

# Sexual Health and the Five Action Steps

A healthier body. A satisfying sex life. Valuing and feeling good about yourself. Having peace of mind. Positive and satisfying relationships. Avoiding sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unplanned pregnancies. These are just a few of the important benefits of good sexual health. Being sexually healthy means being able to enjoy a healthier body, a satisfying sexual life, positive relationships, and peace of mind. It also means enjoying your sexuality and taking care of yourself and your partners throughout your life. Being free to talk about sexual health with your partner and health care provider is key to your health.

**Value who you are and decide what's right for you.** Sex is a natural part of life; it can bring you pleasure, intimacy and joy. But it is up to you to decide if and when you choose to have sex. First, think about what you want, and define your personal values, desires, and boundaries. These might change depending on your stage in life.

**Get smart about your body and protect it.** Learn about your body and how it works, and explore ways to express yourself sexually. Practice safer sex to protect yourself and your partners from many STIs and unplanned pregnancies. Condoms can prevent both STIs and unplanned pregnancies, while other contraceptives only prevent pregnancy. For extra protection, some people choose to use condoms, along with another contraceptive method.

**Treat your partners well and expect them to treat you well.** Be with someone who makes you feel good about yourself, comfortable and safe. Partners should respect your boundaries and should not pressure or force you to do something you don't want to. Likewise, respect your partner and don't force them to do anything they don't want to.

**Build positive relationships** by having open and honest conversations about your relationship, desires, and sexual health. Respect each other and make decisions together. If health problems come up, discuss them openly and seek medical care. If your partner is violent, or pressures or tries to control you, seek help from your health care provider or an organization that addresses partner violence.

**Make sexual health part of your health care routine**, which will help protect your sexual health and well-being. Find a health care provider who makes you feel comfortable and respects you. You have a right to good medical care. Have open conversations with your provider about how to stay healthy and any other issues that affect your sexual health. Wellness check-ups are a good time to get recommended services, ask questions, or share any concerns about your sexual health, including sexual performance and functioning.

*It's time to give sexual health the attention it deserves.*



Learn more at [www.NCSHguide.org](http://www.NCSHguide.org)

## Action Steps to Good Sexual Health

There are five key steps you can take to help you achieve good sexual health. These steps apply regardless of your age or the relationships you choose to have:

1

Value who you are and decide what's right for you

2

Get smart about your body and protect it

3

Treat your partners well and expect them to treat you well

4

Build positive relationships

5

Make sexual health part of your health care routine

## Learn More About Sexual Health

Check out the website [www.NCSHguide.org](http://www.NCSHguide.org) to get the full guide, "Take Charge of Your Sexual Health: What you need to know about preventive services."

It includes recommended services for men and women, tips to find and talk with a health care provider, and additional sexual health resources.



[www.nationalcoalitionforsexualhealth.org](http://www.nationalcoalitionforsexualhealth.org)



SYSTEMS RESEARCH FOR BETTER HEALTH

[www.altarum.org](http://www.altarum.org)

## WHAT IS SEXUAL HEALTH?

Five Key Action Steps To Help You Achieve It



Learn more at [www.NCSHguide.org](http://www.NCSHguide.org)

