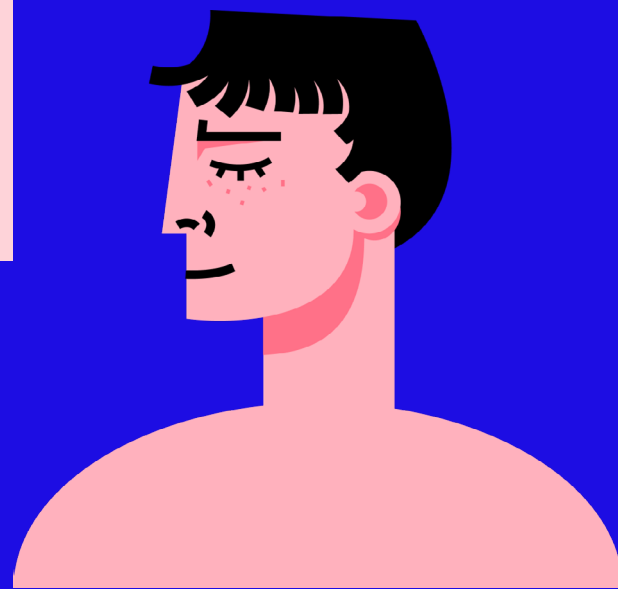
- “Shouldn’t we use a condom?”
- “Do you have a condom?”
- “I have a condom, should I get it?”
- “Do you want to put the condom on?”

WHAT DO YOUNG MEN IN ICELAND SAY ABOUT DISCUSSING CONDOM USE?

"It's just as straight forward to talk about condom use as asking if she wants to have sex with him."

"You may be a little afraid of killing the mood by talking about condoms, but it's an absolute must to talk about it."

"In these situations, you can always ask: Shall I get the condom?"



Talking About STIs

You may find it absurd or even stupid to discuss STIs or STI test. But if you think about it, is it really that hard?

How can I start to talk about STIs? You might say, for example:

I just want to be safe...

- "Have you had a recent STI test?"
- "Do you know if you've recently contracted an STI?"

What Are the Benefits of Talking About Sex?

The main benefits are:

- Sex becomes better for both partners.
- Clearer communication about what you want and enjoy during sex.
- Clearer communication about what you do not want or enjoy during sex.

**TALKING TOGETHER ABOUT SEX
MAKES IT BETTER FOR BOTH PARTNERS.**

WHAT DO YOUNG MEN IN ICELAND SAY ABOUT DISCUSSING STI?

“If you have an STI, you don’t want to infect someone who likely doesn’t want to be infected, and if you don’t check if you are infected, you’re just being irresponsible.”

“Better to kill the mood for a moment instead of catching something.”

“You can ask if she’s recently been tested. It’s a completely normal question.”



Few Tips on Talking About Sex

- Try out talking to your sexual partner.
- It becomes easier with experience.
- Talk together about protection against STIs and pregnancy.
- Be confident and ask without hesitation: “Shall we use a condom?”
- Even if it’s awkward, it does not have to ruin the mood.
- Allow yourself to have fun.



CONSENT

3

Sexual consent means that a person has agreed to participate in some kind of sexual activity. That could mean saying yes to kissing, touching certain areas of the body, or perhaps engaging in sexual intercourse. It is not enough to get consent for vaginal intercourse and assume that it applies to oral and anal sex. Some people have no interest in oral or anal sex. Preferences vary greatly between individuals. Everyone has the right to engage in sexual activity that they feel comfortable with.

Why Do I Need Consent From Others for Sex?

Everyone has the right to decide what kind of sexual activity they are willing to participate in. Forcing someone into sexual activity is against the law.

How Do You Get Consent?

It is actually simple.

You just ask if the other person consents to the sexual activity you want to engaging in.

Examples:

- "May I hold you in my arms?"
- "Do you want me to touch you here?"
- "Do you want to have sex?"

Major Benefits of Getting Consent

- Both partners can enjoy sex more fully.
- Sex is practiced more safely.
- Mutual respect is present.
- Greater consideration for each other.

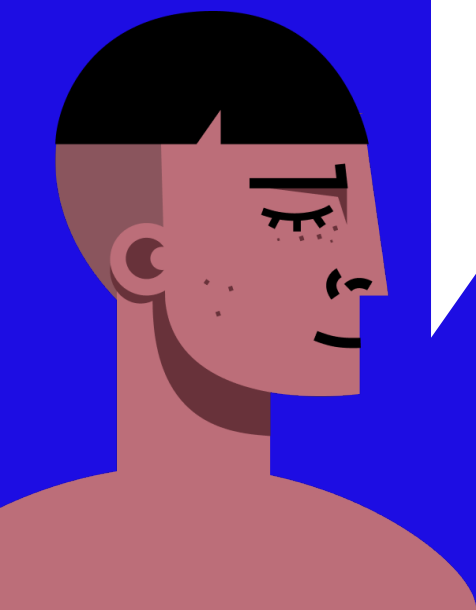
WHAT DO YOUNG MEN IN ICELAND SAY ABOUT SEXUAL CONSENT?

“Number 1, 2, and 3 in healthy sex, is always when both partners agree and are content with it.”

“I would respect it if she didn’t want to have sex right away; I wouldn’t push or pressure her.”

“Contraception is by far the biggest factor in responsible sex, aside from both partners agreeing to have sex.”

“You want to get consent, to make sure everything is just fine.”



How Do I Know if My Partner Has Given Sexual Consent?

Explicit Consent

If you go home with someone after a night out, does that mean consent for sex?

No. Maybe the person just wanted to have a cozy time with you and listen to music. You need to be completely sure whether the person wants to have sex or not. **It's best to ask directly.**

Your Interpretation

You are on the couch together, and you feel your partner's body language indicates wanting to go further.

Is it enough just to feel something?

Is it enough to interpret body language?

You need to be absolutely sure.

It's best to ask what your partner wants.

Nagging

You're used to nag and nag until you get consent for sex.

But is that real consent?

That is considered a **forced consent.**

YOUR CHECKLIST

Think about the following questions related to consent:

- Do I realize the importance of consent?
- Do I always ask for consent?
- Do I nag until I get consent?
- Do I consider what others want or do not want sexually?
- Do I realize that everyone has the right to decide what kind of sexual activity they want to engage in?

WHEN BOTH PARTNERS GIVE THEIR CONSENT.

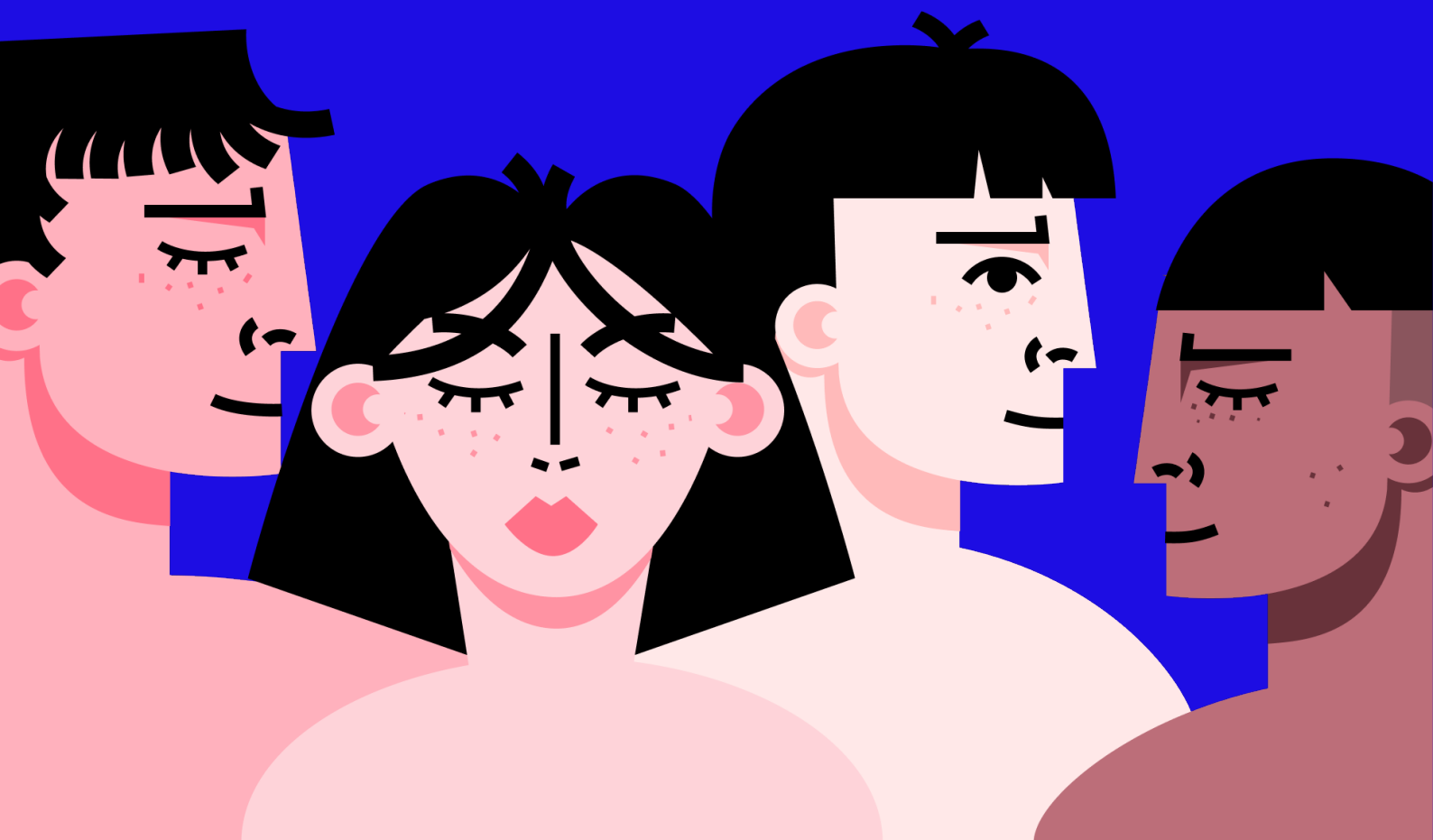
Sending Sexual Photos

Some people find it exciting to send or receive sexual photos. It is important to remember that if you intend to send sexual photos, you must obtain the recipient's consent. It is also wise to consider how the person receiving the photos might feel, it could create discomfort. Think carefully before sending a photo and consider whether you are showing yourself enough respect. Do remember that the photo could be widely distributed.

Receiving sexual photos or messages that you did not ask for is not acceptable. Sending sexual photos without the recipient's permission is illegal in many countries.

A Few Tips on Consent in Relation to Sexual Activity

- Just ask—don't hesitate.
- Ask clearly—don't nag.
- Ask directly—don't assume consent.
- If someone does not want to have sex, stop pressuring.
- If someone does not want to have sex, respect their decision.
- Do remember, it is always necessary to obtain consent.
- A drunk person can't give consent.
- It is not a failure if you or both of you do not go all the way.
- You can always stop.
- Once you have practiced asking for consent, it is not an issue anymore — Congratulations, you've overcome this hurdle!



RELATIONSHIPS

4

Relationships are essential in our lives. We all need someone to talk to, hang out with, hold, and love in one way or another. Relationships can take many forms, and each one is unique. It is important to build healthy relationships where both partners feel good, which makes sex much better. In a relationship, it is important that both partners meet as equals.

Trust

To have a good relationship and good sex, trust must be built between both partners. Both partners need to be able to trust each other—it is important to be open and able to talk about everything and nothing.

How Do We Build Trust?

- Both partners keep their word.
- Both partners support each other.
- Both partners are faithful to each other.
- Open and good communication.
- Listening, showing care, and respect.
- Honesty and fairness.
- Building trust takes time.

YOUR CHECKLIST

Think about the following questions related to healthy relationships:

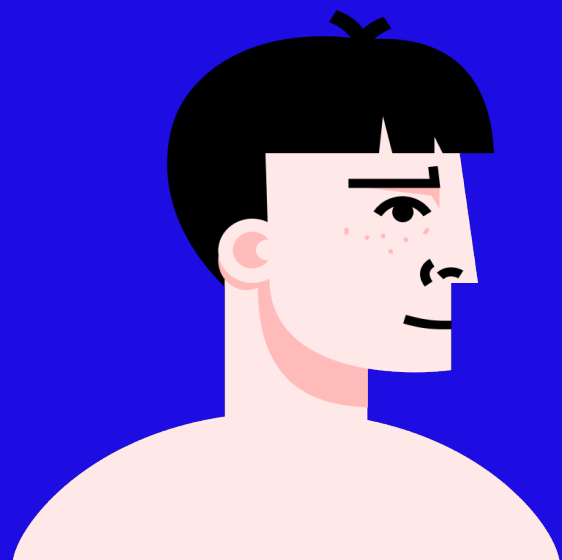
- Do I treat my sexual partner well?
- Do I have good communication with my sexual partner?
- Do I make an effort to build trust with my sexual partner?
- Can I talk to my sexual partner about everything and nothing?
- Do I listen well to my sexual partner?
- Do I set boundaries and stand by them?
- Do I respect my sexual partner's boundaries?
- Do I ensure that equality is in place?

WHAT DO YOUNG MEN IN ICELAND SAY ABOUT TRUST?

“Sexual partners become closer when there is trust.”

“It is important to build trust.”

“Both partners need to trust each other.”



IN RELATIONSHIPS THERE MUST BE **RESPECT.**

Respect

When young men in Iceland reflect on their experiences, they often think about how important it is to show respect in relationships and in one-night stands. When respect is present, both partners are more likely to feel good, and sex becomes more pleasurable and intimate.

What Does Respect Mean in Relationships?

- Recognizing that everyone is unique.
- Everyone is valuable.
- Respecting others' opinions and boundaries.
- Good communication—speaking kindly to and about others.
- Courtesy.
- Full consent.
- Enhances well-being.
- Being on the same page.

Did you know that respect makes sex better?

Self-Respect Matters

Self-respect includes:

- Stand by yourself.
- Respecting your own boundaries, opinions, wishes, and desires.
- Stopping anyone who tries to hurt you.

THOSE WHO RESPECT THEMSELVES SHOW RESPECT TO OTHERS.

WHAT DO YOUNG MEN IN ICELAND SAY ABOUT RESPECT?

"It is crucial to show respect to your partner."

"Mutual respect is fundamental, and mutual consideration must be present for both partners in a relationship."

"Respect means that both partners can enjoy themselves as they wish and have equal opportunities."

"Respect is very important overall; you respect the boundaries and feelings of individuals."

"Both partners should respect each other and listen to one another. If she doesn't want to have sex, it shouldn't happen."



WITHOUT RESPECT SEX IS NOT AS GOOD.

Responsibility or Risk

Part of being in a relationship is showing sexual responsibility. This is a major factor in sexual and reproductive health, which means better and safer sex. Doesn't everybody want good sex?

Sexual responsibility is another fundamental principle according to young men in Iceland.

What Does Sexual Responsibility Involve?

- Having sex when you are ready.
- Both sexual partners give consent.
- Taking responsibility for your own actions during sex.
- Act responsibly toward others.
- Using appropriate protection against sexually transmitted infection (STIs) and pregnancy.
- Being aware of what you are doing.
- Regularly getting tested for STIs.
- Obtaining professional information.
- Being able to discuss desires, expectations, and all matters related to sex.
- Respecting your own and others' boundaries.
- Ensuring that both sexual partners feel good during sex.

WHAT DO YOUNG MEN IN ICELAND SAY ABOUT SEXUAL RESPONSIBILITY?

“Sexual responsibility is incredibly important, so things don’t get out of control.”

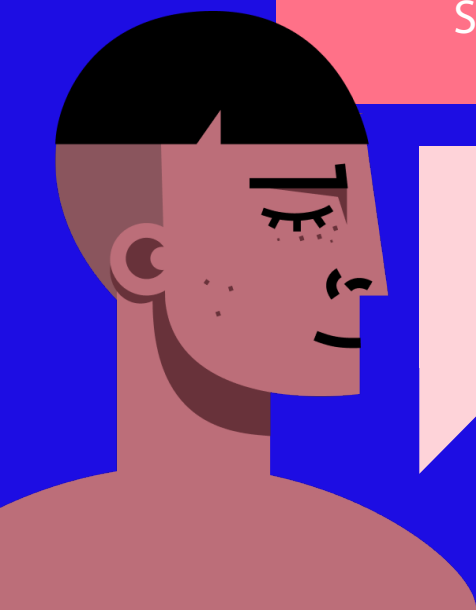
“Consent from both partners.”

“You are responsible for your actions.”

“Part of responsibility is not having sex if one person is drunk and the other is not.”

“In responsible sex, you need to know the risks if you don’t use a condom, and regarding STIs, you need to know what can happen.”

“People should know what they are doing and what they want to do sexually.”



Irresponsibility

Irresponsibility can increase the likelihood of sexual risk-taking, which can have negative consequences. Irresponsibility can threaten your health and safety and cause discomfort or sexual problems.

YOUR CHECKLIST

Think about the following questions related to risks:

- Do I take risks?
- Do I use condoms or other appropriate contraception?
- Do I assume that the girl is on the pill?
- Do I think things through?
- Do I get consent or just assume that I have it?
- Do I get tested?
- Do I take the risk of infecting others?
- Do I respect others' boundaries?
- Do I have good sexual knowledge?
- Do I talk enough with my partner about expectations, desires, and everything related to sex?

**EVERYONE MUST TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR
WHETHER SEX HAPPENS
OR NOT.
THE DECISION CAN HAVE CONSEQUENCES.**

WHAT DO YOUNG MEN IN ICELAND SAY ABOUT IRRESPONSIBLE SEX?

“Some people don’t think enough about sexual and reproductive health, at least not as much as they should.”

“If you don’t have STIs checks you are being irresponsible.”

“I’ve heard from older friends that you can just take off the condom during sex, and nothing will happen, but of course that’s not okay.”

“Most people think ‘it won’t happen to me’ and take risks by not using a condom but regret it the next day.”



Setting Boundaries

Setting boundaries means drawing a clear line between what is okay and what is not. By setting boundaries, you protect your sexual and reproductive health and well-being.

Why are Boundaries so Important?

In every relationship, being able to set boundaries is essential. They are the foundation of a pleasurable and healthy sexual life. Boundaries must be discussed, personal boundaries expressed and respected.

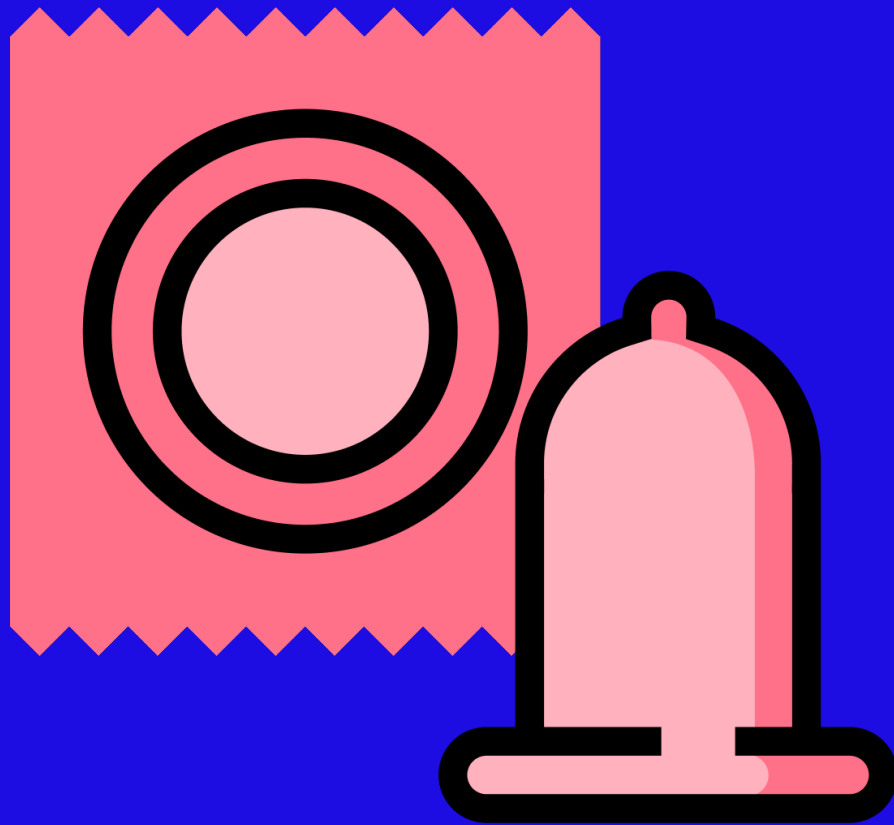
Everyone has the right to have their boundaries respected, whether physical, emotional, or digital. It is important to keep the discussion open because boundaries can change.

Trust and respect are essential when it comes to boundaries. Both partners must be aware of their own boundaries, respect them, and show respect for themselves and others.

NO MEANS NO.

A Few Tips About Setting Boundaries

- Obtain reliable knowledge from professionals.
- Be daring and unafraid to talk about sex, expectations, and desires with your partner.
- Do remember that both partners should enjoy having sex.
- Respect your own and others' opinions and boundaries.
- Avoid having sex under the influence of alcohol or other drugs.



CONDOM USE

5

The condom is the best protection for people who are starting to have sex and when having sex with a new partner. Condoms are made of rubber (latex) or plastic (polyurethane) and come in many sizes and types so everyone can find the one they like best. Condoms are very easy to use, and when used correctly, they prevent sexually transmitted infections (STIs) by blocking contact between mucous membranes and prevent pregnancy by hindering sperm from entering the vagina.

THE CONDOM IS THE ONLY CONTRACEPTION THAT ALSO PROTECTS AGAINST STIs.

Use a Condom If:

- You don't want to become a father.
- She doesn't want to become a mother.
- You don't want to get an STI like chlamydia or gonorrhea or infect others.
- You are unsure whether you might be infected.

YOUNG MEN IN ICELAND REPORT THAT
**SEXUAL SENSATION CHANGES
VERY LITTLE**
WHEN USING A CONDOM DURING
SEXUAL INTERCOURSE.

WHAT DO YOUNG MEN IN ICELAND SAY ABOUT CONDOM USE?

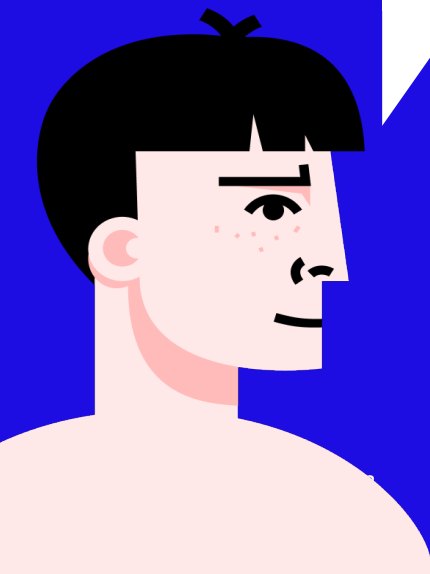
"It's very simple when you have a condom you like."

"I realized it can be really nice to use a condom; there is very little difference."

"I have found condoms very important, partly because they serve a hygiene purpose for gay men."

"It's like wearing a seatbelt in a car; it takes little to no time to put it on."

"Part of the routine, you take your pants off and you also put on the condom."



Buying Condoms

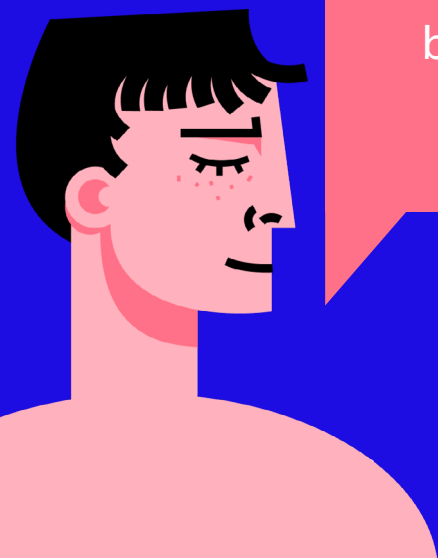
You can buy condoms at grocery stores, gas stations, pharmacies, online stores, and vending machines in many high schools. Condoms are also available at health care centers and STI clinics. Buying condoms for the first time may feel awkward, but don't let that stop you. Always carry a condom—just in case.

IT IS MUCH **EASIER TO BUY A CONDOM**
THAN TO EXPECT A BABY.

WHAT DO YOUNG MEN IN ICELAND SAY ABOUT BUYING A CONDOM?

"The more often I buy condoms,
the easier it gets."

"No one feels ashamed about having sex,
but apparently it's a bit awkward to buy
the equipment to have sex."



Practice Using Condoms

Practice using condoms before having sex with someone. Try different types to find your favorite condom, the one you feel comfortable with.

Once you have found your condom, using it with a partner is easy. You will notice no difference, perhaps even more pleasure, satisfaction, and safer sex.

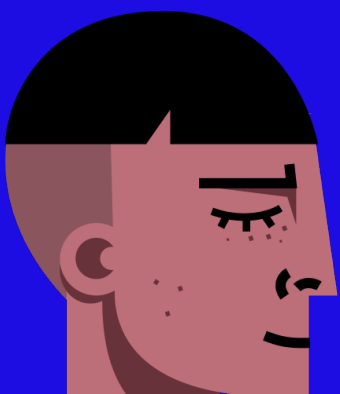
Don't decide in advance that a condom is bad just because someone else says so. They probably haven't yet found their favorite one. You are likely to enjoy better sex right from the start because you found the right condom for you.

FIND YOUR CONDOM!

WHAT DO YOUNG MEN IN ICELAND SAY ABOUT PRACTICING CONDOM USE?

“Don't you learn best by practicing putting on a condom?”

“It works really well to have practiced putting on a condom and because of that I feel well prepared.”



Storing Condoms

It is convenient to store condoms in a bedside drawer, in a box in your bedroom, or in the bathroom. Make sure they are not exposed to sunlight. You can also keep a condom in the pocket of your jacket or a closed pocket in your bag, as storing it in a wallet or phone case may damage it.

The Break —Putting on a Condom

During sex with a partner, you may need a short break to get the condom and open the package. If you have practiced beforehand and you have the condom nearby, you don't need to worry. A short break can even be exciting. Then the condom is rolled on the fully erect penis. If the break is long or the penis becomes flaccid, return to foreplay. A fun part of foreplay may also involve the partner helping with putting the condom on.

**NEVER THINK OF REMOVING
THE CONDOM
DURING INTERCOURSE
WITHOUT YOUR SEXUAL PARTNER'S
CONSENT.**

WHAT DO YOUNG MEN IN ICELAND SAY ABOUT PUTTING ON THE CONDOM?

"If you have a condom in the bedside drawer, there's no problem."

"Get a condom and place it on the table, then it's easy to reach and use it. It's not complicated at all."

"A short nice break is just fine, even fun."

"It may take a little time and ruin the mood, but you can always fix it; nothing embarrassing about it."



How to Use a Condom



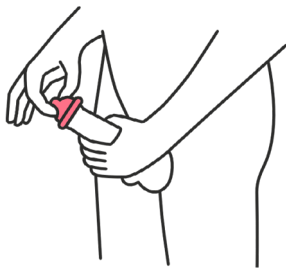
1

Be careful when opening the package. Sharp fingernails, teeth, and jewelry can tear the condom.



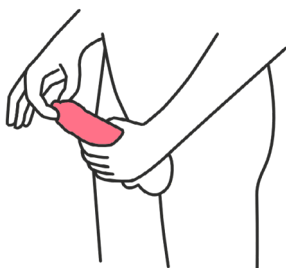
2

The penis must be fully erect when rolling on the condom.



3

Check that the tip of the condom is facing upwards.



4

Pinch the tip of the condom with two fingers to leave space for semen. Hold the tip of the condom while rolling the condom down the shaft.



5

Use water-based lubricants if desired or necessary.



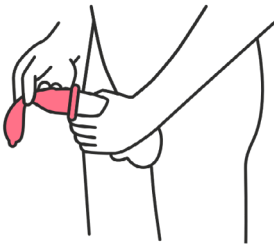
6

Ensure the condom stays in place during intercourse.



7

Withdraw the penis carefully after ejaculation, holding the base of the condom to prevent it from slipping off.



8

Remove the condom from the penis.



9

Tie a knot on the condom before disposal in a waste basket (not in the toilet).



10

Continue enjoying the moment with your partner.

A Few Tips on Condom Use

- Practice putting on the condom.
- Check the expiration date on the condom package.
- Keep the condom nearby when you need it.
- If using lubricants, use water-based lubricants with latex condoms.
- Avoid using oil-based products (like Vaseline) or oils on latex condoms.
- Use each condom only once.
- Use a new condom if something goes wrong during use.
- Tie a knot on the condom before disposal in a waste basket.
- If the condom breaks or slips off and the partner is not using another contraception, consider emergency contraception.

YOUR CHECKLIST

Think about the following questions related to condom use:

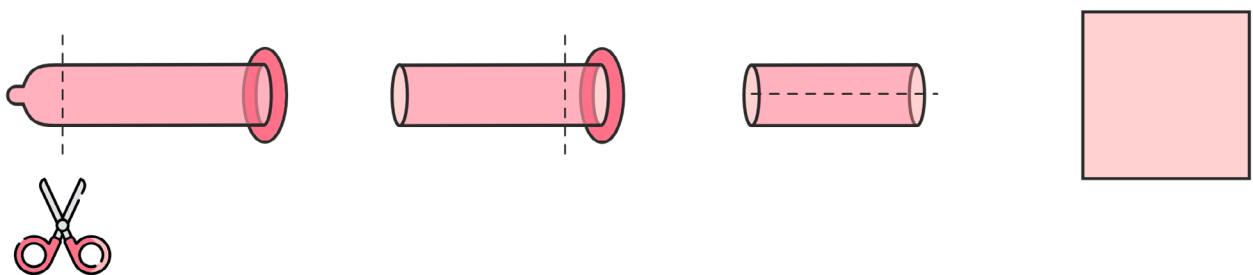
- Have I practiced putting on a condom?
- Have I found a suitable condom?
- Do I find it easy to use a condom?
- Do condoms help me make future goals?
- Do I take a risk if I don't use a condom?
- Do I know if my friends use condoms?
- Do I always use a condom in a new relationship?

Dental Dams

A dental dam protects against STIs and is necessary for oral sex. It is a rectangular sheet made of latex or plastic (polyurethane) like the condom. The sheet is placed over the vulva or anus before oral sex. Be careful not to stretch it too much to avoid tearing or displacement. Dental dams can be purchased online or in sex toy stores.



You can also make your own dental dam by cutting a condom and using it the same way.



A Few Tips on Using Dental Dams

- Practice using a dental dam.
- Check the expiration date on the package.
- Keep the dental dam nearby when needed.
- Use water-based lubricants with latex dental dams.
- Avoid using oil-based creams (like Vaseline) or oils on latex dental dams.
- Use each dental dam only once.
- Use a new dental dam if something goes wrong.
- Dispose of the dental dam in a waste basket after use.

Gambling with STI?

Enjoy using a condom during sex, take no chances and everyone wins.

- No one wants an STI. Get tested regularly.
- Everyone has a duty to avoid infecting others. If you have sex without a condom or if the condom slips off or breaks, get tested.
- Testing is simple; often urine or swab tests are enough. Sometimes blood tests or more examinations are needed. STIs can be asymptomatic.
- Tell your partner if the condom slips off or breaks.

IT IS EASY TO GET TESTED FOR STIs.

For young men living in Iceland

Read more...

PRIMARY HEALTH CARE



STI CLINIC



For those who live in other countries get yourself familiar with the local services.

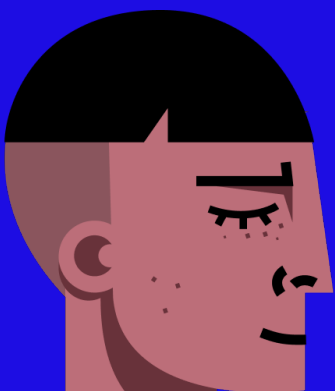
WHAT DO YOUNG MEN IN ICELAND SAY ABOUT STIs?

“Better safe than sorry by using a condom, instead of having herpes for life.”

“Thinking it won’t happen to you is nonsense; I know that for sure.”

“Since gay men are at higher risk for HIV, condoms are much more natural.”

“It’s a big shock to get an STI, and it’s very disappointing if you didn’t use a condom at that time.”





HAVING SEX

6

Most people are interested in having sex and are generally curious about it. What always needs to be kept in mind not just the first time you have sex is to be well-prepared. You wouldn't go on a mountain hike without good preparation; the same applies to your sexual journey with a partner. You pack your backpack with lots of knowledge and positive attitudes, you have asked yourself questions about what you want and don't want sexually, practiced talking positively about sex and condoms/dental dams, practiced putting on a condom, and take essential items like condoms with you.

When Are You Ready to Have Sex with a Partner?

It's perfectly okay not to be ready to have sex with a partner, whether it's the first time or later. If you don't feel ready for the first time, do not let others pressure you.

You decide entirely when you are ready. It is not a good reason to have sex just because everyone around you says they have. Keep in mind, they may not have been ready either and may have had awkward experiences, but won't admit it, creating a "hero story."

YOUR CHECKLIST

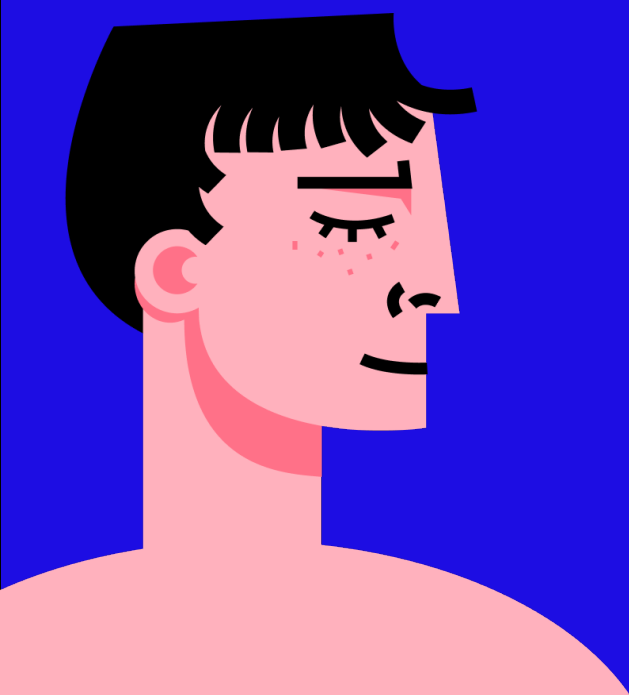
Think about the following questions related to having sex:

- Do I have good knowledge about various aspects of sex?
- What do I want sexually?
- What do I not want sexually?
- What positive role models do I have regarding how to have sex?
- Can I talk about sex and condoms/dental dams with my partner?
- Have I mastered how to use a condom?

WHAT DO YOUNG MEN IN ICELAND SAY ABOUT THE FIRST TIMES?

“You need to bump into things
and learn along the way.”

“The first time, it’s a bit shaky; you’re a bit
insecure, you don’t have enough confidence,
but somehow it works out.
Confidence builds up.”



SEX IS FOR BOTH PARTNERS, WHERE BOTH GIVE AND RECEIVE.

What Are You Supposed to Do During Sex?

There are many things you can do in your sexual life. It is important that your approach with your partner is based on a conversation about what makes sex enjoyable for both of you. You also need to understand your own desires. Some want to go all the way (have intercourse), while others prefer to enjoy the journey. There is no obligation to have sexual intercourse.

YOUR CHECKLIST

Think about the following questions related to having sex with a partner:

- Do I see my sexual partner as an equal?
- Do I respect my sexual partner?
- Do I consider my sexual partner's needs?
- Do I know what my sexual partner wants in sex?
- Do I know how to respect my sexual partner's boundaries?
- Do I know when to stop?
- Do I know what to do if something awkward happens?

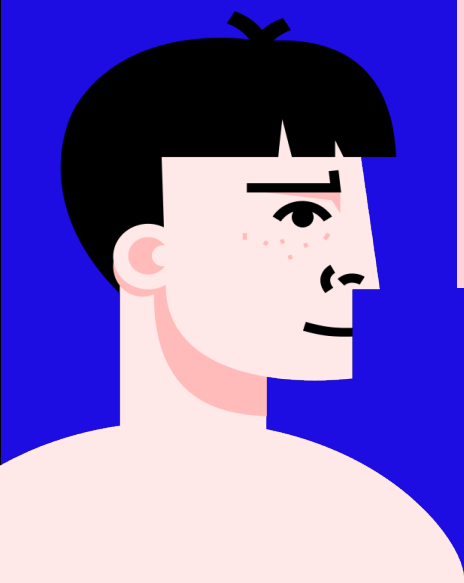
THERE ARE LOTS OF STRANGE THINGS IN SEX (E.G. STRANGE SOUNDS), AND MAYBE SOMETHING WILL GO WRONG, BUT IT DOES NOT HAVE TO BE AWKWARD IF YOU AND YOUR PARTNER KNOW EACH OTHER WELL.

WHAT DO YOUNG MEN IN ICELAND SAY ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS AND SEX?

“Of course, it also depends on the girls; they are very different, and what is appropriate for one may be inappropriate for another.”

“If you haven’t been hitting on someone, you’re insecure and afraid of rejection.”

“If you’re having sex with someone you love, there doesn’t always have to be orgasm; intimacy and what it involves is enough.”



Pornography and Sex

Some people watch pornography online to learn about sex. However, much of pornography, especially hardcore porn, does not reflect real-life sex. It can be difficult to apply a porn scene to your own sexual experiences. Your partner might resist or feel uncomfortable with what you imagined from porn and wanted to perform.

What is Porn?

People may define pornography differently. Most agree it does arouse sexual desires. Porn can be classified as mild or hardcore. Mild porn emphasizes intimacy and imagination. Hardcore porn explicitly shows genitalia and sexual intercourse.

How Is Hardcore Porn Different from Real-Life Sex?

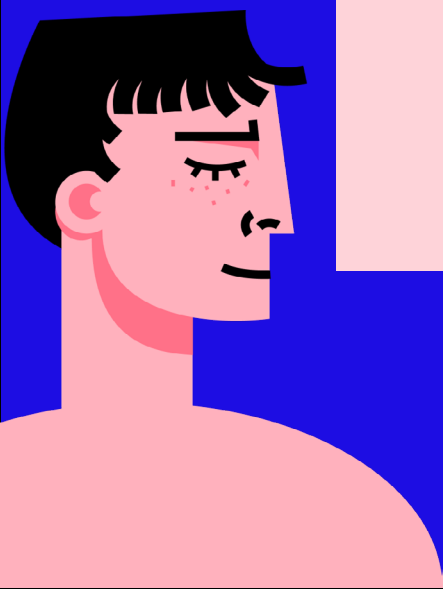
Hardcore porn contains acted sexual scenes mostly focused on the needs of men, with little or no attention paid to the needs of women, and they are even humiliated. In real-life sex, all kinds of sounds happen naturally when bodies touch; this doesn't occur in hardcore porn. To know what your partner wants, you need to communicate, hardcore porn lacks communication. Condom use needs to be addressed in real-life sex, but rarely in hardcore porn. Real-life sex involves more than intercourse, unlike hardcore porn.

WHAT DO YOUNG MEN IN ICELAND SAY ABOUT PORN?

“I think I definitely got ideas from porn, but lately I watch less to have realistic standards and be able to experience what is happening. I do not want to repeatedly experience that I am not performing as I would like to.”

“I notice it’s easier, if you have been watching porn, to lose erection.”

“I may always have been reasonably aware of how unrealistic porn is, but you still know of people who really think real-life sex is what actually appears on porn sites.”



Can Watching a Lot of Hardcore Porn Cause Problems?

- Gives a distorted view of real-life sex.
- Interest in real-life sex may decrease.
- Expectations and ideas about sex can become unrealistic.
- Fear of poor performance may develop.

Watching porn can shape unrealistic expectations about sex. Problems can arise if one partner watches porn and the other doesn't or watches very little. Expectations of sex can then be very different. High porn consumption may lead to difficulty enjoying intimacy and having sex with a partner, as well as anxiety about sexual performance.

YOUR CHECKLIST

Think about the following questions related to porn:

- What do I consider to be porn?
- Am I aware of the difference between real-life sex and hardcore porn?
- Do I spend too much time watching hardcore porn?
- Do I realize if I am trying to imitate porn in my relationships?
- Do I struggle with real-life sexual experiences?
- Do I really think men acting in hardcore porn perform like men in real-life sex?
- Do I consider my partner's needs?
- Am I afraid of performing poorly in real-life sex?

PORN AND REAL-LIFE SEX ARE VERY DIFFERENT, LIKE APPLES AND ORANGES.

Where Can You Find Good Information About Real-Life Sex?

BETTER HEALTH



PLANNED PARENTHOOD



RFSU – SWEDISH SEXUAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION



A Few Tips on Porn

- If you watch porn, think about it critically.
- Be aware that porn is not real-life sex.
- Allow yourself to enjoy sexual intimacy with your sexual partner.
- Be careful not to avoid real-life sex.
- Try to be yourself when you have real-life sex.

**MANY PEOPLE WATCH PORN AND THINK IT IS
REAL-LIFE SEX.**

Sex and Condoms

Some young men worry that the pause needed to put on a condom reduces sexual excitement and that the penis becomes soft. They have also expressed their worries about premature ejaculation. Under those circumstances sexual excitement can become so high that it can make them worry if using the condom will be successful or not.

There is a lot at stake.

This may lead to thinking that it is perhaps best not to use the condom, as it only means trouble. Instead, practice using condoms safely until you feel comfortable with them.

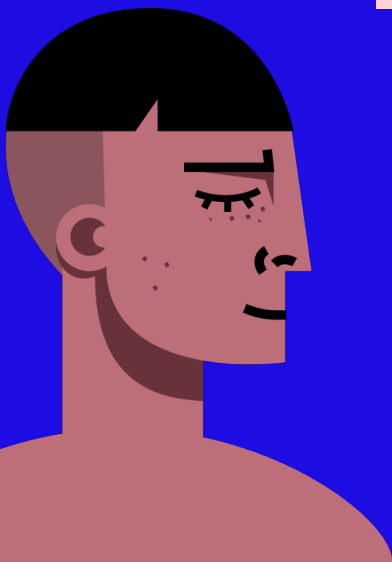
ONCE YOU
MASTER CONDOM USE,
IT'S EASY.

WHAT DO YOUNG MEN IN ICELAND SAY ABOUT SEX AND CONDOM USE?

"It is perhaps during the wait while searching for the condom, the penis might go soft."

"Personally, I don't mind the moment while searching for the condom."

"It doesn't take long to find the condom."



Are You Ready to Have a Child?

When having sex, people want to enjoy it without worry. One way to do this is to know how to prevent pregnancy. No one wants to worry that their partner becomes pregnant. Young people usually want to wait until they are ready to have children.

To prevent pregnancy, either you need to use the condom or your partner must use a reliable contraceptive method. Both of you can also use contraception. It's not enough to assume your partner is on the pill. She may not be using it and become pregnant. If you are unsure, ask if the person is using the pill or another contraception.

**EXPECTING A CHILD
WHEN NOT READY
IS A DEFINITE U-TURN.**

WHAT DO YOUNG MEN IN ICELAND SAY ABOUT HAVING CHILDREN?

"It's better to use a condom than risk making a girl pregnant."

"When you're young, you don't want kids."

"You don't want to spoil your plans. I have big plans. This would ruin them."



A Few Tips on Having Sex

- Take time to get to know your partner.
- Be prepared with everything in your “backpack.”
- You may be clumsy at first; it gets better.
- If you forget to put something in your backpack, do it the next time.
- Always keep condoms in your backpack.
- Find the condom you’re happy with.
- Be patient—experience builds over time.
- Prepare well to avoid mistakes.
- Learn what each partner likes; everyone is different.
- To avoid awkwardness with condom use, practice beforehand.
- If the partner is drunk and the other isn’t, it is not possible to get valid consent—do not have sex.
- It’s okay if something unexpected happens, like premature loss of erection; you can make the best of it and restart or skip sex this time.
- With practice, you will eventually become a skilled lover.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Sóley S. Bender is Professor Emerita at the Faculty of Nursing and Midwifery, University of Iceland, and a specialist in sexual and reproductive health. She has been teaching sexual and reproductive health since 1978. She earned a B.Sc. degree in Nursing from the University of Iceland in 1977, an M.Sc. degree in Family Planning Administration from the University of Minnesota, USA, in 1983, and a Ph.D. degree in Health Sciences from the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Iceland in 2005. Her doctoral thesis focused on teenage pregnancies. She was one of the founders of the Icelandic Sexology Association and the primary founder of the Icelandic Association for Sexual and Reproductive Health in 1992, which provided sexual and reproductive health services for young people at the Hitt Húsið. She provided contraceptive counseling, e.g. for young people in the women's department of the National University Hospital for 27 years. She has edited and authored comprehensive sexuality education curricula for both primary and secondary schools in Iceland. Additionally, she has produced various educational publications on sexual and reproductive health for young people. She has led multiple research projects on young people's sexual and reproductive health and published numerous articles and book chapters on the topic in both domestic and international journals.

Katrín Hilmarsdóttir is a public health specialist. She earned a B.Sc. degree in Nursing in 2009 and an MPH degree in Public Health in 2021, both from the University of Iceland. During her public health studies, she focused on adolescent sexual health, and her final project examined condom use among young men in Iceland. Katrín used to work at Sidekick Health, creating digital educational material on health promotion and lifestyle support, including for pregnant people and cancer survivors. She has years of experience working as a nurse at the National University Hospital's Cancer Department and is presently working at the breast clinic.

Lóa Guðrún Gísladóttir is an adjunct lecturer and a PhD student in Childhood, Youth, and Education Studies and Parent Education at the Faculty of Education and Diversity, School of Education, University of Iceland. She earned a B.Sc. degree in 2016 in Sports Science from Reykjavík University and an MA degree in 2018 in Educational Science with a focus on psychology in education studies, risk behavior, prevention, and life perspective from the University of Iceland. Her MA thesis focused on the sexual health of young men. She has also completed 45 ECTS in Parent Education. In 2021, she participated in the revision of the sexual education curriculum Young People and Sexuality.

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