Are YOU thinking of having sex?
Are you ready?
The message that ‘everyone is having sex’ can often seem to come from all sides - from your boyfriend or girlfriend, your friends and from the media. But don’t let this kind of pressure push you into having sex.

It is up to you to make the decision. Having sex for the first time is a very big step and should not be rushed into. Going on dates, kissing, cuddling and other “non-penetrative” sexual activities can be really fun while you are getting to know each other until you feel you are BOTH ready for anything more serious.

Remember that it’s your choice...
“Everybody is doing it!” or “If you don’t have sex with me I’ll dump you.” These may sound familiar but they are not acceptable. Nobody has the right to force you to do anything that you are not comfortable with and you should not be intimidated.

Remember that it’s your body, your choice and your right to say “no”! And bear in mind that just because you might be ready to have sex does not necessarily mean that your girlfriend or boyfriend is comfortable with the idea.

If you are both really ready...
Okay, so just because you are both ready does not mean you can be careless!

When used properly condoms are the only form of contraception that protect against BOTH unintended pregnancy and STIs. You should use one every time you have sexual intercourse and oral sex. Condoms are available free from family planning clinics, many sexual health clinics and some GPs.

The Pill is available free from your local doctor or family planning clinic, as well as most pharmacies with a prescription. Remember that whilst the Pill protects from unwanted pregnancies it does NOT prevent the transmission of HIV and other STIs.

Most young people use condoms and the pill, but there are also many other contraception options available that you can discuss with your local doctor or health professional.

Meeting a cute girl or guy is always fun, kissing and dating, things can sometimes get messy. This is a discussion that all young people should be aware of.
Sex and the law

Many young people seem to think that if they feel ready to have sex and they use protection then there are no other considerations. But every teenager needs to know the laws and what they mean.

In England, Scotland and Wales, the legal age of consent for sex (both gay and straight) is 16. In Northern Ireland, both people have to be over 17. It is a criminal offence to break the law on age of consent.

The legal age of consent for anal sex between a man and a woman in England and Wales is 18. In Scotland it’s 16. In Northern Ireland it’s illegal. The legal age of consent for anal sex between two men in the UK is 16, provided both men consent.

The law considers anyone under 13 to be unable to understand the consequences of having sex. So even if a 12 year old consented to sex, it is still illegal to have sex with them.

Regardless of age or where you live in the UK, it is illegal to have sex unless both people give their consent.

Your rights and responsibilities

No one has the right to sexually abuse you: rape (being forced to have sex against your will), incest (sexual intercourse between closely related persons – e.g. father, uncle, brother), being touched or forced to perform a sexual act on someone, are NOT acceptable and are illegal.

Over the past few years some people with HIV have been prosecuted for the transmission of HIV to their girlfriends or boyfriends. If you have HIV and then infect another person with the virus you may be held responsible and risk prosecution and imprisonment.

Remember though that it is your responsibility to protect yourself against HIV. Just because a person does not say that he/she has HIV does not mean that they don’t. Similarly a person who says they don’t have HIV may not be telling the truth.

If you have any questions about your responsibilities phone THT Direct on 0845 1221 200 for support and advice.

It's fun and exciting. From flirting, sometimes move very fast and before you if “sex” comes up...
School nurse or Student Support Service
You can talk to your nurse or health professional who should be well informed about sexual health issues and will be able to give you information and advice.

Clinics
Go to www.fpa.org.uk to find your nearest clinic depending on your needs. You can access contraceptive clinics for young people, infection testing (GUM) clinics, family planning clinics or clinics that provide emergency contraception. Health advisers can also offer you support and advice at these clinics.

Under 18?
For free confidential advice on sex, relationships and contraception phone Sexwise on 0800 28 29 30 (open from 7am to midnight every day, 7 days a week). The advisers are really friendly and helpful and are used to working with young people. Go to www.ruthinking.co.uk for more info on these issues and to find out where your nearest sexual health clinic is.

Over 18?
Visit www.playingsafety.co.uk where you can access all the information that you need to keep healthy and stay safe. You can also phone the free Sexual Health Information Line on 0800 567 123 for confidential advice and support (7 days a week, 24 hours a day. Calls from mobiles may be charged).