YOUR LOVE. YOUR HEALTH. OUR HELP.

Let's talk about sexual health.

Sexual health is a state of well-being in relation to sexuality across the life span that involves physical, emotional, mental, social, and spiritual dimensions. Sexual health is an intrinsic element of human health and is based on a positive, equitable, and respectful approach to sexuality, relationships, and reproduction, that is free of coercion, fear, discrimination, stigma, shame, and violence.

Sexuality and health.

Intimacy and responsible sex can be wonderful; thoughtful decisions and planning can help make these experiences positive. Engaging in risky sexual behavior can result in sexually transmitted infections (STIs), like HIV, or unintended pregnancies. That's why the Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center Health Promotion and Wellness Department works to promote healthy relationships and prevent undesired outcomes among Sailors and Marines. We offer practical tools, educational resources, and prevention strategies that can help you reconnect and remain sexually and reproductively healthy.

Protect yourself.

It's important to practice safe sex for your health. Risky sexual behavior has serious consequences in the Navy and Marine Corps. Between 1985 and 2015, at over 5,100 active duty Sailors and Marines were infected with HIV.[1] In 2015, over 7,500 cases of chlamydia, gonorrhea, or syphilis were diagnosed among active duty Sailors and Marines.[2] In 2008, only half of unmarried, active duty men in the Navy and Marine Corps reported using a condom the last time they had sex.[3] In addition, only one in three unmarried, active duty women said a condom was used during recent intercourse.[3] Condoms can be used along with other forms of birth control to reduce the risk of an unintended pregnancy and prevent STIs.

In 2014, about six of 10 Navy enlisted women said her last pregnancy while in the Navy was unplanned.[4] Of those who experienced an unplanned pregnancy, half said that they were not using any form of birth control when the pregnancy occurred. Among the women who were using birth control, about half were on the pill. Oral contraceptives can be an effective method to prevent unintended pregnancy, when used correctly. However, other available contraceptive methods, such as IUDs and hormonal implants, are even more reliable and effective.

Be sexually healthy.

The good news is that STIs, HIV, and unplanned pregnancies are mostly preventable if you practice safe sex. The following options can reduce your risk:

- Get vaccinated against Human Papillomavirus (HPV).
- Say no to sex or delay sex until another time in your life.
- Establish a long-term, mutually-monogamous relationship.
- Talk with your doctor about the most effective contraception options for your lifestyle and needs.
- Use your chosen birth control correctly.
- Use condoms correctly and every time.
- Talk with your doctor about routine screening for early detection of HIV, chlamydia, and other STIs.
- Use a buddy system when going out to prevent alcohol and sex related incidents.

For assistance regarding your sexual health, contact your health care provider or visit your medical treatment facility.

To learn how our resources and tools can help keep you fit for service and improve your overall health, visit us at **WWW.MED.NAVY.MIL/SITES/NMCPHC/HEALTH-PROMOTION**.

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[1] Navy Bloodborne Infection Management Center, Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center. DoN HIV Seroconversion - 2015. Unpublished data; Jan 2016. Accessed Jan 2016.

[2] Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center. Sexually Transmitted Infections Annual Report 2015. Published 2016. Accessed March 2016.

[3] Bray R et al. 2008 DoD Survey of Health Related Behaviors Among Active Duty Military Personnel. Published 2010. Accessed March 2015.

[4] Navy Personnel Research, Studies, and Technology. 2014 Pregnancy and Parenthood Survey. Published Jan 2016. Accessed Jan 2016.

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