



Five Action Steps to Good Sexual Health: Fact Sheet

Overview: The [National Coalition for Sexual Health](https://www.nationalcoalitionforsexualhealth.org/) (NCSH), consisting of 100+ leading health and medical organizations and experts, developed the **Five Action Steps to Good Sexual Health** to help Americans protect and improve their sexual health.

This comprehensive roadmap redefines what it means to be sexually healthy, and equips Americans with the practical information and skills they need through a mobile-friendly website: www.fiveactionsteps.org.

Specifically, it is designed to empower and equip people to increase their self-esteem, advocate for themselves, develop positive relationships, treat their partners well, make healthy choices, and access vital preventive services.

Why did we develop the Action Steps? Americans are eager to improve their sexual health, but face many challenges to doing so, including valuing themselves, building relationships, and communicating openly about sex and sexual health, according to NCSH research.

Also, they lack access to a practical, positive framework for taking action. Traditional approaches to sexual health are often narrow in scope, negative, and aimed at disease avoidance. But good sexual health is so much more. It “means being able to enjoy a healthier body, a satisfying sexual life, positive relationships, and peace of mind.”

How did we create the Action Steps? Over four years, the NCSH employed a rigorous process, including consumer research, literature reviews, and expert consultations, to develop the Action Steps. This practical roadmap includes the benefits of taking action, tips & advice, conversation starters, real-life scenarios, and resources to learn more.

How did the public respond? The Action Steps were pre-tested through eight focus group discussions with women and men ages 15-54. Most participants strongly identified with the content; considered it practical, positive, and nonjudgmental; and highly valued the conversation starters and real-life scenarios.

What are the Steps? They include:

#1: Value who you are and decide what’s right for you. Get advice on improving self-esteem and body image, embracing your sexual identity, and advocating for yourself.

#2: Get smart about your body and protect it. Learn about your body and sexual expression, safer sex, choosing lower risk sexual activities, condoms and birth control.

#3: Treat your partners well and expect them to treat you well. Learn how to give and get the respect you deserve, and talk about desires, boundaries, consent, and safer sex.

#4. Build positive relationships. Discover the key ingredients of a healthy, romantic relationship, get tips for building & maintaining one, and identify warning signs of abuse.

#5: Make sexual health part of your health care routine. Preventive services, such as vaccines, STI screening, and birth control, can protect your health. Learn about what’s recommended for you, and get tips on talking openly with your provider.

