

ABSTINENCE

Office of Population Affairs defines abstinence as refraining from all forms of sexual activity and genital contact, such as vaginal, oral, or anal sex.

This topic can be challenging and sometimes a little confusing. It can be helpful to include a parent or other trusted adult that you can talk to about things like dating, relationships, and pregnancy prevention.

Effectiveness: 100%

Advantages:

- Free
- Supports self-esteem and positive self-image
- Encourages couples to build relationships in other ways
- Prevents sexually transmitted infections
- Flexibility to start or stop abstinence at any time
- Monthly menstrual cycle (period) is consistent

Disadvantages:

- Requires commitment and self-control

Instructions:

- Learn how to resist peer and social pressure
- Decide in advance what types of sexual contact fit into your abstinence plan
- Decide what your boundaries are and how to set those boundaries
- Share your limits, boundaries and decisions with your partner

References:

Hatcher, R.A., Ziemann, M., Lathrop, E., Haddad, L. & Allen, A. (15th ed.) (2019). *Managing contraception for your pocket*. Managing Contraception LLC.

Office of Population Affairs. (2023). Contraception and preventing pregnancy.
<https://opa.hhs.gov/reproductive-health/preventing-pregnancy-contraception>