

TAKING CARE OF YOUR SEXUAL HEALTH

As a teenager in New York State, you can get sexual health care services on your own. Call 311 to find confidential sexual health services near you. Many places will see teenagers for free or very low cost.



What is Sexual Health?

Sexual health involves everything related to your sex life and reproductive system, whether or not you're having sex. Talking with a health care provider about your sexual health is just as important as getting a yearly physical exam.

Sexual health care includes:

- Accurate information about sex, so you can make informed decisions
- Testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV
- Pregnancy testing
- Help getting and learning how to use condoms
- Birth control, including emergency contraception
- Information about pregnancy options, including prenatal care, adoption and abortion
- Help, including counseling, after forced or unwanted sex

You don't have to be having sex to talk to a health care provider about your sexual health. It's a good opportunity to get your questions answered or learn more about how to be healthy and safe, so you'll be ready if you decide to have sex of any kind.

You Have the Right

Teens in New York State have a legal right to get any of these services without the permission or knowledge of parents, guardians, boyfriends,

girlfriends, relatives, teachers or anyone else. These services are available for free or at low cost at many clinics and health care providers.

Preventing a Pregnancy or Sexually Transmitted Infection

The two best ways to protect yourself:

1. Don't have sex.
2. Use birth control **and** a condom every time you have sex. Only condoms will help protect you from HIV and other STIs.

For young women and teenagers

Hormonal birth control methods are safe and, when used correctly, almost 100% effective in preventing pregnancy. Hormonal options include:

- Birth control pills ("The Pill")
- Patch (Ortho-Evra)
- Vaginal ring (NuvaRing)
- Injection you get every three months (Depo-Provera)
- Implant that lasts up to three years (Implanon)
- IUD (intrauterine device) that works for up to five years (Mirena). (A non-hormonal, copper IUD, ParaGard, works for up to 10 years.)

All these methods are available for free or at low cost at many clinics. Talk to your doctor about what's right for you.

Emergency contraception (EC), known as the "morning-after pill," can also prevent pregnancy, but you have to act fast.

- EC prevents pregnancy after unprotected sex or if a condom breaks. You can also use it after forced sex.
- The sooner you take it, the better. The most common brands, Plan B and Next Choice, work best when taken as soon as possible after unprotected sex. If used within 24 hours after sex, EC can reduce your risk of getting pregnant by 95%. But it still works up to five days after sex.
- Teens can get EC free at some health centers or with a prescription that can be filled at a pharmacy. If you're 17 or older, you can also buy it over the counter at a pharmacy.

For young men and teenagers

Always use a condom to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV.

- Condoms are the only birth control method that also prevents HIV and other STIs.
- Use a condom every time you have sex, even when your partner is using another birth control method.
- Make sure you know how to use a condom before you have sex. To find out how, go to nyc.gov, keyword: condom, or [facebook.com/nyconcondom](https://www.facebook.com/nyconcondom).

It's your choice whether or not you have sex. No one — not even a boyfriend or girlfriend — has the right to pressure or force you to have sex. Almost half of all teens wait until they leave high school before having sex. Even if you've had sex before, you can always change your mind and say no.

To learn more, go to nyc.gov and search for NYC Teen, or snap this code.



EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION

As a teenager in New York State, you can get sexual health care services on your own. Call 311 to find confidential sexual health services near you. Many places will see teenagers for free or very low cost.



Did the condom break? Did you forget to take your birth control pills? Are you afraid you might get pregnant? Don't panic. Mistakes happen, but with emergency contraception (EC), if you're not ready to be pregnant you don't have to be. When taken correctly, EC greatly reduces your risk of pregnancy after having unprotected sex and is available to everyone in New York City.

What is It?

EC, sometimes called the "morning-after pill," is birth control a woman can take after unprotected sex to help prevent a pregnancy from happening. You can take it up to five days (120 hours) after unprotected sex, but the sooner you take it the more effective it is. Brands include Plan B, Next Choice and Ella.

What It is Not

EC is *not* an abortion pill. It helps prevent a pregnancy from happening soon after unprotected sex. If a woman is already pregnant when she takes EC, it will not affect her pregnancy. She will still be pregnant.

EC does not protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Only condoms can help protect you from HIV and other STIs. Remember, the best way to prevent a pregnancy *and* an STI (other than not having sex) is by using condoms plus another form of birth control, such as pills, the contraceptive shot or an IUD.

How Does It Work?

The EC pill, which contains the same hormone found in most birth control pills, keeps a woman's ovaries from releasing eggs and meeting up with any sperm. If the egg and sperm can't meet, then a pregnancy can't happen.

How Well Does It Work?

EC is very effective. You can take it up to five days after unprotected sex, but the sooner after sex you take it the better. If you take it within 24 hours after unprotected sex, it reduces your risk of pregnancy by up to 95%. If you wait 72 hours, it's 88% effective. EC is safe for most teens and women and has very few, if any, side effects.

How Do I Get It?

If you're 17 or older, you can buy Plan B or Next Choice at the pharmacy without a prescription (Ella is prescription only). If you're 16 or younger, you can get EC free at some health centers or ask your provider for a prescription and get it filled at a pharmacy. You can also get EC at no cost at Health Department STD clinics, but only up to 72 hours after unprotected sex.

To learn more, go to nyc.gov and search for NYC Teen, or snap this code.

