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by Elisa Klein

It sounds cheesy, but there is just something magical about the prom. Maybe it's the ride in a stretch limo that makes you feel like a celebrity, or the glammed-up attire. It could be the twinkly lights that decorate the ballroom, or being out all night with your closest friends. No matter what it is that makes you feel like you are on top of the world, prom is definitely a night to remember!

quick poll

Do you think there's a lot of pressure to have sex on prom night?



Yes



No

shout out!

archives

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But you want to remember prom for the *right* reasons, not the wrong ones! It might seem like everyone's "doing it" on prom night, but the truth is, while some people choose to have sex on prom night, many others don't! It's a very personal decision, so don't feel like you have to give into pressure and do something you're not ready for.

But if there's a possibility that prom night might be *the* night, think about what you need to make your prom perfect. If the only item on your list is breath spray, here are some other suggestions for how to be prepared.

A Sexy Safety Kit

"A lot of teens decide to have sex for the first time on prom night," explains Eric, 18. "Or, they may think that having sexual intercourse on prom night will make it that much more special. Having condoms handy would only be smart." So, if there is even the remotest possibility that you are going to have sexual intercourse on prom night, then latex or female condoms should definitely be on your accessory list! And fortunately, they fit easily in an evening bag or wallet, and there is no age requirement for buying them. "It's a little bit intimidating the first time you buy condoms," says Rebekkah, 17, "but you can also get them at health clinics, most times for free!"

In fact, to help teens stay safer at prom, Planned Parenthood of Minnesota/South Dakota gave high school students "prom survival kits" containing breath mints, confetti, condoms, and a \$10 coupon for contraceptive services. "We just wanted to make it a little bit easier for sexually active teens to practice safer sex," explained education director Katherine Meerse.

Condoms Are Required Attire!

Remember the facts: latex and female condoms are highly effective in preventing pregnancy, and they're the only forms of birth control that also help reduce the risk of sexually transmitted infections. Condoms block the exchange of body fluids and help protect you and your partner during vaginal or anal intercourse. In order for condoms to be effective, they must be used with *every partner, every time* you have intercourse.

Oral sex isn't as high risk as vaginal or anal intercourse, but using a barrier can also help reduce the risk of infections. For safer oral sex, use a condom to cover the penis, or a Glyde[®] dam or plastic wrap to cover the vulva or anus.

Want even more protection? Many clinicians recommend that a woman keep emergency contraception pills (ECPs) on hand, in case a condom breaks or she has unprotected sex. To find out where you can get ECPs, call 1-888-NOT-2-LATE.

More Safer Sex Options

Of course, there's more to safer sex than just using condoms and keeping ECPs on hand. A lot of teens choose to skip intercourse and practice outercourse instead, which can include kissing, body rubbing (dry humping), and mutual masturbation. By keeping body fluids away from the vagina, anus, and mouth, partners greatly reduce the risk of pregnancy and infection.

The decision whether or not to have sexual intercourse after the prom should not be taken lightly. And although the prom may seem like the end-all, be-all of your high school career, it's just one night. "I think that teens get way too jazzed up about the prom," says Allie, 19. "There's a lot of pressure to make it the best night of your life, but it's just a good party ... that's all!" The message here is clear: Relax ... have a ball ... and *be prepared!*

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