

If I am concerned about HPV (human papillomavirus) and getting cervical cancer, what can I do?

The sexually transmitted infection HPV is the leading cause of cervical cancer. In Ireland, women aged 25-60 are entitled to free cervical cancer screening (smear tests), which is testing to check for signs of cervical cancer. For free cervical screening, contact **CervicalCheck** and register yourself for free screening online, by phone, or by filling out a form and posting it to **CervicalCheck**.

If I am pregnant but do not want to be pregnant, what can I do?

If you are experiencing a crisis pregnancy (a pregnancy that you did not plan or want), you have three options: becoming a parent, adoption, and abortion.

Adoption is when you have your child placed with another family for life, and **The Adoption Authority of Ireland** will give you information on how adoptions work in Ireland.

Abortion is the termination, or ending, of a pregnancy. You can end a pregnancy through a surgical procedure or through the use of different abortion pills that can work for up to 24 weeks. Abortion is illegal in Ireland except for when there is a real and large risk to the mother's life (the pregnancy is very dangerous for the mother), including from the threat of suicide. Even though it is illegal in Ireland, you can still go abroad to terminate your pregnancy. The **Irish Family Planning Association (IFPA)** provides free and confidential pregnancy counselling, and their counsellors can provide you with information and support about traveling abroad for abortions and obtaining a visa. They also offer free post-abortion counselling and medical check-ups.

Is it legal for women to undergo female genital mutilation (FGM) in Ireland?

It is not legal for women in Ireland to be subjected to FGM. It is also illegal to attempt to perform FGM, and to take a girl out of Ireland to another country to undergo FGM. If someone commits any of these crimes, they can be imprisoned and fined.

Where can I get help if I was subjected to female genital mutilation (FGM)?

The **Irish Family Planning Association** offers a free, specialized FGM Treatment Service at its Dublin city centre clinic. It provides medical care like pain and infection management, fertility advice, surgery referral, psychological counselling, and more. They also offer translation services if you request them.

There is a drop-in clinic every Wednesday, with no appointment needed. To make an appointment at other times, text or phone the FGM Treatment Service confidential line at: 0858771342.

Rape and Sexual Assault Treatment:

Rape Crisis Centres (24 hour helpline: 1800 778888)

Web: <http://www.drcc.ie/>

Sexual Assault Treatment Units (Dublin tel: 01 8171736)

Complete list of clinics around Ireland:

<http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/5/sexhealth/satu/>

STI Testing (free and confidential):

St. James Hospital (Tel: 01 4162315/4162316)

GUIDE Clinic, James's Street, Dublin 8

Web: www.guide2guide.ie

STI testing, interpreters; 18 & younger from 10am Thursdays

Mater Misericordiae Hospital (Tel: 01 8032063)

Infectious Diseases Unit, Eccles Street, Dublin

Web: www.mater.ie

HIV Ireland (Tel: 018733799)

70 Eccles Street, Dublin 7

Web: <http://www.hivireland.ie>

Free HIV and STI testing, counselling, support, advocacy, and free condoms (you can ask at reception)

B4uDecide – www.b4udecide.ie

Consent, types of contraception, STIs, teen pregnancy

Cervical Cancer Screening

CervicalCheck (Freephone: 1800 45 45 55)

Web: www.cervicalcheck.ie

Crisis Pregnancy (counselling, abortion information):

Irish Family Planning Association (to book an appointment, call the IFPA National Pregnancy Helpline Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm: 1850 49 50 51) Web: www.ifpa.ie

Free and confidential pregnancy counselling and post-abortion counselling, information on abortion and adoption, 11 locations

Positive Options – www.positiveoptions.ie; crisis pregnancy information and clinic locations

Well Women's Centre - <http://wellwomancentre.ie>; counselling, sexual health services, family planning

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) Treatment Service:

Irish Family Planning Association, Dublin City Centre Clinic (tel: 01 872 7088 / 085 8771342)

Address: 5/7 Cathal Brugha Street, Dublin 1

Web: <https://www.ifpa.ie/Sexual-Health-Services/FGM-Treatment-Service>

Disclaimer: Where all efforts were made to ensure the accuracy of this information, Cairde assumes no responsibility for and gives no guarantees concerning the accuracy or up to date nature of the information provided.

Your Body, Your Rights:

A Guide to Consent, Contraception, and More for Young Ethnic Minority Women



Health Information and Advocacy Centre

19 Belvedere Place
Dublin 1, Ireland

Phone: 01 855 2111
healthworker@cairde.ie

www.cairde.ie
www.facebook.com/CairdeCentre

Are rules about engaging in sexual activity different in Ireland than in my country?

Every country has its own legal norms for sexual activity. You may be from a country with different rules about how old you have to be to engage in sexual activity, and if a woman has to agree to sexual activity. Ireland has its own rules about sexual consent that everyone must follow.

What is consent to sexual activity?

In Ireland, consent is necessary for having sex. Consent means that someone voluntarily agrees to a sexual activity, is old enough to consent, and has the necessary mental capacity to agree to sexual activity.* This means that to give consent, someone must be aware of what is happening and agree to it. If someone is very intoxicated, for example, they cannot give consent because they do not have the necessary mental capacity. Consent is required even if you are married. It is a crime punishable by law to do anything sexual with someone if they do not agree to it.

What is the age of consent for sexual activity?

In Ireland, the age of consent is 17. This means you cannot have sex with someone under 17, even if they say that they want to. You can be prosecuted for doing so.

What does it mean to consent to marriage?

To consent to marriage, or to agree to marriage, you need to be at least 18 years old. You can get an exemption so that you can be married at a younger age.

In order to get married, both people must freely consent to, or agree to, marriage. Someone cannot freely consent if, at the time of the marriage, a person is intoxicated (drunk), suffering from mental instability or insanity, or is being threatened to get married. If you are married because you are threatened to, your marriage may be void. You cannot get married if you are currently married to someone else. There are also some restrictions in relation to marrying people who are related to you by blood or marriage.

Are polygamous marriages allowed in Ireland?

Even though polygamous marriage, or marriage between more than two people (for example, one man and several women), may be allowed in your religion or country, it is not allowed in Ireland. If you come to Ireland in a polygamous marriage, it will not be legally valid or recognized by Ireland.

* The Court of Criminal Appeal in *The People (Director of Public Prosecutions), Prosecutor v. C., Accused* [C.C.A. No. 156 of 1999]

What do I do if I was raped or sexually assaulted (if I did not consent to sex)?

If someone made you do anything sexual with them that you did not want to, or if someone sexually assaulted or raped you, it is a crime. If you decide that you might want to report the rape or sexual assault to the Garda at any time, do not wash yourself or your clothes that you were wearing at the time of the assault before a doctor or nurse examines you. They can gather evidence of the assault or rape from your body and clothes.

Contact **An Garda Síochána** (the police) for free at 112 or 999 if you want to report the assault. If you do not know what to do, contact the **Rape Crisis Centre (RCC)** for confidential help. They will help you decide if you should go to the Garda, and will give you information about the nearest **Sexual Assault Treatment Unit (SATU)**. Even if you are undocumented, the RCC will help you.

You might be entitled to free legal aid in cases of sexual assault. Contact the **Legal Aid Board** for help.

What are Sexual Assault Treatment Units?

There are six SATUs around Ireland that you can contact yourself. They provide care for women and men over the 14 who have been recently sexually assaulted or raped. If you are under 18 years old, you must have a parent or legal guardian give permission for tests. They provide free support and care, like emergency contraception and medication to reduce your change of developing a sexually transmitted infection.

How can I protect myself from unwanted pregnancy?

You can get pregnant even if you are having sex for the first time. The best way to prevent pregnancy is to use contraceptives, which protect against pregnancy even when you have sex. There are many different types of contraceptives available for women in Ireland, including short-term and long-term contraceptives.

What are short-term contraceptives?

Short-term contraceptives are contraceptives that you use only when you are having sex, like male condoms, female condoms, and diaphragms. The male condom is 98% effective at preventing pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Never use two condoms at the same time, do not reuse condoms, and do not use condoms that have expired. Diaphragms and female condoms are over 90% effective at preventing pregnancy. Female condoms can also prevent STIs. Only contraceptives like condoms that act as barrier protectors, or that block sperm from contact with a woman's eggs, can protect you from STIs.

Where can I get short-term contraceptives?

Short-term contraceptives like male and female condoms are available for sale without prescriptions at most pharmacies and supermarkets. Many guides explaining how to use condoms are available online. Some organisations offer condoms for free.

What are long-term contraceptives, and how do I get them?

Long-term contraceptives are contraceptives that you use for long periods of time to continually prevent you from getting pregnant. There are many different types of long-term contraceptives for women (including the contraceptive pill, patch, intra-uterine devices, and more). They are the most effective form of contraception because there is little chance of them failing. They do not protect against STIs.

To find out more about contraception, talk to your GP or go to your local family planning clinic. If you have a medical card, you can get most long-term contraceptives for free.

What happens if I did not use protection or my contraception failed?

If your contraception failed (you missed a pill or a condom broke) or you did not use contraception during sex, then you might become pregnant. Emergency contraception can stop you from getting pregnant. Emergency contraceptive pills, which can be taken up to 3 days (72 hours) or 5 days (120 hours) after unprotected sex, can prevent pregnancy. Both pills are more effective the sooner they are taken, and are available to buy in pharmacies without a medical prescription. Emergency contraceptives are free on a medical card, but you need to go to your GP or family planning clinic for a prescription.

If I had unprotected sex or my condom broke, do I need to get tested for sexually transmitted infections (STIs)?

If you have had unprotected sex, you are at risk of getting an STI and should get tested at a GP, family planning clinic, or free STI clinic. Even if you do not think you have an STI, you should get tested because many STIs do not have symptoms. STIs can cause long-term health problems like infertility if you do not treat them. Treatment for most STIs is simple and painless.

STI testing is free and confidential at some clinics in Dublin, so no one will know that you went to a clinic or will know your results. **St. James Hospital, Mater Misericordiae Hospital, and HIV Ireland** are some of the places that will test you for free. Talk to your GP for more information.