

Grade 7

Choosing Abstinence



Learner Outcomes

W-7.14 *Examine abstinence and decisions to postpone sexual activity as healthy choices*

How To Use

This lesson plan contains several activities to achieve the learner outcome above. You may choose to do some or all of the activities, based on the needs of your students and the time available. Some of the activities build on the ones that come before them, but all can be used individually.

For a quick lesson, combine activities A, D and F.

Classroom Activities & Timing

- A. Ground Rules (5-10 minutes)
- B. Abstinence and Sexual Activity (20-30 minutes)
- C. Promoting Abstinence Group Project (60-90 minutes)
- D. Role Play (45-50 minutes)
- E. Ask an Adult Interview
- F. Question Box (5-10 minutes)

Required Materials

HANDOUT: Promoting Abstinence

HANDOUT: Refusal Skills

HANDOUTS: Abstinence Role Play Scenarios

HANDOUT: Ask an Adult

Background Information for Teachers

When talking about sexual activity, it is important to recognize that sexual activity consists of a variety of behaviours on a continuum ranging from any physical contact with another person to sexual intercourse. Different people place different activities in different places on this continuum. For example, while one person might consider touching another's breasts sexual activity, another may not. Similarly, some people may not count anal or oral sex as sexual activity if they only consider vaginal sex as sex.

When talking about consent to sexual activity, the full range of sexual activities, from sexual touching, hugging and kissing to intercourse, count as sexual activity.

Although people make decisions to participate in or abstain from different activities, in this lesson sexual activity means direct touching of a partner's genitals, vaginal sex, oral sex or anal sex.

The only sure way to avoid pregnancy is to abstain from any activity where a penis or semen are near the vaginal area (including anal and vaginal sex or penis/vaginal touching). The only sure way to avoid STBBIs (sexually transmitted and blood borne infections) is to abstain from any activity that involves sexual contact between one person's body and another person's genital area, semen or vaginal fluid and from contact with infected breastmilk, blood and bedding/towels.

For students not choosing abstinence, these strategies can reduce risk of pregnancy:

- Delay sex
- Correctly and consistently using dual protection (condom plus another method of birth control increases contraceptive effectiveness and also reduces risk for STBBIs)
- Clear communication with partners about intentions, limits and safer sex

For students not choosing abstinence, as well as the three bullets list above, these additional strategies can reduce risk of STBBIs:

- Limiting sexual partners
- Getting vaccinated against Hepatitis B & HPV
- Getting regular testing and treatment if needed
- Clear communication between partners about sexual history, testing and treatment

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Educational programs that result in the most positive sexual health outcomes (e.g. delayed first intercourse, safer sex strategies, healthy relationships) and are best at reducing negative sexual health outcomes (e.g. unintended pregnancy, STBBI) are programs that are comprehensive and include information about contraception, relationships, sexual decision making & STBBI prevention.

Abstinence is one possible choice regarding sexual activity for youth. It is often a healthy choice as with abstinence, risks associated with sex can be avoided. However, it is important that the teacher not over-emphasize abstinence as the right choice because of their unconscious or conscious bias.

Inclusive Language

Language is complex, evolving, and powerful. In these lessons, [gender-neutral language](#) is used to be inclusive of all students, including those with diverse gender identities and sexual orientations. This includes the use of ‘they’ as a singular gender-neutral pronoun. The lesson plans use the terms ‘male’ and ‘female’ when referring to biological sex (sex assigned at birth), such as when discussing reproductive anatomy. A person’s reproductive system can be male, female or intersex (not clearly defined as either male or female).

People are assigned a sex at birth based on their reproductive anatomy. Sex assigned at birth is independent of gender identity. Gender identity is a person’s internal sense of identity as female, male, both or neither, regardless of their biological sex assigned at birth.

For many people, their gender matches the sex they were assigned at birth (cisgender). Others may identify as being transgender or gender diverse if their gender identity does not match the sex they were assigned at birth. A person’s gender identity can be girl, woman, boy, man, transgender, gender fluid, gender queer, agender or others. The intention in this material is to use language that reflects these many possibilities.

Being Prepared for Disclosures and Distress

To maintain both student safety and engagement, it can be helpful for the teacher to be familiar with [trauma informed practice](#), use inclusive language and to acknowledge feelings and stories. It is also important to strongly emphasize a respect for confidentiality among all class members.

- Respect confidentiality in the classroom and anticipate where discussions will lead in order to protect students from revealing inappropriate personal information.

For more information on reporting and responding to disclosure see the video and related materials at [A School’s Role in Keeping Our Kids Safe](#)

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- Before starting these lessons, it is recommended to talk to the school counsellors so they are aware there may be disclosures of abuse.
- Reinforce confidentiality and sensitivity when discussing this topic.
- Ensure your students understand that disclosures of abuse cannot be kept confidential. Disclosures will result in the immediate aid to the student who is or has been abused.
- Share with students what they can expect if they disclose abuse, e.g., acknowledgement, honouring their disclosure, redirection to discuss further outside of class and assurance of connecting them with support.
- The Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act requires you to report the abuse of a young person to Child and Family Services or Delegated First Nation Agencies. You can locate your local office by visiting http://www.child.alberta.ca/home/local_offices.cfm

For more information review [Responding to Child Abuse: A Handbook](#), published by the Government of Alberta or visit <http://www.child.alberta.ca/home/593.cfm>

Refer to your school division's guidelines about disclosures and reporting.

A. Ground Rules

Ensure [ground rules](#) are established before beginning this lesson. For classes that have already established ground rules, quickly reviewing them can help ensure a successful lesson.

B. Abstinence and Sexual Activity

These discussion questions will help students clarify the meaning of several terms, and begin to examine abstinence and postponing sexual activity.

1. What is sexual activity/sexual intercourse/sex?

- Each of these terms can mean different things to different people. Some people might think sexual activity means any sexual contact like kissing, touching over or under clothing, above or below the waist. Others think sexual activity refers only to sexual

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intercourse, or certain types of genital to genital contact.

- Explain how you will be using the term in class. For example, "In this class, when we are talking about sex, we are talking about any contact between one person's genitals and another person's body."
- Anal sex, oral sex and vaginal sex are all types of sex.

2. What is abstinence?

- Abstinence means choosing not to do something. In these lessons, abstinence means choosing not to have sex. This includes not engaging in:
 - direct touching of a partner's genitals
 - vaginal sex (penis to vagina)
 - anal sex (penis to anus)
 - oral sex (mouth to penis, anus or vulva/vagina)
- Abstinence is often referred to as being 100% safe; meaning that there is no risk of pregnancy and no or low risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs). This is only true if all of the activities in the definition above are avoided.
- Most teens choose abstinence. According to the *Health Behaviour in School-aged Children Canadian study (2016)*, among grade 9 students, 18% of males and 14% of females have had sexual intercourse. Among grade 10 students, 28% of males and 29% of females have had sexual intercourse.

3. What is virginity?

- Virginity means different things to different people. Virginity is a cultural idea, not a biological fact, so the meaning can change from person to person and over time.
- Many people define it as not having chosen to be sexually active with another person yet.

4. If you have already had sex, can you still be abstinent?

- Yes. A person who has had sex in the past, who chooses not to be sexually active, is abstinent. The choice to be abstinent can be made at any time, regardless of past experience.
- Sometimes people use someone's sexual history to pressure them to have sex again. This is not fair and could be considered coercion or bullying.

5. Divide the class into small groups of 3-5 students. Ask students to brainstorm as many answers as they can to the

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following questions, and to write a list as a group.

What are some activities that young people can do together without becoming sexually active?

- Hold hands
- Kiss
- Do recreational activities together (playing sports, etc.)
- Spend time with friends together
- Watch movies/TV/play video games
- Pursue mutual interests (arts, music, computers, etc.)

What are some reasons young people choose to be abstinent or to delay sexual activity?

Personal

- Personal values or religious/moral beliefs
- Not ready yet
- To avoid fear or disappointment

Medical

- Fear of pregnancy
- Fear of STIs
- Health and protection against disease. For example, risk factors for cervical cancer include early age of first intercourse, higher number of sexual partners, and younger age at first pregnancy.

Relational

- Haven't met the right person
- To strengthen a relationship. Abstaining or postponing sexual activity may allow time to develop a deeper friendship and establish intimacy that is not sexual. A couple may spend more time talking, building mutual interests, and sharing good times with friends.

What are some reasons that a person who wants to be abstinent or postpone sexual activity might engage in sexual activity?

- Fear of saying no
- Pressure from your partner
- Peer pressure – 'everyone is doing it'
- Wanting to feel loved
- Use of alcohol or drugs
- Making the decision that abstinence is no longer right for you

6. Come back together as a whole class and ask each group to share some of the answers they identified for each question.

C. Promoting Abstinence Group Project

Students work together to create promotional materials (posters, pamphlets, commercials) outlining the importance of abstinence/postponement, exploring alternatives to sexual activity, and identifying ways to say no to sexual activity.

1. Form groups of 3-5 students.
2. Give each group the **Promoting Abstinence** handout.
3. Explain that groups must plan and present promotional material as outlined on the handout.
4. Allow groups time to plan and create their promotional material as outlined on the handout.
5. Have groups present their promotional material to the class. Posters and pamphlets could be presented as if they were competing for the “best poster” or “best pamphlet” contest at the local sexual and reproductive health clinic. Group members could pose as “experts” visiting the classroom to promote a message. Commercials could be presented live or the recording could be played for the class. Encourage the students to be creative in their presentation.
6. Debrief using the following discussion questions:
 - What are some of the most convincing reasons to remain abstinent or postpone sexual activity?
 - How realistic were the ideas presented by each group?
 - Are there any other suggestions?
 - If you choose abstinence, how can you ensure it will work for you consistently?
 - How often should you review your decision about abstinence and your reasons for choosing it? Why?
 - If you choose abstinence, when and under what circumstances might you cease to use this method?
 - If you decide abstinence is no longer right for you, how will you choose another method to protect yourself from an unintended pregnancy or STI?

D. Role Play

The following role play activities allow students to practice effective communication and refusal skills that may contribute to postponing or reducing sexual activity. It is important to be aware

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When using role play activities that highlight relationship issues, it is important to be cognizant of heterosexism. Students in your class may be questioning their sexual orientation or involved in a same sex relationship. Students who identify as LGBTQ+ also experience pressure in their relationships. The scenarios are intentionally gender neutral to be inclusive of all students.

of the potentially upsetting nature of this activity for some students who may have experienced trauma in their past. For more information, see [What is Trauma Informed Practice?](#)

1. Explain that the following role play activity will allow students to practice good communication and refusal skills. For this activity, the goal of all of the role plays is for the characters to remain abstinent or postpone sexual activity.
2. Display or hand out the **Refusal Skills** information and discuss as a class. Reinforce that if someone is sexually assaulted, it is never their fault, regardless if they used refusal skills or not.
3. Form student groups of 2-3 students.
4. Give each group a **Role Play Scenario** card.
5. Explain that groups must plan and present a role play as outlined on the card they received. The role play must include pressure lines, (e.g. "If you loved me you'd have sex with me") and give examples of appropriate refusal skills. Role plays should range from 1-3 minutes in length. No inappropriate language is allowed.
6. Give groups 5-10 minutes to plan and practice their role play.
7. You may wish to have each group perform their role play for the rest of the class, or simply have each group present to you while the others practice. You could also allow students to write a script individually or as a group as an alternative to presenting the role play.
8. If you choose to have each group present to the whole class, have each group begin by reading the scenario and introducing the actors and their roles. Groups then act out the role play.
9. After each presentation, use the following questions to lead a discussion with that group, or the class, as appropriate:
 - What were the pressures identified in the role play?
 - What refusal skills were used?
 - What alternative actions were suggested?
 - What are your feelings as you watched this role play?

E. Ask an Adult Interview

Although teens often challenge their parents' ideas, they want to hear their parents' opinions and values. Research shows teens see their parents as role models when it comes to sexual health, not celebrities from movies, TV, music or sport. Many personal values are learned and reinforced at home. Invite students to encourage open dialogue at home.

Students begin a dialogue with a parent, guardian or supportive adult about relationships and sexuality. Keep in mind that not all students have equal opportunities for open discussion with family or other adults in their life. Although it is best for students to complete this assignment with a supportive parent or guardian, it may not be possible. Be sensitive to the needs of your students.

Due to the sensitive nature of human sexuality topics, it is recommended that homework is reviewed or discussed but not graded.

1. Distribute the **Ask an Adult** handout for students to complete at home.
2. Explain that students can complete this handout with a parent, guardian or other supportive adult.
3. Explain that this is not a graded assignment and there are no right or wrong answers.
4. Dedicate time to debrief this activity during the next lesson. Debrief questions could include:
 - How does talking about relationships and sexuality with a parent or supportive adult help you to form your own values?
 - What was the best experience during the interview?

F. Question Box

Answer any questions from the [question box](#) in the previous lesson. Have students submit any new questions and address them next class.

Addressing the questions at the next class allows you time to review the questions and prepare responses.

Self-Reflection

During the lesson, were:

- ground rules being followed?
- good practices established regarding group work and discussion?

What will you change for future classes with this group?

What will you change for future use of this lesson?

Student Assessment

During the lesson, did students:

Knowledge:

- define abstinence and postponing sexual activity?
- outline the value of abstinence/postponement?
- explore alternatives to sexual activity?
- identify ways to say no to sexual activity?

Skills:

- exemplify appropriate listening and speaking skills during class discussion?
- demonstrate an understanding of refusal skills?

Attitudes:

- decide what personal actions are going to be followed?

Promoting Abstinence

Together with your group, produce material for a tween or teen audience that promotes abstinence and postponing sexual activity. Follow the steps outlined below.

1. Choose **one** of the following types of promotional material for your group to create:
 - Poster/Infographic: a one-sided poster/infographic complete with colour and pictures/graphics
 - Pamphlet: a fold-out pamphlet complete with colour and graphics
 - Commercial: a commercial complete with written script and a live or video presentation
 - Series of 3 blog posts that include pictures/graphics or 3 vlog entries
 - Podcast: an audio broadcast complete with written script and a live or recorded presentation
2. Choose one of the following topics as a focus for your group:
 - Reasons to be abstinent or postpone sexual activity
 - Things you can do without doing “it”
 - Ways to say no to sex
3. Brainstorm your ideas. Your group must have at least 15 points directly related to the topic. Write the points in the boxes on the next page.
4. Plan the layout/design/script of your promotion.
5. Work together to develop a finished product.
6. Use the following checklist to ensure you have created high quality promotional material:
 - Topic is obvious
 - Design/format appeals to grade 7 audience
 - Design/format is creative
 - Design/format is easy to understand
 - Design/format highlights the most important information
 - Information is accurate
 - Information is appropriate
 - Information is complete (at least 15 points are included)

Name: _____

Information to include in the final project				

Refusal Skills

Use Verbal Skills:

- Say “No”
- Tell your partner you want to stay abstinent or postpone sexual activity

Use Body Language:

- Use serious facial expressions
- Create distance between you and your partner
- Cross your arms

Use Delay Tactics:

- Stop kissing or touching
- Tell your partner you have to call home

Suggest Alternatives:

- Call up friends to go out together
- Go to the mall or to a movie
- Suggest playing a sport or another activity

Build The Relationship:

- Explain your feelings
- Ensure your partner knows that you made a decision to stay abstinent before this moment

Role Play Scenario One

Baran and Jamie have been going out for a little while. They have never gone farther than a few kisses. This weekend, Jamie's parents are away and Baran has come over to help baby-sit Jamie's little brother. Once Jamie's little brother has gone to bed, they start making out. Use the following script to help you begin your role-play.

Refusal: Um, wait...I think we should stop.

Pressure line: Oh, come on. Just a little bit more won't hurt...

Refusal:

Pressure line:

Refusal:

Pressure line:

Refusal:

Agreement:

Conclusion:

Conclusion:

Role Play Scenario Two

Taylor and Asul have been flirting with one another for a long time. They are at a party at a friend's house. No parents are around, and there has been a lot of drinking. Both of them have had a few drinks, and now they find themselves alone in one of the bedrooms. They are fooling around, and things begin to go further than one of them would like.

Refusal: Hey, I think we should stop.

Pressure line: Why? We're just having fun. I really like you...

Refusal:

Pressure line:

Refusal:

Pressure line:

Refusal:

Agreement:

Conclusion:

Conclusion:

Role Play Scenario Three

Avery and Kelly have just started seeing one another after Kelly broke up with a long-time partner. Kelly has had sex before, but isn't comfortable having another partner so soon. Kelly wants to remain abstinent in this new relationship. Avery doesn't understand. The two of them just had a great time at the school dance, and Avery expected it would lead to more than just a goodnight kiss.

Refusal: Can we slow down a bit, please?

Pressure line: What's the big deal? You've been here before. Just not with someone as great as me...

Refusal:

Pressure line:

Refusal:

Pressure line:

Refusal:

Agreement:

Conclusion:

Conclusion:

Role Play Scenario Four

Tanner and Logan have been friends since they were babies. Their families are close friends, and they have been going to the same campground together every summer since they can remember. Recently, they have talked a lot about sex and what it would be like. They are both curious, and decide that when they are both ready, they want to try it together to see what it is like. One day, they start kissing, and before they know it things are getting really serious.

Refusal: Hang on. I can't do this.

Pressure line: But we talked about it. You were fine just an hour ago...

Refusal:

Pressure line:

Refusal:

Pressure line:

Refusal:

Agreement:

Conclusion:

Conclusion:

Role Play Scenario Five

Jesse and Ping have been dating for three months and have been sexually active for two months. They have been using condoms, but one broke recently, and it has made Jesse think twice about the consequences. Jesse has decided to resume abstinence and stop having sex with Ping. They've talked about it, and Ping agreed it was OK. One day after school, they are working on homework in Jesse's room, and they start kissing and touching each other underneath their clothes. Soon they are both half undressed. They are becoming seriously close to having sex when Jesse decides to stop.

Refusal: Ping, stop. We talked about this before. It's too risky.

Pressure line: That was just one time. We can be careful. Come on...

Refusal:

Pressure line:

Refusal:

Pressure line:

Refusal:

Agreement:

Conclusion:

Conclusion:

Ask an Adult

The decision to remain abstinent or to postpone sexual activity is a personal one. It is based on many things, including your personal values. Discussion with a parent, guardian or other supportive adult in your life can help you to review your decisions about abstinence.

1. Take this handout home. Share it with a parent, guardian, or other supportive adult, and ask that person if you can complete it together.
2. Schedule at least half an hour with the adult for the interview. Give the adult this handout so that they can think about the answers before the interview.
3. Interview the adult using the questions provided.

Questions

What do you think are the most important reasons for a young person to remain abstinent or to postpone sexual activity?

What values do you want to share with me regarding sexuality?

How can we handle talking about this if I ever have questions or concerns?