



**There are 15 methods of contraception in the UK and when thinking about the best method for your body and lifestyle, you may find it helpful to discuss your feelings and decisions with those that are close to you.**

**Talking about sex, relationships and contraception can be tricky. Having an honest frank discussion with your parent, close friend, son/daughter or partner can ease any embarrassment and you may even come to a decision together.**

### Universal conversation starters

Whoever you decide to chat to about contraception, these tips will help give your conversation a smooth start...

**1. Don't be embarrassed!**

Contraception is a normal part of life but we probably aren't talking about it enough. Keep the conversation relaxed and to the point. You could print out information in advance to use during the chat and prompt conversation.

**2. Do your research**

With 15 different methods to choose from it can be confusing, so investigate the methods available before your conversation.

**3. Choose the right time/place**

Talking about sex and contraception can be embarrassing whatever your age, so avoid starting a conversation in a place where you can't have a private conversation.

**4. Use a TV storyline or current affairs to spark a conversation**

Sex is a normal part of life and storylines about teen pregnancy, sex and relationships are often on TV soaps and drama. Why not use these programmes and current affairs to start a conversation about contraception.

### How to start a conversation with a parent, relative or friend

Parents, close relatives and friends may have experience of different contraceptive methods and can offer you advice and information. However, it is important to remember that there are 15 methods of contraception available, each one works differently and every woman is different. As well as using the universal conversation starters you may find the following tips useful.

**1. Let them know you are being responsible**

It can be really difficult to start a conversation about sex/relationships and contraception with your parent or relative, but the important thing to remind them is that you are taking responsibility for your health and your life, and you would really appreciate their support.

**2. Ask them to attend your contraceptive consultation with you**

If you don't feel comfortable going to your doctor/nurse appointment alone, why not ask your parent, relative or friend to come with you. They may remind you of aspects of your lifestyle that could be relevant to your contraceptive choice.

## How to start a conversation with your partner

As well as using the universal conversation starters, there are other factors that may become important when you are in a relationship.

### 1. Discuss the reasons why choosing the best contraception is important

The more you both know about the contraceptive method you choose, the more likely you will both take some responsibility to make it work.

### 2. Think about your bodies and lifestyle

Are you planning to have a baby soon? Have you decided to try a new method? Are you or your partner allergic to any methods? It is important to think about your bodies and lifestyles that may influence your choice of contraception.

### 3. Sexual history

Talking about your sexual histories can be tricky but it is important to consider when choosing a contraceptive. STIs including syphilis, chlamydia, genital warts and herpes have been on the increase since the 1990s. Is there a possibility that either you or your partner has been exposed to a STI?<sup>1</sup> If so, it's worth visiting your local GUM/family planning clinic for piece of mind. Remember: only condoms protect you from STIs.

Find out more about talking to your partner on the Talk Choice website.

## How to start a conversation with your son/daughter

Good sex and relationships education can raise the age that your son/daughter first tries out sexual activity and cut the rate of teenage pregnancies, abortion and sexually transmitted infections (STIs).<sup>2</sup> It can also help your son/daughter with their emotional development, stay safe and feel more confident talking about sex with their partners when they're older.

### 1. Assume that they have little/no knowledge

Although most teens may beg to differ, many won't know much about contraception and the different methods. Contraception as a subject is not compulsory at some schools and much of their 'knowledge' is myth and misinformation they may have heard from their peers.

### 2. Emphasise the importance of preventing pregnancy, STIs and staying in control

Both hormonal and non-hormonal methods of contraception are effective methods of preventing pregnancy however only barrier methods like the condom protect against STIs. Explain the benefits of using both condoms and an effective contraceptive method to your teen. Remind your son/daughter that they are in control and neither they nor their partner should feel pressurised to have sex.

### 3. Remind them that you were their age once

You may be hoping that your son/daughter will wait until he/she is older and more mature before starting to think about sex. However the reality is your son/daughter may be thinking about sex/relationships already. Let them know that you were their age once so you understand how they feel. Tell your son/daughter that you trust their judgment and expect them to act in a responsible way.

### 4. Don't expect to cover every aspect of sex and contraception in one conversation

The most important thing to remember that you're opening the lines of communication. It can take several conversations before you and your teen overcome any mutual discomfort. As your teenager matures, you can talk about more difficult issues. You can also suggest places where they can find more information such as [www.talkchoice.co.uk](http://www.talkchoice.co.uk)

**Don't forget that is your body, your lifestyle and your contraception... raise your voice for choice and feel confident about what you choose to use.**

#### Want to know more?

For more information on contraception and choosing the best method for your body and lifestyle visit:

#### Talk Choice

[www.talkchoice.co.uk](http://www.talkchoice.co.uk)

#### fpa (formerly the Family Planning Association)

[www.fpa.org.uk](http://www.fpa.org.uk)

#### References

1. Sexually transmitted infections. NHS Direct. Available from: <http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk/articles/article.aspx?articleId=436> (Last accessed 22 May 2009)
2. Speakeasy. fpa. 2009. Available from: <http://www.fpa.org.uk/Inthecommunity/Speakeasy/Speakeasytalkingtoyourchild> (Last accessed 22 May 2009)