

## SEXUAL HEALTH RISKS IN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS

When you are in a relationship, you make serious decisions that affect your health. In a healthy relationship, your partner will respect the choices that are best for you. But if you are in an abusive relationship, you may be pushed to do something sexually that you don't want to or that is not safe. Your sexual health is very important and you have the right to protect it.

### What Do I Need to Know?

Remember, you deserve to be in a relationship where you feel free to make your own decisions about sex and to say "no" at any time. Your partner should not force you to go farther than you want to or to do something that you don't feel comfortable with. Your partner must also respect your decisions about using birth control or a condom to protect yourself. In fact, keeping you from making your own decisions about your sexuality is a type of serious abuse. In an abusive relationship, you are much more likely to have an unwanted pregnancy or get a sexually transmitted infection (STI), which can change your health and life forever. For your own safety, you must feel free to make your own decisions around all aspects of your sexuality.

### What Can I Do?

Remember that protecting your sexual health is important to a healthy relationship. Keep these safety tips in mind:

- You have to decide for yourself what you do or don't want to do sexually with your partner. Trust your instincts and let your partner know what feels right for you.
- You are also free to make your own decisions about how to protect yourself from an STI or unwanted pregnancy, such as birth control or condoms. If you have questions about these options, visit a health clinic or contact us for more help and information.
- Talk openly to your partner about sexual decisions. You should feel comfortable to ask your partner to get tested for STI's.
- Making your own choices means that you are not being convinced, pressured, pushed, threatened or forced to do something sexually that you don't want to.
- Your partner must respect your choices.

If you don't feel safe to follow these tips, you may not be in the healthy relationship you deserve. Don't ignore the risks to your sexual health. Take our **Healthy Relationship Quiz** or visit [www.thesafespace.org](http://www.thesafespace.org) for more help and information. Find out whether your relationship is healthy and right for you.

You have the right to a safe and healthy relationship..  
free from violence and free from fear.