

KNOW YOUR STUFF

BREAK UPS
CONSENT

SEXUALITY

RELATIONSHIPS
CONTRACEPTION

ONLINE SAFETY



This booklet was designed with young people and parents in mind. We recognise the importance of sexual health for all young people today and suggest it is important that you “Know your Stuff”. This booklet is not intended to be a comprehensive answer to all the topics covered but rather a starting point with information on topics such as relationships; puberty; reproductive system, sexuality; consent; on-line safety and contraception to name but a few.

We have included links to other resources where you can access further information about each topic covered in the booklet.

We hope you enjoy reading the booklet as much as we enjoyed putting it together. Hopefully you will learn something new from it or it may even answer some questions you may have.

Lets get the conversation started...

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Relation

Adolescence is an important developmental stage of life.



nships

Adolescence is an important developmental stage of life.

Relationships play a vital role during this stage ranging from friendships, family relationships to more intimate relationships.

Some young people develop some very close relationships to another young person with whom they feel safe to share their thoughts and express their feelings.

Healthy relationships are fun and make you feel good about yourself. You can have a healthy relationship with anyone in your life, including your family, friends and dating partners.

The most important part of any healthy relationship between two people is being able to talk and listen to one another. Communication is based on honesty and trust and through communicating we learn to respect and trust important people in our lives.

Very few people get relationships right every time, and most of us go on learning about them all our lives.

It is important that young people feel safe talking about their feelings and issues relating to their sexual health so that they feel in control of all relationships in their lives.

It is very important that a young person is aware of their own needs and feel that they are ready to be in a relationship both emotionally and physically.

People with a disability experience the same range of sexual needs and desires as others.

Many people feel they need to have a boyfriend or girlfriend or be in a relationship. Learning how to build healthy relationships is very important.

Puberty

Although it happens quite slowly, puberty is the time when the body goes through many changes. But really you start to change quite gradually and the changes carry on through your teenage years. The body produces hormones to make it ready for sexual development. Moods change, and the body parts change. Puberty happens to people at different times, it is important not to compare yourself to your friends. It will happen when your body is ready.



Female Changes

- Breasts and nipples get bigger
- Waist narrows
- Hips widen
- Ovaries, womb and vulva get bigger
- Periods begin
- The vagina gets a bit bigger and produces more fluids (discharge)
- Skin may get greasy

Male Changes

- Shoulders broaden
- Facial hair/body hair
- Voice deepens (breaks)
- Penis gets longer and wider
- Testes (testicles) get bigger
- Wet Dreams

Both Males & Females

- Underarm and pubic hair
- Body odour
- Spots/acne
- Mood changes
- Growing pains
- Emotional changes
- Sexual attraction



FEMALE REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM

1. Uterus (Womb)

The uterus is where pregnancy develops and looks like a small upside down pear. This is where the baby develops and grows for 40 weeks

2. Endometrium

The Endometrium is the lining of the womb

3. The Cervix

The Cervix is the lower part of the uterus. A smear test swab is taken from here. <https://www.hse.ie/eng/cervicalcheck/>

4. Vagina

The Vagina is the muscular canal that extends from the cervix to the outside of the body.

The Vagina has natural healthy bacteria which creates a mucus discharge which is normal

5. Vulva

Vulva is the name for the female genitals which are outside the body and surround the opening of the vagina. The appearance of the vulva can vary from person to person

6. Clitoris

Clitoris is the most sensitive part of the vulva. It gets bigger during sexual arousal and helps produce an orgasm. The clitoris is a bundle of nerve endings and is there purely for pleasure

7. Labia

Labia are the outer and inner 'lips' of the vulva

8. Ovary

The ovaries produce and release the female sex cells (eggs)

9. The Fallopian Tube

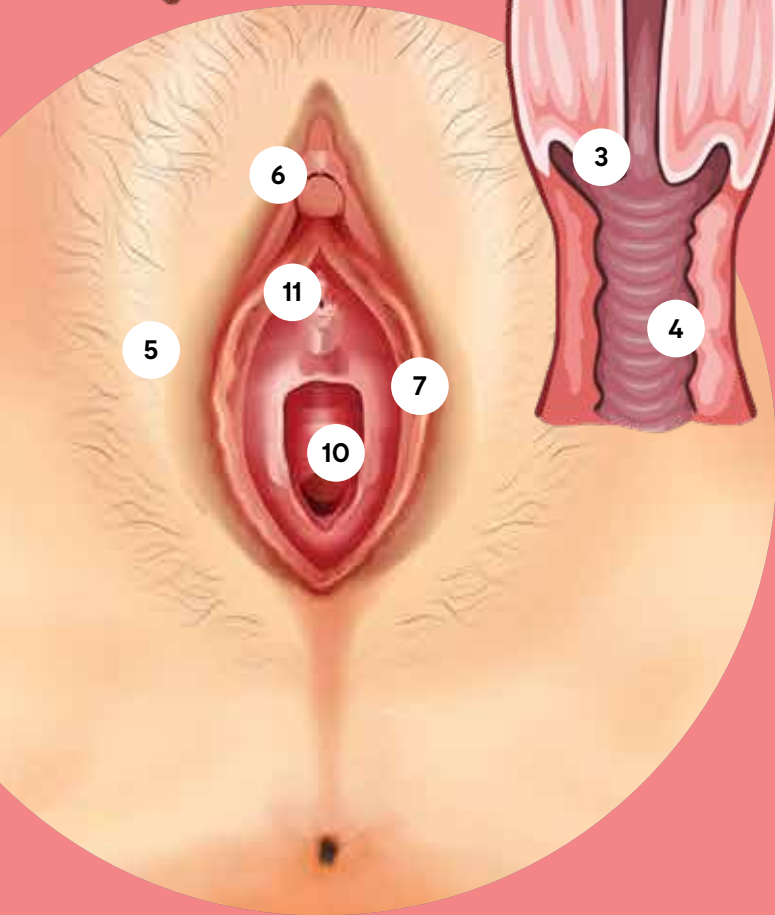
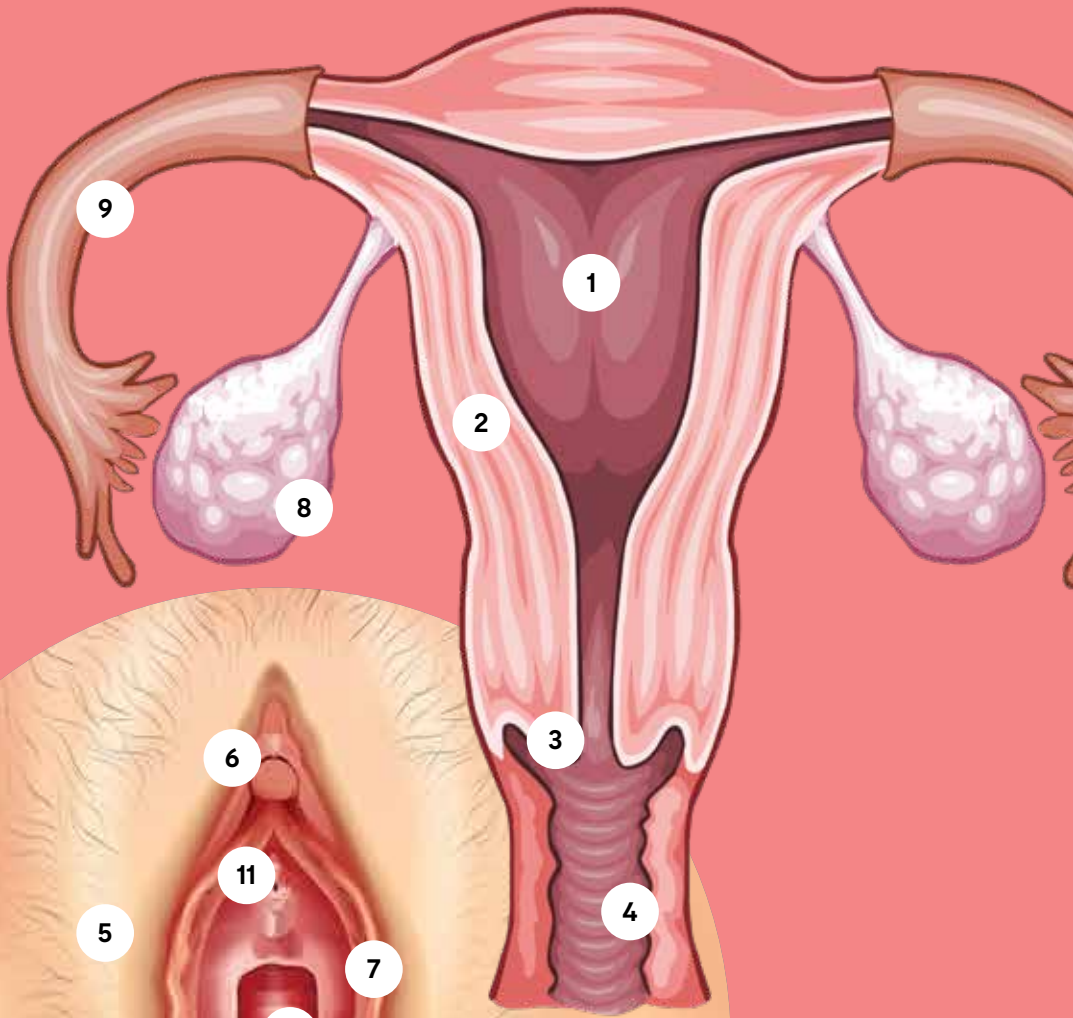
The Fallopian Tube carries an egg from the ovary to the uterus

10. Hymen

Hymen is a thin membrane inside the vaginal opening. If it has not already been broken by either physical activity or tampon use you might experience some slight bleeding the first time you have sexual intercourse.

11. Urethra

The Urethra is located between the Clitoris and the vaginal opening. It carries urine from the bladder to the outside.



MALE REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM

1. Urethra

The Urethra is the tube that carries urine and semen to the penis.

2. The Penis

The Penis is outside the body, when a man is sexually aroused the blood vessels fill with blood causing an erection. The size of the penis varies from person to person.

3. Glans

The Glans is the sensitive head of the penis. It is where 90% of signs and symptoms of an S.T.I. will present. Before ejaculation a small amount of fluid is released, this is called Precum; it contains sperm and could result in pregnancy.

4. Foreskin

The Foreskin is the loose skin which covers the end of the penis and covers the glans (head) of the penis. It is this skin which is removed when the male is circumcised.

5. Scrotum

The Scrotum is the soft bag which holds the testicles. They are outside of the body as sperm needs to be kept below body temperature for the production of sperm.

6. Testicles

The Testicles are the size of a small plum; it is where male sex cells (sperm) are made.

7. Vas Deferens

The Vas Deferens is the tube through which sperm travels from the testicles to the urethra.

Ejaculation

Ejaculation is when semen is discharged out of the penis often during an orgasm (sexual climax)

Semen

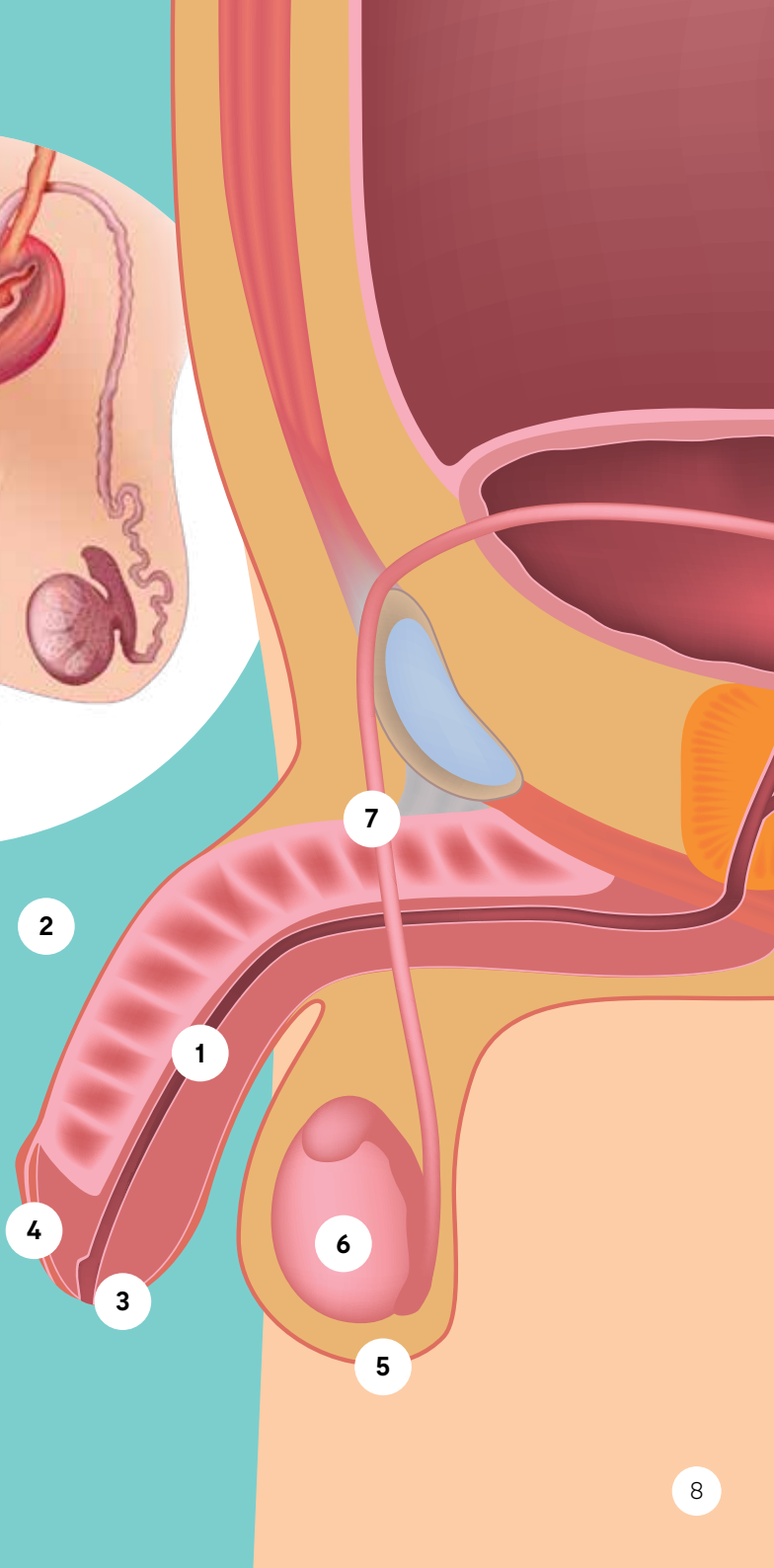
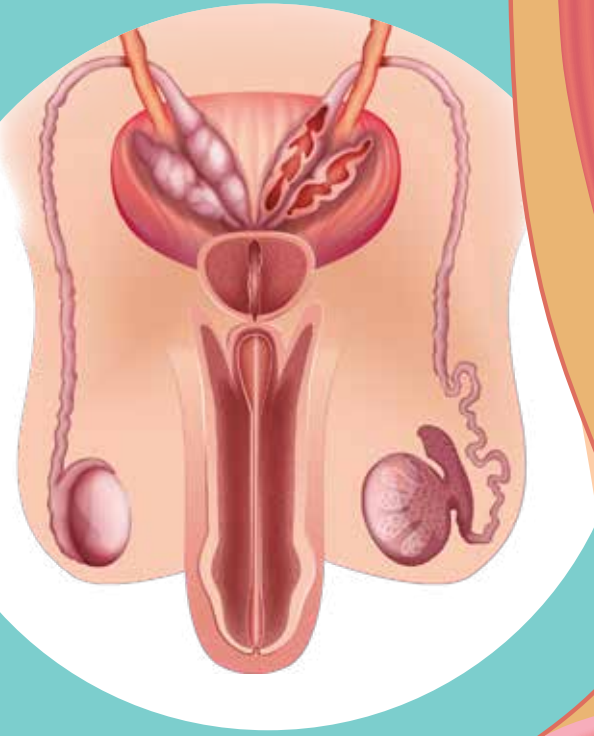
Semen also called cum, is the fluid ejaculated from the penis, usually about a dessertspoon full of semen is produced and contains between 200 – 300 million sperm (the male reproductive cell). It only takes one sperm to fertilise a female egg leading to pregnancy.

Wet Dream

A Wet dream is when semen is ejaculated during sleep; they usually begin during puberty and are a very normal part of development.

Precum

Precum is the small amount of semen which is released prior to ejaculation. Precum can often be released without being felt or noticed.



Menstrual Periods

One of the biggest changes in a young woman's life is when she starts getting her periods. A period is when blood comes out through a girl's vagina. Most girls get their first period between the age of 9 and 18. The average age is 12 but every girl's body has its own schedule.

A period is part of the menstrual cycle. The menstrual cycle is from the first day of a period until the day before the next period starts. The length of the cycle varies – it can be as short as 21 days or as long as 40 days. On average the cycle is 28 days.

The menstrual cycle is controlled by hormones. The hormone oestrogen causes about 12 to 20 tiny eggs to ripen in one of the ovaries each month.

Usually one egg becomes larger than the others and travels into the fallopian tube that connects the ovary to the womb.

This release of the egg is called ovulation and it happens approximately 14 days before a period is due.

When sex happens sperm is released into the vagina. When a sperm meets an egg fertilisation can occur.



ovulation

If the egg is not fertilised hormone levels drop, the womb lining sheds itself and with the egg is released through the vagina as a period.

A woman is most likely to become pregnant, if she has unprotected sex, during ovulation.

PMT (Premenstrual Tension)

Premenstrual Tension (PMT or PMS) is when women have mood changes and a range of physical and emotional changes just before their period begins. It is usually caused by hormonal changes in the body. Some women get very bad PMT while others just feel a bit uncomfortable.

When a period occurs

There are a few ways to deal with period blood. You may need to experiment a bit to find which works best for you. Some girls

use only one method and others may switch between different methods.

Most girls use a pad when they first get their period. Pads are made of cotton and come in lots of different sizes and shapes. They have sticky strips that attach to the underwear.

Many girls prefer to use tampons instead of pads, especially when playing sports or swimming. A tampon is a cotton plug that a girl puts into her vagina. Most tampons come with an applicator that guides the tampon into place. The tampon absorbs the blood. Don't leave a tampon in for more than 8 hours because this can increase your risk of a serious infection called toxic shock syndrome.



CONTRA

Condoms are the only method of contraception that offer protection against most STI's (*Sexually Transmitted Infections*)

Withdrawal is not a form of Contraception. Precum which comes out of the top of an erect penis can result in pregnancy and/or STI's




CEPTION

A male condom is put over the man's erect penis to help stop sperm entering the vagina preventing pregnancy and also helping to reduce the risk of STI's.

How to use a male condom: Male condoms are really effective when they are used properly. They protect against most but not all STI's. It takes a little practice to use one properly - here are some tips.



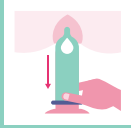
1. Make sure you buy a good quality condom. Look for the BSI Kitemark or CE mark and check the expiry date. 



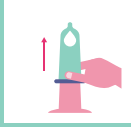
2. Be careful the condom does not tear when you open the packet - don't use your teeth and be careful with long nails and jewellery.



3. Put the condom on before there is any genital contact or penetration-there can be semen on the penis before ejaculation.



4. Don't try to put a condom on if the penis is not hard.
5. Hold the condom at the head of the penis. Pinch the top to get rid of any air and with your other hand gently roll it down over the penis.



6. **Oil-based lubricants (massage or baby oil, petroleum jelly) and products such as body cream can damage condoms making them split. If using a lubricant be sure it is a water-based lubricant.** www.sexualwellbeing.ie

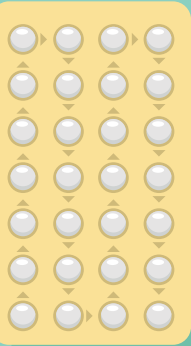


7. When withdrawing after sex, hold the base of the condom. Be careful when removing the condom so that you don't spill any semen. There will still be semen on the penis, so keep it away from the vagina.
8. Wrap the condom in a tissue and dispose of it safely and hygienically (not down the toilet).

A variety of condom types are available including female condoms. If one condom doesn't feel comfortable, check out other condom options.

Contraceptive Choices

Hormonal Contraception:



The Combined Pill. A tablet containing two hormones - oestrogen and progesterone, which prevent eggs being released from the woman's ovaries (ovulation).

Progestogen Only pill (Mini Pill). A tablet containing one artificial hormone progesterone taken at the same time each day, this causes changes making it difficult for sperm to enter the womb or for the womb to accept a fertilised egg.

The contraceptive patch. It is a small plaster that is applied to the skin which releases hormones oestrogen and progesterone to prevent a pregnancy.

Long-acting reversible contraception. (LARC)



Intrauterine System (The Coil/IUS). It is a small plastic T-shaped device or hormone coil placed in the woman's womb that releases the artificial progesterone hormone called levonorgestrel. There are different kinds of IUS available in Ireland. They work by stopping the sperm and egg from surviving in the womb or fallopian tubes.



The Implant (The Bar). It is a small flexible rod about the size of a matchstick which is placed just under the skin on the inside of upper arm. It slowly releases the hormone progesterone and gives contraceptive protection for 3 years. It prevents ovulation taking place and also thickens cervical mucus making it difficult for sperm to enter the womb.



Contraceptive Injection. An injection is given by a healthcare professional every 12 weeks. The injection releases the hormone progesterone very slowly into the body which stops ovulation.

These are prescribed by your GP and are just some of the options available

Emergency Contraception

If you had unprotected sex or think the contraceptive you used did not work, you can access emergency contraception. (Also known as the "morning after pill")

Emergency contraception is a high dose of hormone which can stop/delay ovulation.

There are different emergency contraception choices for different situations so it is important to talk to a health professional (Pharmacist, GP or Nurse) about your options.

Emergency contraception is for emergencies only and is not a substitute for regular contraception.

Emergency contraception does not prevent STI's occurring.

**Emergency
contraception is more
effective the sooner
you take it but is
available up to 120
hours after having
unprotected sex**



Visit www.myoptions.ie for information about continued pregnancy supports or how to access abortion services.

Freephone 1800 828 010 or visit www.sexualwellbeing.ie

For further information on other contraceptive options check out www.sexualwellbeing.ie

Sexuality

Sexuality is a fundamental part of human development which is very personal.

Exploring & Understanding Sexuality

Sexuality is much more than sexual feelings or having sex, it involves our relationships with ourselves and those around us.

Our sexuality can be what drives us to develop the relationships that can be loving, sensual and intimate.

Our feelings about sexuality are an important influence on our sexual health.

A positive attitude to sexuality will support healthy choices and relationships.

Sexual orientation

Sexual orientation can be defined in many ways, it is the term used to describe who a person feels sexual desire for.

You cannot tell a person's sexual orientation just by looking at them. A person may be straight, gay, lesbian, or bisexual and others. Although sexual orientation



probably begins to develop before birth, it may seem to change over the course of a lifetime for some people.

What is the difference between Sex and Gender?

It's common for people to confuse biological sex and gender.

Gender refers to the role of a male or female in society.

Sex relates to biological differences while gender relates to social norms of how men/women should behave.

For some people their biological sex does not line up with their gender identity.

Transgender

A person who identifies as transgender is an individual

whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from their biological sex. This term can include many gender identities such as: transsexual, transgender, crossdresser, androgynous, genderqueer, non-binary, and gender variant.


In 2015 the Irish Government introduced Gender Recognition Legislation. This means that a person of 18 or more can change their birth certificate and other legal documentation. A person of 16 and 17 can also alter this documentation, however, this process needs to go through their guardians, a court process and medically certified.

For further information contact: www.teni.ie or www.Belongto.org



Consent

Simply put consent is when someone agrees, gives permission and says “yes” to sexual activity with another person (including oral sex, genital touching, and vaginal or anal penetration). Before being sexual with someone, you need to know if they want to be sexual with you too. Consent lets the other person know that they also want to have sex.

An illustration of a woman with dark curly hair tied back, wearing a light pink t-shirt and dark blue pants, sitting on a brown wooden chair at a small round table. She is holding a red cup. To her left is a potted plant with large green leaves in an orange pot. To her right, another person's arm and hand holding a red cup are visible. A white speech bubble with a dark blue border contains text.

Consent is about being clear of your own personal choice whilst respecting someone else's.

Important things to know about Consent:

Consent is always freely given, it is a choice you make and should be made without the influence of alcohol, drugs or pressure.

A person can always change their mind at any time about what they want to do, even if they have done it before.

Consent is clear and specifically saying yes to one thing like kissing doesn't mean you have said yes to anything else.

Without consent, sexual activity is sexual assault or rape.

The legal age for consent to sexual activity in Ireland is 17.



SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS

It is important that you are comfortable with what you do and you should never feel pressurised into doing things you are not happy about.



SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS. Puberty brings about changes both physically and emotionally and sexual desire begins to become a part of healthy social and personal relationships. Sex should be pleasurable, there are many things involved in sex to make it enjoyable for both people. People's experience of sex can vary and it may not be what you had expected.

SAFER SEX. Sex includes many activities and is not just about having sexual intercourse. It can include lots of things like kissing, touching, fondling, mutual or self masturbation.

Safer sex is giving and getting sexual pleasure without passing semen, vaginal fluids or blood into your partner's body. Safer sex helps protect you against STI's.

www.sexualwellbeing.ie

FOREPLAY is a term used to describe intimate activity including touching or kissing of the genitals. Sexual arousal is different for everyone and foreplay can help to make sure you are both ready.

KISSING. Sexual experiences can start with a kiss on the lips or other parts of the body. Everyone has their own individual style of kissing.

MASTURBATION refers to touching and stimulating your own genitals or those of your partner. It is perfectly normal and safe. Knowing what you like and what turns you on is important if and when you decide to have sex with someone.

ORGASM is the climax of sexual excitement. It usually involves pleasurable feelings centred in the genitals. For males, ejaculation usually happens at the same time as orgasm. Some women don't find it easy to climax and may need more touching and stimulation to reach orgasm.

ORAL SEX is using the mouth or tongue to arouse the genitals of a sexual partner and can be given and received by both men and women. Oral sex is a choice, some people love it and others don't like it at all. It is important that you are comfortable with what you do.

Do not give oral sex if you have cold sores, as you could spread herpes (see section on STI's). Flavoured condoms can be used for oral sex.

SEXUAL INTERCOURSE.

VAGINAL INTERCOURSE. Most commonly vaginal intercourse includes a penis into the vagina. It may also mean using sex toys to penetrate the vagina.

ANAL INTERCOURSE. Most commonly, people think of anal sex as when a penis enters the anus. However, it might also mean using fingers or sex toys to penetrate the anus. If you are having anal sex it is very important to use a good quality condom and lubricant.

LUBRICATION. Lube is a type of liquid that can be used during sex to help decrease discomfort or increase sexual pleasure. Using lube during penetrative sex can decrease the risk of pain or tearing and in general helps to enhance sexual pleasure.



SEX DURING COVID

COVID-19 can be passed from person-to-person, who may or may not have symptoms, during close and intimate contact. Being sexually active with another person involves some risk of COVID-19 transmission, especially as you may not know if someone has COVID-19 if they have no symptoms. If you or your sexual partner is unwell avoid sexual activity and close contact.

When to consider avoiding sex

Avoid sexual activity and especially kissing if you or your partner has symptoms of COVID-19, such as fever- including chills, dry cough, fatigue, sore throat, shortness of breath or changes to your sense of smell or taste. Anyone with any symptoms of COVID-19 should self-isolate(stay in your room) and get a COVID-19 PCR test. You can do this by phoning a GP or you can book a test online through the HSE.

If you have been identified as a close contact of COVID-19 you should follow the advice you have been given by contact tracing or public health.

If you test positive for COVID-19 avoid sexual activity and close contact until your self-isolation period is over and you are well. If your results are reported as 'not detected' keep in mind a 'not detected' result means that the virus was not found in that sample, someone may have been exposed after their test was taken or have had very low levels of virus that weren't picked up.

There are some things you can do to minimise the risk to yourself and others:

- Do not engage in sexual activity if you have tested positive for COVID-19 or have been asked to self-isolate.
- Avoid sexual activity and close contact if you or your partner is unwell.
- Limit sexual activity to as few partners as possible, preferable one regular partner.
- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before and after sexual activity.
- Masturbation or remote sexual activity are safe alternatives to physical sexual activity. Before you decide to engage in online sexual activity including sexting, consider the risks to yourself and others.
- Heavy breathing and panting can spread the coronavirus so consider wearing a face covering during sexual activity.
- Always practice safer sex using condoms and dental dams which can reduce contact with saliva, semen or faeces during oral, vaginal and anal sex.

DEALING WITH A BREAK UP

Like lots of things in life a break-up can be a positive and be a negative. On the positive side you may feel relief, happiness a sense of freedom and look forward to what the future brings. On the other side you may go through lots of emotions and feel sad, upset, angry, confused, disappointment, rejected or embarrassed.

Often people will tell you you'll get over it or you'll meet someone else, but when it's happening to you it can feel like no one else has ever felt the same way.



Here are some tips that might help when you break-up.

Share your feelings with someone you trust.

Don't be afraid to cry. Going through a break-up can be really tough, and crying can be a big help.

Remember what's good about you. Remind yourself of your good qualities. If you can't think of anything because you're broken hearted, ask your friends to remind you.

Take good care of yourself. Get lots of sleep, eat healthy foods and get some exercise out in the fresh air and meet friends.

Do the things you normally enjoy. Do something you enjoy to take your mind off the negative feelings for a while.

Keeping yourself busy can really help. That doesn't mean you shouldn't think about what happened – working things through in our minds is all part of the healing process and the learning process – it just means you should do other things too.

Give yourself time. It takes time for sadness to go away, but it gets better after a while. Getting over a break-up can take a couple of days to many weeks – or longer.

If you are under 18 you can ring / text / online chat with Childline, the national listening service for children and young people. You can also call the Samaritans, both are free.



ONLINE SAFETY

The internet can be an amazing source of knowledge. It is an accessible world of information, creativity and communication.

With many of us spending more time online, it is important to be aware of how to keep ourselves, our reputations and our online relationships safe.

There are many ways to reduce risk and protect yourself in particular from any prospective dangers.

Be mindful of the following:

- Remember that everything you post online remains there forever... what goes up never comes down!
- It is better to set your profile to private. If you don't want to keep your profile private think about keeping some information private like phone number, e-mail address, date of birth.
- Be Cautious about sharing personal information someone you meet online.
- Never agree to meet someone you've only met online in a non-public place. Always tell a trusted person-preferably an adult of your plans and location. It is wise to exercise caution regardless of how long you have been chatting with someone online.
- If you are harassed, bullied or if you receive any unwanted communication, then block, un-friend, delete and report the other offending user.
- Don't respond to communication that makes you feel uncomfortable.

SEXTING

What is sexting?

Sexting is the sending or receiving of sexual words, pictures, or videos via technology, typically a mobile phone and other social networks

If sexual images or videos of a child or young person (under 17 years of age) are shared or stored on a device, this meets the definition of child pornography which is illegal.

If someone receives a sext or other pornographic material they can report this to www.hotline.ie

This is an anonymous facility to report suspected illegal content.

Remember, if you are under 18, a sexual image of you will be considered child exploitation material. This means that you and the person you send it too could be in some very serious trouble. Possessing or distributing explicit images of a young person under 18 is illegal and can lead to criminal prosecution. Penalties can include imprisonment and/ or a fine. Offenders are also automatically added to the sex offenders register for at least 2 ½ years and there are no exceptions.



THE LAW AND CONSENT

In Ireland, you must be 17 years of age or older to be able to give legal consent to engaging in sexual acts with people of the same sex or a different sex often this is called the age of consent.

What is a “sexual act” according to the law?

The law (Sexual Offences against the person Act 2017) describes a “sexual act” as:

- Sexual intercourse (vaginal or anal)
- Penetration of the anus or mouth by the penis
- Penetration of the vagina by an object
- Aggravated sexual assault



Why is there a legal age of consent?

The law is there to protect young people. It also aims to prevent older people from taking advantage of younger people. It is a crime to engage in a sexual act with a person who has not yet reached the age of 17.

What is Consent?

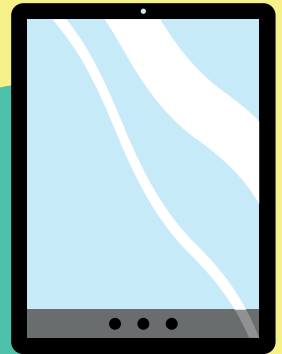
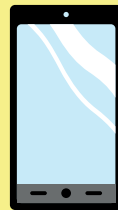
- Consent means to give permission or to agree. It is very important that both people give consent to have sex before they have sex.
- Consent to a sexual act should be verbal – the person has said yes and is sober enough to know what they are agreeing to.

PORNOGRAPHY

Many young people access porn because they are curious, they want to know what the body looks like and what happens during sex or they want to know how to perform. It is important to be aware that pornography can distort your expectations about sex and relationships.

Pornography is found in a variety of media including books, magazines, photographs, drawings, paintings, animation, film, video and others

Remember people in porn are acting, and what looks great on screen may not work as well in real life. There are huge differences between real life sex and porn



COCO'S LAW

In February 2021 the Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act was commenced, known as Coco's Law.

Coco's Law creates two new offences which criminalise the non-consensual distribution of intimate images:

- **It is an offence to** distribute or publish intimate images of a person, without consent and with intent to cause harm. Penalties include an unlimited fine and/or **7 years imprisonment.**
- **It is an offence to** take, distribute or publish intimate images of a person without consent even if there is no specific intent to cause harm. Penalties include a maximum fine of €5,000 and/or **12 months' imprisonment.**

Importantly, this applies even if the person initially gave consent for the picture to be taken, but they were later shared with other people without their consent.

UNPLANNED PREGNANCY

Sometimes an unplanned pregnancy can bring up mixed feelings and emotions. It's a good idea to talk to someone you trust like a family member, friend or trusted adult. Speaking to a professional counsellor can also help you make sense of what's happening and what options are available to you. Counselling support and information can be accessed for free through My Options, see information below.

The HSE provides information and support on all your options, including continued pregnancy supports and abortion services.

You can get free and confidential advice on all your options at:

www.myoptions.ie a HSE support service.

You can call My Options on freephone 1800 828 010

From outside of Republic of Ireland call +353 1 687 7044



Sexually Transmitted Infections: (STI's)

The background is a dark blue gradient with a pattern of small, light blue dots. Overlaid on this are several light blue circles of various sizes, some connected by thin white lines, creating a network-like structure. A prominent feature is a bright yellow starburst or cluster of small dots in the center-right area.

What is an STI?

An STI is a sexually transmitted infection.

How are STI's passed on?

STI's are passed on through sexual contact with someone who is infected.

Types of STI's

Currently all types of STI's can be either caused by Bacterial Infections, Viral Infections and parasites. All STI's can be treated but they are all not curable.

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI's)

Sex can be fun and pleasurable, but if you want to stay healthy, you need to take precautions. When you have unprotected sexual contact with a person you may pick up an infection from them. A person who has an STI can pass it on to another person without even realising. STI's are increasing in Ireland. The best way to avoid them is to know about them and protect yourself.

How do you know if you have an STI?

Often you can have an STI and show no symptoms. It is possible to have more than one STI at a time. The only way to find out if you've an STI is to be tested.

The symptoms can include:

- Unusual discharge from the penis or vagina
- Pain or burning when urinating (taking a pee)
- Itching, rashes, lumps, ulcers, sores or blisters on or around the genitals
- Pain during sex
- Bleeding between periods for women

How can you reduce the risk of STI's?

Condoms help protect against most STI's, so use them correctly every time you have sex.

Avoid oral sex if you or your partner has sores on the mouth, gums or genitals.

Anal sex is a high risk activity for STI transmission. Always use a good quality condom and lubricant.

Be careful if using drugs or alcohol, as they can make you do things that you might regret and leave you more open to taking risks.

Where can you get help?

If you think you may have an STI, it is important to be tested. You should visit your GP, pharmacist or an STI clinic for professional advice.

See www.sexualwellbeing.ie for clinics across Ireland

See www.spunout/health/article/what-to-expect-at-an-sti-clinic for more information

STI'S AT A GLANCE

Name	What is it?	How is it passed?	What are the common symptoms?
Chlamydia	Chlamydia is a bacterial infection. It is one of the most common STIs. If it is not treated, it can cause infertility in women.	> unprotected sex (oral, vaginal, anal) > using unwashed sex toys > mother-to-baby during delivery	Often there are no symptoms. > Discharge from the vagina, penis or anus. > Pain or discomfort passing urine.
Genital Herpes (HSV)	Genital herpes is a viral infection caused by the herpes simplex virus (HSV). HSV 1 is more commonly associated with 'cold sores' around the mouth. HSV 2 is most commonly associated with genital infection.	The herpes virus is transmitted by skin-to-skin contact, kissing, vaginal and anal sex, oral sex (mouth to genital contact) and from mother-to-baby during delivery.	Often there are no symptoms. > Multiple spots or red bumps around the genital area. > Swollen glands in the groin. > Flu-like symptoms. > Pain or discomfort passing urine.
Genital Warts (HPV)	Genital warts are 'warts' in the genital area caused by a virus called the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV).	HPV is passed by skin-to-skin contact, usually genital skin-to-skin contact.	Often there are no symptoms. If you do get genital warts, they are often flesh-coloured lumps or bumps on the skin, anywhere in the genital or anal area.
Gonorrhoea	Gonorrhoea is a curable bacterial infection. If it is not treated, it can cause infertility in women	Gonorrhoea is passed from one person to another through: > unprotected sex (oral, vaginal, anal) > rimming (mouth to anus contact) > using unwashed sex toys > mother-to-baby during delivery	Men > discharge from the tip of the penis > burning pain when passing urine > 1 in 10 men have no symptoms > bowel symptoms such as diarrhoea, pain, mucus discharge or bleeding from the back passage > pain and swelling in one or both testicles Women > 7 in 10 women have no symptoms
Hepatitis B	Hepatitis B is a viral infection that infects the liver. In most people a full course of vaccination prevents infection.	unprotected sexual contact, including vaginal, anal or oral contact and rimming (mouth to anus contact) > sharing needles > mother-to-baby during pregnancy or delivery > sharing toothbrushes, razors or towels contaminated with infected blood	Many people have no symptoms. Others have symptoms when they first become infected. These can last for several weeks and may include flu-like symptoms, yellow skin, nausea, vomiting or diarrhoea.
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is a virus that attacks the human immune system and weakens its ability to fight infection and disease.	> having sex without a condom (vaginal or anal) with someone who is HIV positive and not on effective HIV treatment > very rarely through oral sex without a condom with someone who is HIV positive and not on effective HIV treatment (this risk is extremely low) > sharing needles or works (injecting equipment) with someone who is HIV positive and not on effective HIV treatment.	Some people get a flu-like illness when they first become infected with HIV. Many people are often unaware that they're infected because they may not feel sick right away or for many years after being infected with HIV.
Pubic lice (crabs)	Pubic lice are small insects that live in the kind of coarse hair you might have on your chest, abdomen, underarms and pubic areas. They do not live in head hair.	Pubic lice are passed from person to person by: > skin-to-skin contact > sexual contact > sharing clothing, towels or bedding.	itching > black spots (from the lice droppings) on your underwear > brown lice eggs in your pubic hair > small blood spots on your skin or underwear
Syphilis	Syphilis is caused by a bacteria called Treponema pallidum.	> skin-to-skin contact or coming into direct contact with a syphilis sore > unprotected oral, vaginal and anal sex > mother-to-baby during pregnancy (congenital syphilis)	Symptoms can vary from a painless sore (ulcer) to a rash all over the body. Often there are no symptoms.
Trichomonas Vaginalis (TV)	TV is a sexually transmitted infection caused by a germ called a protozoan. TV can infect the vagina in women and the urethra (the tube through which you pass urine) and underneath the foreskin in men.	> unprotected sex (oral, vaginal, anal) > using unwashed sex toys > from mother-to-baby during delivery.	Often there are no symptoms. > Discharge from the vagina, penis or anus. > Pain or discomfort passing urine.

How can I be tested?	What are the Treatments?	How can I avoid it?
Chlamydia is diagnosed by taking a urine sample in men and a vaginal swab in women	Chlamydia is treated with antibiotics.	Using condoms correctly and every time you have sex will reduce your risk of getting chlamydia.
If you have visible blisters, the doctor or nurse will take a swab from the sore for testing and sometimes may also take a blood sample.	Treatment usually involves antiviral tablets, to help speed up the healing process. Usually the pain can be managed with simple painkillers and a local anaesthetic (numbing) cream.	Using condoms and taking antiviral medication can reduce the risk of passing on genital herpes. It is best to avoid sex during an outbreak.
Genital warts are diagnosed by the doctor or nurse examining the genitals.	Treatments include: > cryotherapy (freezing) > creams > surgery – if there are lots of warts or if they do not respond to other treatments	There is now a vaccine which protects against the main types of HPV.
For men, a urine sample and sometimes a swab from the penis is taken. For women a swab is taken from the vagina. Sometimes a swab will be taken from the throat or rectum (back passage).	Gonorrhoea is treated with antibiotics.	Use condoms every time you have sex.
Hepatitis B is detected by a blood test	There are different stages of hepatitis B infection. Some stages need treatment and some do not need treatment but need to be checked regularly (monitored).	There are vaccines that prevent infection with hepatitis B. It can also be prevented by using condoms and not sharing needles.
HIV is detected by a blood test.	HIV can be treated effectively with medications. HIV treatment stops HIV reproducing in the body. When taken properly, HIV treatment enables most people with HIV to live a long and healthy life.	You can reduce your risk of getting HIV by: > using condoms every time you have vaginal or anal sex > not sharing sex toys, or using condoms if you do > not sharing needles or other injecting equipment, including spoons, filters and water > taking post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) if you have been exposed to HIV > taking pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) if you are at substantial risk.
Pubic lice are diagnosed by a careful clinical examination.	Pubic lice are treated with a cream, shampoo or lotion that you can get over the counter in your local pharmacy. This treatment is repeated after 3 to 7 days.	Crabs are contagious and spread easily when people's genitals and pubic hair rub together. The only definite way to prevent crabs is to not have sex.
Syphilis is usually diagnosed by a blood test. Sometimes a swab is taken from a sore (ulcer).	Syphilis can be treated and cured with antibiotics. Treatment depends on your symptoms and how long you have had the infection.	Use condoms every time you have sex.
A swab will be taken and tested	TV is treated with antibiotics.	Use condoms every time you have sex.

GLOSSARY

Terminology can feel like a minefield and terms change over time. Below is a list of common words you may come across.

LGBTI+: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans+ and intersex people.

Lesbian: A woman who is attracted to other women.

Gay: Someone who is attracted to people of the same gender.

Bisexual: Someone who is attracted to people of the same gender and also to people of other genders.

Transgender: People whose gender identity differs from the sex they were given at birth. Trans+ includes non-binary people.

Intersex: People who are born with variations in their sexual anatomy or their hormonal patterns, variations that are not seen as fitting in with typical male or female bodies.

Sexual Orientation: Sexual and romantic attraction.

Gender identity: Our deeply felt internal experience of our own gender.

Heterosexual: Someone who is attracted to people of a different gender.

LGBTI+ bullying: Bullying based on prejudice or discrimination towards LGBTI+ people.

Pansexual: Someone who could be attracted to any person, regardless of their gender.

Gender expression: How we show our gender through our clothing, hair, behaviour, etc.

Cisgender: Someone who is not transgender or non-binary.

Androgynous: A person whose gender identity is both male and female, or neither male or female. They might present as a combination of male and female or as sometimes male and sometimes female.

Non-binary: People whose gender identity is not exclusively male or female. Some non-binary people use they/them pronouns. This includes individuals whose gender identity is neither exclusively male nor female, a combination of male and female or between or beyond genders. Under the non-binary umbrella people may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms such as: gender fluid, genderqueer, etc.

Cross dresser: A person who wears items of clothing commonly associated with the opposite sex.

Transition: A process through which some transgender people begin to live as the gender with which they identify, rather than the one assigned at birth. Transition might include social, physical or legal changes such as coming out to family, friends, co-workers and others; changing one's appearance; changing one's name, pronoun and sex designation on legal documents (e.g. driving license or passport); and medical intervention (e.g. through hormones or surgery).

For a more complete glossary of transgender terms please visit www.teni.ie

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

HSE: Sexualwellbeing.ie is the HSE's sexual health website www.sexualwellbeing.ie

HSE: B4uDecide.ie is the HSE's website on relationships and sexuality for young people. It also has sections for parents, teachers and youth workers. www.b4udecide.ie

HSE: Sexualwellbeing.ie is the HSE's sexual health website. It has a section to help parents talk with their children about relationships, sexuality and growing up. www.sexualwellbeing.ie

HSE: Advice for Mams & Dads – Talking to Teenagers about Relationships & Sex is a free supplement to assist parents of older adolescents in talking with their teenagers about relationships and sexuality. www.healthpromotion.ie/hp-les/docs/HCP000671.pdf

HSE: Busy Bodies is a free DVD and booklet on puberty. www.healthpromotion.ie/health/inner/busy_bodies

HSE: www.yourmentalhealth.ie

Department of Education and Skills: Stay Safe is a programme that promotes personal safety skills and is taught in most primary schools. Its website has a section for parents. www.staysafe.ie/parents.htm

Department of Education and Skills: Webwise.ie offers advice and information for parents to help them promote online safety to their children. www.webwise.ie/parents/

BeLonG To: BeLonG To Youth Services is that national organisations supporting young lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI+) people and their parents. See www.belongto.ie

Spunout: Spunout.ie is a youth information website created by young people, for young people. www.spunout.ie

Tusla: Key messages on what works best for children and families at different ages and stages. www.tusla.ie/parenting-24-seven/

TENI: TENI is the national organisation supporting Transgender people, including young Transgender people and their parents. See www.teni.ie.

Unplanned pregnancy: www.myoptions.ie freephone 1800 828 010 outside Ireland +35316877044

NSPCC: PANTS (The Underwear Rule) is a simple tool for teaching children about personal safety. The UK website contains guides for parents and teachers and a range of materials for children, including an animated video with the PANTS song and a downloadable video game. The children's guides are also adapted for children with disabilities and autism and there is a video for children who are deaf. www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/underwear-rule/

IFPA - Speakeasy: The Irish Family Planning Association offers, Speakeasy, a course designed to provide parents, guardians and carers with the information, skills and confidence needed to talk to their children openly about relationships, sexuality and keeping safe. They also offer, Speakeasy Plus for parents of children with a physical or intellectual disability or with the extra support needs. For more detail see www.ifpa.ie/Education-Training/Programmes

National Parents' Council-Primary: The NPC offer parents a training course entitled, supporting your child to build a healthy friendship and relationships. This can be accessed online or can be requested as a group training for your school. For more detail see www.npc.ie/training.aspx. The NPC also have a helpline for parents on: 01 887 4477

One Family: One Family offer a free one-to-one sexual health awareness programme to support parents in talking with children in a way that nurtures their child's curiosity and supports their developing sexual health and well-being. For more detail see www.onefamily.ie

Childline: Childline provides support services for young people through online chat via text and over the phone. Freephone 1800 666 666 or text TALK to 50101

Samaritans: Samaritans provides a listening support service.

Call Freephone: 116 123

Text: 087 260 90 90 (standard text rates apply)

Email: jo@samaritans.ie

www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/underwear-rule/

Local Agencies

North East Sexual Health Service

Our Lady of Lourdes
Hospital - Drogheda

Louth County Hospital – Dundalk

Telephone: 086 8241847

SH:24.ie

SH:24 is a free home STI testing service, delivered in partnership with the HSE. This means that anyone from the age of 17 can order a free STI test to their home. Results are communicated through the SH:24 clinical team by phone or text message. If follow up testing or treatment is required, this is provided for free by HSE public STI clinics. For more information on the SH:24 home STI testing service and how to order a test is available on www.sh24.ie

Your GP

You can make an appointment with your GP and speak to them about how you feel. They will be able to talk you through what might help you. If you are not sure about what GP's are in your area, you can find a local GP here: <https://www2.hse.ie/services/find-a-gp>

Youth Work Ireland Cavan Monaghan

Ballybay, Castleblayney,
Carrickmacross & Clones

Telephone: 042 9751979

Email: info@ywicm.ie

Website: <https://www.ywicm.ie>

Bounce Back Youth Service

Ballyjamesduff, Baileborough,
Ballyconnell, Belturbet
& Kingscourt

Telephone: 087 7684757

Email: con@ywicm.ie

Website: <https://www.ywicm.ie>

Cavan Monaghan Rainbow Youth

LGBTI+ support and information
service for young people,
their families & peers.

Telephone: 087 219 3904

Email: info@camry.ie

Website: <https://camry.ie/>

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