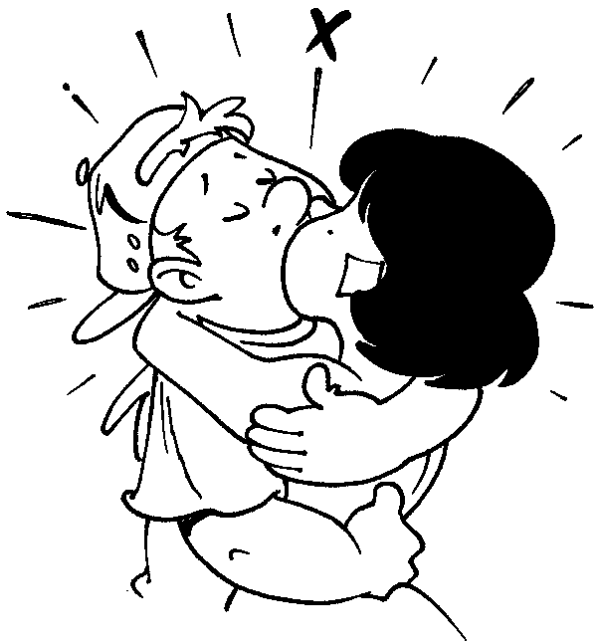


More Talk About Sex!



**An information leaflet
for young people with
spina bifida and/or
hydrocephalus**

More Talk About Sex

Everybody can have a loving, caring relationship and THIS MEANS YOU!

When you have a special boyfriend/girlfriend, you might want to make love. And it's natural to worry if sex will be all right – whether you're disabled or able-bodied. But you don't have to make love to have a loving relationship. You should only do what feels right for you and your partner.

Sexual intercourse

(Sometimes called 'making love').

When two people feel very sexy and attracted to each other, they may feel that they want to be as close as they can in a sexual way, so close that the boy's erect penis goes inside the girl's vagina. Don't panic – the girl's vagina will stretch open in a way to fit around the penis.

BUT, before you make love with your boyfriend or girlfriend, you need to talk about it together and answer some very important questions.

Q Are we old enough to do it?

A You must both be at least 16 years old before you make love. It is against the law before the age of 16. If you are a homosexual boy (gay),

then you must be over 18 to have gay sex.

Q Are you ready to have a baby?

A Probably not yet! If you make love, it is possible for the girl to get pregnant – yes, even the very first time you do it.

Q Have you thought about how not to get pregnant when you make love? (contraception)

A There are lots of different kinds of contraception. You may have heard of some, like condoms or the pill. You will need proper advice from a Family Planning Clinic or your family doctor about the best contraception for you. Don't be shy about asking – this is private between you and the doctor.

Q If we do want to have a baby, what are the chances that the baby will have spina bifida or hydrocephalus?

A If you or your partner have spina bifida, then you are at greater risk of having a baby with spina bifida.

But you can reduce this risk by taking a 5mg folic acid pill every day for at least a month before you get pregnant and continue for the first three months of your pregnancy.

You need to get a prescription for this folic acid pill from your doctor.

If you have hydrocephalus alone, it is very unlikely that your baby will

have hydrocephalus or spina bifida.

Q Have you heard about 'safe sex'?

A This means making love without passing on or catching any sexual diseases like AIDS. Probably the best answer is to use a condom (you may have heard these called rubbers or johnnies). This is a very thin rubbery cover which fits over an erect penis and needs to be put on before you start to make love.

A condom is a bit like a penile sheath but it is not the same. Condoms do not have any holes in them – this is to stop the sperm going into the girl's vagina, otherwise she could get pregnant. You must NOT use a penile sheath as a condom.

Q Can people with spina bifida make love?

A Making love will usually be possible if one of you has spina bifida but you may need to try different positions to find one that is comfortable.

Even if full sexual intercourse does not seem possible (because the boy cannot get an erection, for example), there may be ways to help you get over these problems. If you cannot get an erection, perhaps a sex aid could be used to support the penis – to find out more about sex aids, or different positions for making love, contact SIA. Their phone number is on the back of this leaflet.

What if I have continence problems?

There are practical ways you can cope with incontinence so that it does not 'get in the way' when you make love.

An empty bladder helps avoid accidents. Wear attractive underwear if it makes you feel good, particularly if you want to make love with your partner for the first time but you feel embarrassed about your appearance.

BUT REMEMBER ...

YOU can have a loving sex life in many ways even if you have very restricted movements or if you don't have feeling in your penis or vagina.

Where can I find out more?

Look again at our leaflet *Let's Talk About Sex*. Or contact any of the following:

Family Planning Association

2-12 Pentonville Road, London N1 9FP
Helpline: 0845 310 1334 (9am-7pm Monday-Friday). Web: www.fpa.org.uk

Relate, Helpline: 0845 130 4010

SIA - Spinal Injuries Association has some useful information on sexual issues.
76 St James Lane, London N10 3DF
Telephone: 020 8444 2121. Helpline: 0800

980 0501 freephone. Fax 020 8444 3761
Email: sia@spinal.co.uk
Web: www.spinal.co.uk

Your ASBAH Adviser, Contact your ASBAH adviser, or nearest ASBAH office. If you don't know who to contact, telephone us on 01733-555988.

RESOURCES



Book

"Enabling romance - A Guide to Love, Sex & Relationships for the Disabled"
by Ken Kroll & Erica Levy Klein.
1995 Woodbine House.
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Getting the most out of life