

SEXUAL HEALTH IN PLAIN ENGLISH

CONSENT

People have the right to say **'yes'** or **'no'** to things in their lives. Everyone is in charge of their own body.

When it comes to being sexy with another person, all people involved must give consent. Consent means agreement or permission.

To give consent it is important to make sure that all people:

- know and understand what is happening (no-one is being tricked or fooled)
- have a similar understanding of what is **O.K.** and **NOT O.K.** behaviour ([see Healthy Relationships factsheet](#))
- know what can happen during and after sexual contact
- respect each other's decisions when giving or not giving consent.

Consent is:

- free agreement
- saying 'yes' without fear
- saying 'yes' without force
- saying 'yes' without pressure
- something that can be taken away at any time (if someone changes their mind)
- something that must be given every time something sexy happens with another person
- something that can be expressed in words and by actions
- the same for people of all sexes, sexualities, genders and abilities
- required every time, even when married or the person is a boyfriend, girlfriend or partner.

There is **NOT** consent if someone is:

- saying 'yes' because of pressure (e.g. someone is made to feel bad about saying no, like when someone says 'if you love me, you would have sex')
- saying 'yes' because they are scared of saying no
- saying 'yes' because they are forced to or worried that someone else will be forced
- saying yes because they have been stopped from leaving the place where they are (e.g. a locked car or room)
- saying 'yes' even though they don't understand what is going to happen or what sex is
- saying 'yes' because they think the act is for medical or hygiene reasons
- affected by illegal drugs or alcohol
- silent in word or action (does not say 'yes' or 'no').

People can say no to sexual contact; this is called withholding or **NOT** giving consent. Doing sexy things without consent is **NOT O.K.** and is against the law.

It is against the law:

- to do sexy things without consent
- for people in the same family to do sexy things together (it's only O.K. if they are an adult couple doing things together e.g.: parents, grandparents)
- for a carer/support worker/ therapist to have sex with the people they support
- to have sex with someone who is under the legal 'age to consent'. These ages vary across Australia.

For state specific information visit: [https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/age-consent-laws or Youth Law Australia](https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/age-consent-laws-or-Youth-Law-Australia) <https://yla.org.au/about-us/>