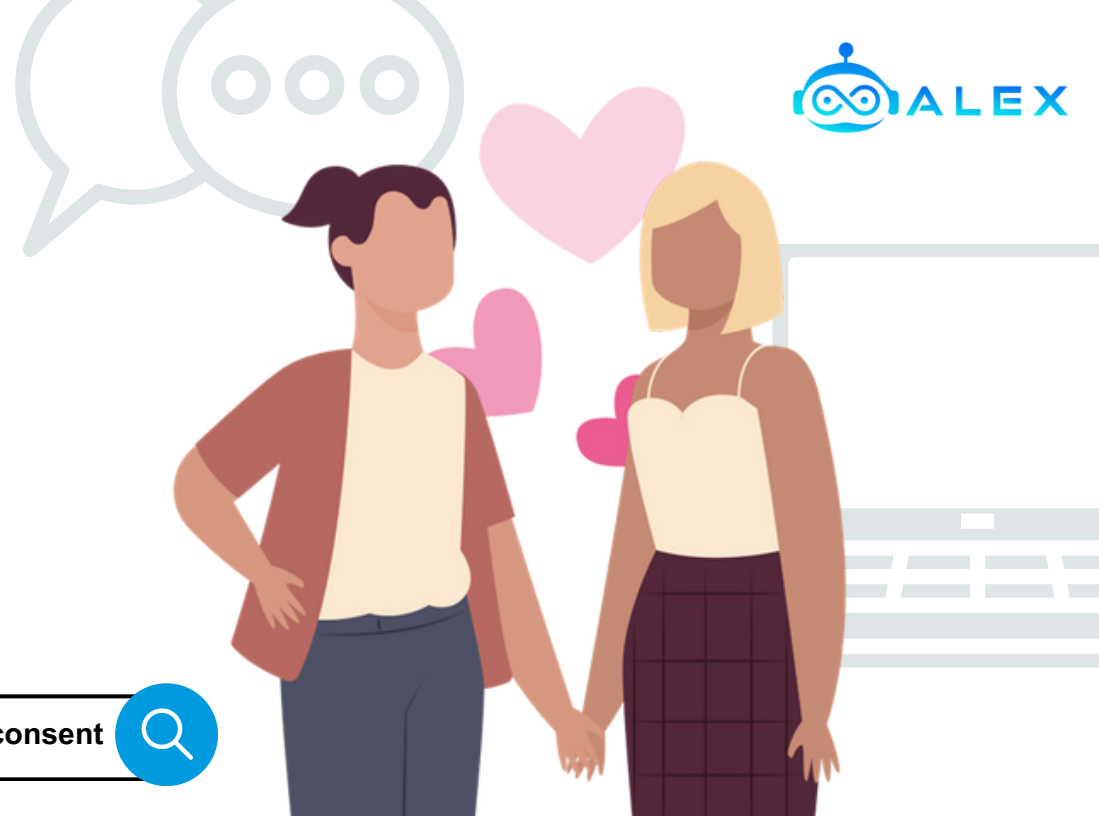


SEXUAL THOUGHTS AND BEHAVIOUR

Will having sex change me?

KEY WORDS sexuality | physical changes | emotions | identity | consent 

Sex is defined in many ways, and everyone's experience is different. For some, only penetration of sexual body parts counts as sex, and for others, sex also includes activities that do not involve penetration, such as masturbating with a partner and orally pleasuring a partner. How you define sex is up to you, so don't pressure yourself to fit into a box!

There are so **many different reactions** you could have, both **emotional and physical**, to having sex — all of which can be completely normal. What matters is that you and your partner are comfortable, give consent, use protection, and are 100 percent sure you are ready to take this step.



In terms of physical changes to your body that can occur after sex, there are not many. If you have a vagina, your hymen might have broken and you may feel a bit sore when you have sex for the first time. This should go away by the next day and you should feel no pain the next time you have sexual intercourse. If you have a penis, it will still look and feel the same after sex. Having sex for the first time may just lead to experiencing new sensations and understanding one's desires.

The main change you may experience is in your own mind. Emotionally, sex can bring about a range of feelings. For some, sex might deepen the emotional connection with a partner, providing a unique level of intimacy. However, it's essential to remember that emotions associated with sex can differ, and not everyone experiences the same emotional impact.



Communication with your partner and understanding each other's expectations can contribute to a healthier and more fulfilling experience. It is crucial to **prioritise safe and consensual encounters**, ensuring that you are comfortable with the pace and nature of what you are doing together. If you have feelings of disgust or feel ashamed or if you feel a sense of remorse or regret, it is important **to speak to someone you trust** - a trusted friend, parent or guardian, doctor, or counsellor.

One common concern is whether having sex will change one's identity or how others perceive them. It is important to recognise that **engaging in consensual sexual activity does not define your worth or character**. Your identity remains yours to shape, and sexual experiences are just one aspect of the journey of self-discovery.

While having sex can introduce new physical and emotional elements into your life, the extent of change is unique to each individual. Your worth and identity are not defined by your sexual experiences! It's important to explore all aspects of yourself to truly understand and navigate the challenges that come with growing up.



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