

## **Abstinence**

**What is it?** Abstinence is a decision to not have sex (vaginal, oral, or anal).

**How does it work?** Abstinence works because sex, which enables sperm to fertilize an egg, does not occur. Total sexual abstinence prevents pregnancy and STDs when used consistently.

**How is it used?** An individual makes a decision not to have sex and sticks to it. Assertiveness, negotiation, and planning skills help an individual and partner remain abstinent.

### **Effectiveness**

When both partners are committed to abstinence 100% of the time, it is 100% effective against pregnancy, HIV, and STDs.

### **What are its main advantages?**

Abstinence has no health risks or side effects. It can be used at any time, regardless of prior sexual experience. It allows users to focus on nonsexual aspects of relationships. And it supports the values of some individuals, families, and religious groups.

### **What are possible problems?**

A person may choose abstinence and then change his or her mind in the “heat of the moment.” It is important to have another birth control method available for pregnancy and HIV/STD prevention.

Funded in part by a US-DHHS-OPA grant.  
Reference: Cardea Services, Abstinence Fact Sheet

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