

HOT TIPS FOR KEEPING SEX SAFE AND ETHICAL

Starting life at university is not just about study. It's often about moving away from home for the first time, managing your own finances, reaching the drinking age, meeting a whole lot of new people from all walks of life, and making your own decisions about who you want to get to know. It is also often about exploring your sexuality and deciding whether or not to be sexually active.

You may recall having sexual health classes in high school, or even having "that talk" with your parents. You might recall how to put a condom on a zucchini or a banana and have some ideas about how to avoid pregnancy. You might even be thinking that everyone else around you has already had sex and that you are the only virgin on campus and that there must be something wrong with you. Or you may already be sexually active but still unsure about your sexual needs and desires. Figuring out if, how, when, why, where and with who to be sexually active are topics you may want to feel clearer and more confident about.

Consensual Sex

Some students are under the seriously mistaken belief that coming to university means that sex and beer are "available on tap". Wrong! Sex is not there for the taking. Sex, whether in a casual encounter or within an ongoing relationship, is something to be negotiated and freely consented to by all parties. Sex without consent is a very serious crime. Sexual assault is a violation of a person's body, their sense of self, their sense of safety, their right to choose.

Think about any general situation where you have given your free consent for something to happen. You most likely wanted to know what you would be consenting to. You may have needed or wanted time to think about your decision. You hopefully said YES without any coercion, pressure or duress. You may have needed to know that you could change your mind without reprisals. When negotiating sex, aim for a clear understanding that you and the other person(s) are comfortable with what is happening. "The way they flirted told me they wanted it!" or "They didn't say no" are not good enough indicators. Don't try to read the other person's mind or assume that they want what you want. Check out what the other person is thinking or feeling.

Keep the following in mind:

- Choosing **not to have sex** is definitely OK!
- Know that you **do not owe anyone sex**, and they do not owe you sex
- You can choose to have **outercourse** rather than intercourse – ie being intimate in ways that do not involve any forms of penetration
- Good sex **is ethical, respectful and safe** and involves:
 - *Caring for yourself* (Do I want to do this? Do I feel safe? What are my needs? Am I practising safe sex?)
 - *Being aware of the other person* (Do they want what I want? Do I really know what they want and if they are OK with it?)
 - *Negotiating* and "asking" what the other person wants (I need to check, verbally or nonverbally, if we want the same thing. Is the other person even able to let me know what they want? If we can't negotiate or figure this out, I do not pass go.)
 - *Reflection* (Think about what I am doing. Will I or the other person feel OK about it tomorrow?) (source - Carmody, 2009)
- Sex with **consent** means that you and the other person(s) have:
 - the **capacity** to consent (eg not drunk, drugged, unconscious, asleep)
 - the **freedom** to choose (eg not coerced, threatened, detained, pressured by someone in authority)
 - voluntary **agreement** (just thinking "the other person was up for it" is not enough)

The following harm-minimisation tips are from the former SmarterSex US project that was especially created for college / university students; to provide accurate information and education about safe and smarter sex.

“As date rape continues to impact college campuses across the country, with 42 percent of the occurrences (US) going unreported, here are just a few things to know about date rape and protecting yourself from being a victim or an offender.

As a Woman, You Can...

- Talk openly about sex, and keep talking as you get further into a relationship.
- Be careful not to let alcohol or other drugs decrease your ability to take care of yourself and make sensible decisions.
- Trust your gut feelings. If a place or the way a date acts make you nervous or uneasy, get out.
- Go out on a first date or a blind date with friends. Insist on going to a public place like a movie, sporting event, or restaurant. Carry money for a phone call and taxi, or take your own car.
- Don't leave a party, concert, game, or other social occasion with someone you just met or don't know well.
- Take a look at the people around you and be wary of anyone who puts you down, or tries to control how you dress or your choice of friends.
- Become an ally and educate others about rape and violence.

As a Man, You Can...

- Ask yourself how sexual stereotypes affect your attitudes and actions toward women or other men.
- Accept a person's decision when they say "no." Don't see it as a challenge. When a woman says no, that doesn't mean wait a few minutes and then try again.
- Avoid clouding your judgment and understanding of what another person wants by using alcohol and other drugs.
- Realise that forcing a person to have sex against their will is rape, a violent crime with serious consequences.
- Never be drawn into a gang rape -- at parties, fraternities, bars, or after sporting events.
- Seek counseling or a support group to help you deal with feelings of violence and aggression against others.
- Confront other men who talk about situations that sound like date rape.
- Acknowledge that although statistically most victims are women, men should remember that they can be forced to do things against their will and can become victims of rape as well.”

On-Campus & Off-Campus Support

Go to UNE's [Respect. Now. Always](#) website for support options. If you are living in one of the on-campus residences and are concerned that you or someone else is experiencing sexual harassment or assault, you can talk to your Senior Residential Fellow, Residential Leader, Dean, and/or Head of Residence. All students can contact the UNE Student Grievance Unit on (02) 6773 4260 (office hours 8.30 am to 4.30 pm Mon. to Fri.). “Only yes means yes” or “Too wasted to say no is too wasted to say yes” or “No shape to say no is no shape to say yes”. These are messages that apply whether you are on or off campus.

If you are not living on campus but need support in the Armidale area, you can contact the Armidale Sexual Assault Service on 02 6776 9500. For 24 hour support, contact the [1800RESPECT](#) national counselling helpline or the NSW Rape Crisis Centre on 1800 424 017 or online via www.nswrapecrisis.com.au All students can contact the UNE counsellors by phoning (02) 6773 2897 (office hours only).

The support you need to succeed

Healthy Sex

Acting in a socially responsible, ethical way is important in the bedroom or wherever you choose to have sexual encounters. Sexual health is not only about protecting your health, but that of others. If you have a sexually transmissible infection, it is important that you seek medical treatment and that you minimise the risk of others contracting the infection. If you don't have an STI, take steps to remain STI free. Also, if you are not ready to start a family, don't assume that your sexual partner is taking or using a contraceptive or is the only one responsible for taking or using a contraceptive. It is a good idea for all sexual partners to check that contraceptive measures are in place. For sexual health and contraceptive information, contact the UNE Medical Centre on (02) 6773 2916, your GP, or your local Community Health Centre or Sexual Health Clinic. Have a health check so that you can stay well and healthy. Call into [uni4me](#) in the campus Northern courtyard for information pamphlets, and free condoms, lube sachets or oral dams (when available).

10 top tips (from the former Smartersex.org) for smart and safe sex.

"It is always smart to talk about sex with your partner, a peer educator or a healthcare professional before you make the decision to have sex. While sexual intercourse always involves some risk of pregnancy or sexually transmitted disease, there are definitely ways of making your sexual experiences safer. Here are 10 simple things you can do, say and think about now before you have sex:

1. Talk smart sex first. Have smart sex later. STIs and unintended pregnancies affect both partners, not just one person. If you feel uncomfortable discussing sex and birth control with your partner, then you shouldn't be having sex. Be straightforward and talk about sex beforehand so both partners know what to expect. It's easier to be rational and reasonable before you're in the "heat of the moment."

2. Don't feel pressured to have sex. Or have sex out of fear - fear of hurting someone's feelings by saying no or fear of being the "only one" who isn't doing it. Virtually everyone wants to fit in with his or her friends, but you should never compromise your values to be "part of the crowd." If you don't want to have sex, be honest, discuss the reasons behind your decision with your partner and stay true to yourself.

3. Don't abuse alcohol/use drugs if you think things could get physical. Drug use or alcohol abuse interferes with decision-making, which can lead to date rape, forgetting to use contraceptives or contracting an STI. The lowering of inhibitions that often accompanies alcohol use might make you think you'll enjoy sex more, but in fact, for a variety of biochemical reasons, too much alcohol actually makes sex less enjoyable for both men *and* women.

4. Two are better than one. To help prevent both pregnancy and STIs, you should correctly and consistently use a birth control method like the Pill, contraceptive injection or diaphragm (for pregnancy prevention) and a condom (to prevent STIs). Condom use is essential, especially in relationships that are not monogamous. If your partner says no to contraceptives that may prevent STIs, like condoms, it's probably time to rethink your relationship. Nothing is worth the potential lifetime consequences of a few minutes of unprotected fun.

5. Use the buddy system. If you go to a party or a bar, go with friends and keep an eye out for each other. Agree that you won't leave with another person without telling someone. Sometimes a friend's "second opinion" could help prevent you from making decisions that you might regret later.

6. Remember that "no" means NO and passed out doesn't mean YES. Being drunk isn't a defence for committing sexual assault. If you are too drunk to understand a person trying to say no; if you are too drunk to listen and respect a person saying no; or if you have sex with somebody who is passed out or incapable of giving consent, it can be considered rape.

7. Respect everyone's right to make his/her own personal decision - including yourself. There is no imaginary "deadline," no ideal age, no perfect point in a relationship where sex has to happen. If your partner tells you that he or she is not ready to have sex, respect his/her decision, be supportive and discuss the reasons behind it. It is everyone's ultimate right to decide when and how they have sex - be it the first time or the tenth time.

8. Be prepared for a sex emergency. Consider carrying two condoms with you just in case one breaks or tears while it's being put on. Both men and women are equally responsible for preventing STIs, using contraceptives and both should carry condoms. Sometimes things go wrong even when you try to do everything right. Women should also know about emergency contraception or EC (also known as the "morning after pill". Taken within 72 hours of intercourse, EC may prevent pregnancy.

9. The best protection doesn't mean less affection. Abstinence is actually the most effective way to protect against STIs and prevent pregnancy. But practicing abstinence doesn't mean you can't have an intimate physical relationship with someone - it just means you don't have vaginal or anal intercourse. There are many other ways to be intimate and not have intercourse - just be aware that alternatives, like oral sex, carry their own risks.

10. Make sexual health a priority. Whether you are having sex or not, both men and women need to have regular check-ups to make sure they are sexually healthy. Women should have annual gynaecological exams."

Sexuality

The University is committed to providing a safe, trusting, diverse, inclusive environment in which to live, work, and study.

GSMA@UNE - The [Gender And Sexuality Minorities Alliance](#) is a social, support and visibility group for people at UNE all across the LGBTQ+ spectrum.

Twenty 10 is a community based, non profit state-wide organization that supports young people of diverse genders, sexes and sexualities, and provides a free and confidential service. For more information, go to www.twenty10.org.au or call 02 8594 9555 for metro support or 1800 65 2010 for freecall in rural areas.

The UNE Counsellors are also a point of contact if you have questions or concerns about your sexuality, sexual health or related issues. UNE Student Counselling and Psychological Services (CAPS) is free and appointments can be made by ringing **(02) 6773 2897**.