

# Dating



This information sheet is about dating and how physical disability may impact dating.

Some people want to date, others do not. The benefits of dating relationships are that they can provide companionship, physical intimacy, and boost self-esteem. However, friendships can offer many of the same benefits and can be just as important as romantic relationships.

*Financial contribution from*



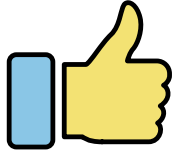
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**sieccan**  
Sex Information & Education Council of Canada  
Conseil d'information & d'éducation sexuelles du Canada

## Part 1: Getting yourself ready to date

### Knowing that you can date.



All disabled people have the right to date, if they want to.



Many disabled people find relationships that they feel good in and that make them happy.



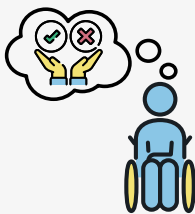
You might have people in your life tell you that you cannot date or that you should not date because you are disabled. This is not true. Many disabled people are dating.

### Knowing yourself and your needs.



It is important that you and the person you are dating want the same things and feel good in the relationship.

Some people are looking for long-term relationships with one person, some people want to meet many different people, and some people want to have more casual relationships.



Ask yourself what you are okay with or not okay with. Ask yourself what is important to you in your life and your relationships.

When you date, you will also learn new things about yourself.

## Knowing yourself and your needs.



Knowing yourself and your needs will help you set boundaries and ask for what you need in your relationships. It will help you understand what you are comfortable and not comfortable doing in a relationship or with a partner(s).

Check out [Setting and Maintaining Boundaries: Information Sheet](#) for more information about knowing your boundaries and communicating them to others in your relationships.

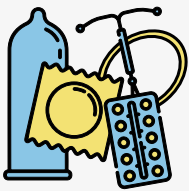


The more you know about yourself, the better you will be at finding relationships where you feel respected, cared for, and safe.

## Developing positive sexual esteem.



Positive sexual esteem means feeling like you have the potential to have positive and pleasurable sexual relationships. It is about feeling confident about yourself when you have sexual relationships.



Learning about sexual health can help build your positive sexual esteem. Check out [SIECCAN's sexual health information sheets](#) for disabled youth to learn about different sexual health topics.



Check out [Developing Positive Sexual Esteem: Information Sheet](#) for ways to feel good and confident about who you are.

## Dealing with ableism.



Ableism is the negative beliefs and feelings some people in society have towards disabled people. Ableism can make dating hard for disabled people.



Because of ableism, some people in society are not open to dating disabled people. This can make disabled people feel badly about themselves and hesitant to even try to date.



Some people might also fetishize disabled people. This is when a non-disabled person has a special interest in dating or having sexual experiences with a disabled person. This could be problematic if the person is only focused on the disability and does not see the disabled person as a whole person.



Disabled people who receive government disability benefits often lose their benefits when they get married or move in with a partner. This can be a barrier for disabled people to get married, have a long-term relationship, or feel like they want to date.



**It is important to remember that the negative beliefs and feelings that some people in society have about disabled people are not true. Disabled people are just as valuable, important, and deserving of love, affection, and healthy relationships as non-disabled people.**

People who want to have a long-term relationship do not always find one or it can take a long time. That can be frustrating.

**It is important to remember that even if you are having difficulty finding a long-term relationship, you are worthy and valuable.**

## Part 2: Sharing your disability with someone you want to date

**It is your choice to tell another person about your disability or not. You do not have to share anything about your disability with another person unless you are comfortable doing that.**

### Reasons to tell a person you are dating about your disability.



You might want to tell a person you are dating about your disability because it is an important part of your life. It can help a person better understand you, your experiences, and your needs.



What is important is that you communicate your needs, boundaries, and desires to a person you are dating, even if you do not tell them about your disability. You should not do anything that makes you feel uncomfortable, unsafe, or unwell to please another person. A supportive partner will make sure to respect your needs, boundaries, and desires.

**If a person you are dating is not respecting your needs, boundaries, and desires, they might not be someone you want to continue dating.**

## When to tell someone about your disability.



If you want to tell a person you are dating about your disability, it is up to you to decide when to tell them.

Some disabled people will tell a person they are dating about their disability right away.



Telling a person you are dating about your disability right away can help you find out who is accepting of your disability. Some people might not be accepting of your disability and may stop talking to you. This can hurt. But, some people will continue to date you and you will know that these people are accepting of your disability.

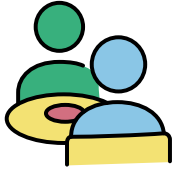
Some disabled people prefer to wait until the other person has gotten to know them a bit before sharing about their disability.



Waiting to tell a person about your disability can allow them to know different parts of you without your disability being the focus. But it is possible that when you tell a person you are dating about your disability, they might not be accepting of you.

**It is important to know that it is not your fault when other people are not accepting of your disability.**

## Things to remember:



You do not owe anyone personal details about who you are and about your life that you are not comfortable sharing.

You can decide to share some information right away and wait to share more details later.

If you meet someone and feel comfortable with them, you may want to tell them more about yourself. That might include telling them more about your disability.



There is no “right way” to tell someone you are dating about your disability. It is your choice how and when you want to share information about your disability.



The most important thing is that a person you are dating understands your needs and is respectful and supportive. You should feel like you can be who you are and not have to hide important parts of yourself.



Someone who is not accepting of your disability is probably not someone you want to date.

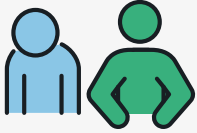


**You deserve to be appreciated, cared for, and respected in your relationships.**

## Dealing with rejection.



Rejection is a difficult part of dating, but most people who date will experience it at some point. Remember, that you are not the only one to experience rejection.



Remember that when another person does not want to date you, it does not mean there is anything wrong with you.



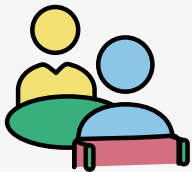
Rejection can make you feel a lot of different emotions. For example: you might feel sad, embarrassed, angry, or frustrated. These feelings are all valid. It is important to let yourself feel these emotions.



When someone tells you they do not want to continue dating you, you may want to know why. But many times, you will have to accept that you might not ever know why. This can be hard to deal with.



When someone tells you they do not want to continue dating you, it is important to respect their wishes and boundaries. Do not continue to try to communicate with them if they tell you they do not want to continue communicating with you.



Talk to someone you trust about how you are feeling. Avoid taking your negative emotions out on other people.

Talking about how you are feeling with someone you trust can help you process these feelings and move on in a healthy way.



After some time has passed, you will feel better. When you are ready, you can try dating again.

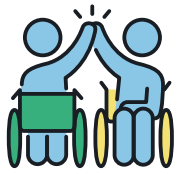


## Part 3: Using dating apps or websites

Dating apps and dating websites are popular ways to meet people to go out on dates with.

### *Choosing an app or website*

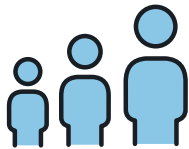
**There are many kinds of dating apps or websites.  
For example:**



Some apps/websites are for everyone, and some are for specific communities. For example: you can find dating apps just for disabled people or just for 2SLGBTQIA+ people.



Some apps/websites are free and some you must pay for. Some apps/websites have free features and features you have to pay for.



Some apps/websites require you to be aged 18 years or older.



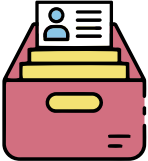


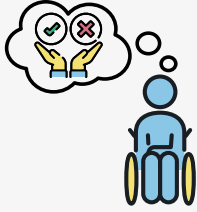


Some apps/websites encourage you to write more on your dating profile. Other apps/websites might not require that you write anything on your dating profile.











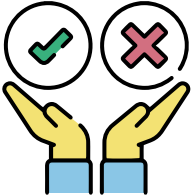
Some apps/websites are mostly for people looking for casual relationships. Other apps/websites are for people looking for long-term relationships.

**Some people like to use many apps/websites at the same time. Other people prefer to use one at a time. You can try out different apps/websites to see which ones you like better.**

<b>Information to include</b> 	<b>Information to NOT include</b> 
 <p>First name or nickname.</p>	<p>Last name.</p>
 <p>The kind of things you like to do.</p> <p>What you are looking for in a partner.</p>	<p>Too much information about where you live, work, or places you often go to.</p> <p>For example: you can write which city you live in. Do <b>not</b> write your home address or your work address.</p>
 <p>Pictures that show who you are and things you like to do.</p> <p>For example: a picture of you doing activities you enjoy.</p>	<p>Private pictures like pictures of your house, your car/license plate, or naked pictures of yourself or of other people.</p> <p>Pictures with other people who do not want their picture to be on your profile.</p>
 <p>Information about your disability if you want share.</p>	<p>Information about your disability if you do <b>not</b> want to share.</p>

## Communicating with people on dating apps/websites

<b>Things you can do</b> 	<b>Things to avoid</b> 
 <p>When you are just starting to communicate with people, communicate on the dating app or website.</p>	<p>Do not give your phone number to people you have just started communicating with.</p>
 <p>Be honest about who you are. But being honest does not mean you have to tell people everything about yourself when you are just getting to know them.</p>	<p>Do not give people personal information like your address or your bank information. Do not send pictures of your house or your car. Do not send pictures of your credit card or debit card. If someone is asking you for this kind of information, stop talking to them. This may be an unsafe situation. Talk to someone you trust about it.</p>
 <p>If someone is making you feel uncomfortable or you do not want to continue to communicate with that person, it is okay to end the conversation.</p>	<p>Do not feel pressured to keep communicating with someone you do not want to communicate with. You can say something like “I’m not comfortable talking about that; let’s talk about something else” or “It was nice talking to you, but I have to get going now”.</p>

Things you can do		Things to avoid 
	<p>To start a conversation with someone, it can be helpful to ask the person about something they wrote or a picture they posted on their dating profile.</p>	<p>Do not send people money. If someone is asking you for money, stop talking to them. They might be trying to trick you.</p>
	<p>To get to know someone, you can ask them questions about what their daily life looks like or what kind of things they like. Asking questions can help you decide if the person is someone you want to meet for a date.</p>	<p>Do not ask someone for personal information that you would not be comfortable sharing yourself.</p>

Check out the [Sexting: Information Sheet](#) for information about things you should be careful of if you want to send naked or sexy pictures/videos of yourself to someone.

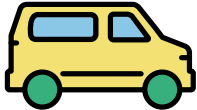


## Part 4: Planning and going on a date

### How to get to your date and home after your date:

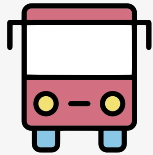
If you need to book accessible transportation, plan ahead.

Decide on a date, time, and location early so you can book your transportation as soon as possible.



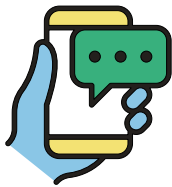
It might be helpful to let your date know that accessible transportation services can sometimes be late. Try to update your date about your possible arrival time once you get picked up.

Let your date know that you might not be able to accommodate last minute changes to plans because you need to book your transportation early.



If you are using public transportation, make sure you know how to get to your date and how to get home afterwards.

Have someone you can call to pick you up in case you need help getting home from a date.



For example:

- If you want to leave your date early, but your accessible transportation has already been booked for a later time.
- You feel uncomfortable on your date and need help to leave right away.
- The public transportation you need to take is out of service and you need another way to get home.



It might be a good idea to choose a location you know well or one that is closer to home for a first date.

If you decide to bring your date home, make sure to have a safety plan in place. For example, practise how to ask your date to leave if you are feeling uncomfortable or want the date to end.

## How to get to your date and home after your date:

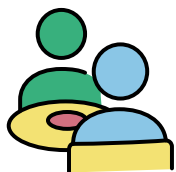


If you are meeting with someone you do not know well, avoid relying on that person to help get you home after the date.



If you need help getting ready for a date (e.g., changing or washing), it may not be a good idea to ask a new date. Consider asking a person you trust instead (e.g., a close friend or personal support worker).

## Telling someone you trust about your date.



Before going on your date, tell a person you trust where you are going and who you are meeting with.



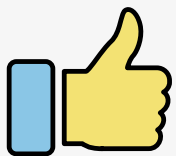
When you are on your date, you can share your location with the person you trust.

To share your location:

1. Go to the Google Maps app on your phone
2. Click on your profile picture
3. Click on “location sharing”



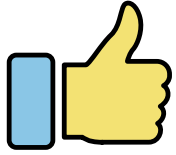
If you feel unsafe on your date, call or message the person you trust. Ask them to come pick you up or help you leave your date safely.



At the end of your date, call or message the person you trust to let them know when you are home, so they know you are safe.

At the end of your date, you can also stop sharing your location with the person you trust if you want to.

## Going on a date.



### **Explain to your date the importance of respecting the plans that you set.**

If you need your dates to be more planned out, it is important that the person you are going to meet respects the plans that you make together.



### **Pick a date location or activity that meets your accessibility needs.**

You can suggest a location or activity that you know well.

If you are trying out a new location or activity, you can look up the location/activity on Google to see if you can find more information. You can also try calling the location/activity to ask them if they are able to meet your accessibility needs.

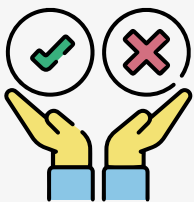


### **Set boundaries for what you are comfortable with or not comfortable with on a date.**

For example:

- How long are you comfortable being on a date?
- Are you comfortable going to someone's house or having your date come to your house? Or do you prefer meeting in a public place?
- What kind of touches are you comfortable with or not comfortable with on a date?

Check out [Setting and Maintaining Boundaries: Information Sheet](#) for information about setting and respecting boundaries in your relationships.



### **Remember that if you want to do anything to, with or for your date, you need to ask them for their consent. If your date wants to do anything to, with or for you, they also need to ask you for your consent.**

Check out [Communicating Consent: Information Sheet](#) for information about asking for and giving consent.

## Alcohol and drugs.



When you drink alcohol or use drugs on a date, it is important to be careful. Some people use alcohol/drugs to have fun and let loose on a date. But some people can use alcohol/drugs to take advantage of another person. When someone gets taken advantage of, it is never their fault. But because of this risk, it is important to protect yourself.



If you are having a drink while on your date, make sure to watch your drink at all times. If you are not watching your drink, it is possible that someone might put a drug in it.



Be careful with how much alcohol you drink when you are on a date.



Do not feel pressured to drink alcohol, or to drink more alcohol than you want to. You can always say no to alcohol and have a non-alcoholic drink like a mocktail, soda/pop, or water.



Mixing alcohol and drugs can be harmful.

Mixing alcohol/drugs with your medications can also be harmful. Speak to your health care provider or pharmacist to learn more about medication interactions. For example, ask if it is safe to drink alcohol when using your medication(s).



## Part 5: Choosing if you want to go on another date or not

After a date, you and your date can choose if you want to continue dating each other.

**Here are some questions you can ask yourself to decide if you want to continue dating a person:**



Did you feel happy after your date?



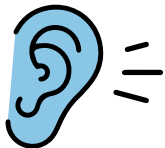
Did you like being around this person?



Did the person make you feel comfortable, valued, and respected?



Did you feel like the person wanted to get to know you? For example: did they ask you questions about yourself?



Did the person listen to what you had to say?



Did you have things in common with the person?  
For example: do you care about the same things or do you like doing similar things?



Did you find the person interesting? Do you want to continue to get to know them?

**Remember that dating is not just about another person choosing you. It is also about you choosing the other person.**