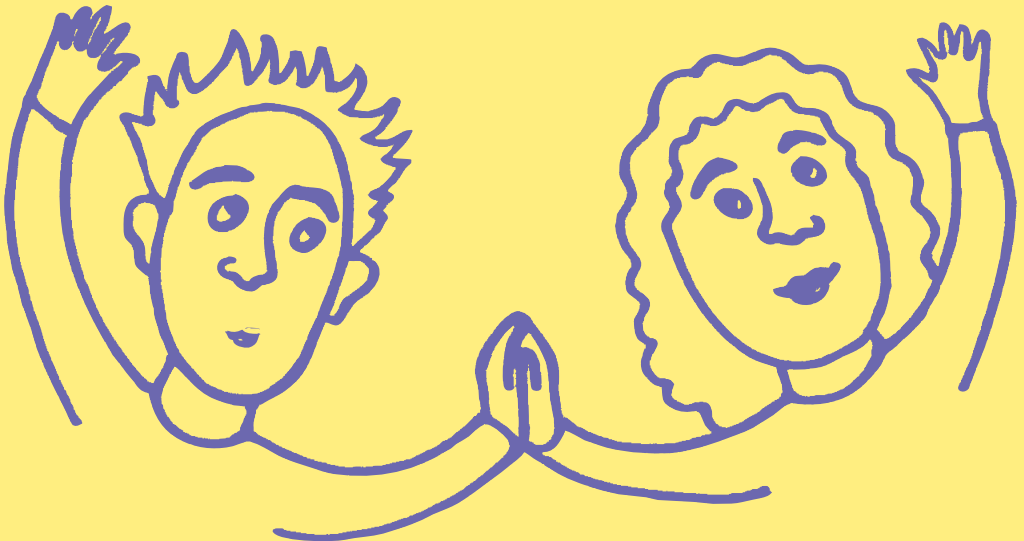


SEX MATTERS A-Z

Sexual Health for Heterosexual Couples



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SEX MATTERS A-Z

Sexual Health for Heterosexual Couples

1

In the past you may have seen information on how to avoid getting HIV and sexually transmitted infections. *Sex Matters A-Z* has been written for heterosexual men and women who have HIV and their HIV negative partners.

It tries to answer as many questions as possible on sexual health and what's safe when you're having relationships. You'll find a list of useful contacts, services and resources at the end of this booklet.

Sex Matters A-Z can be read through from beginning to end or you can look at any one topic that is of most interest to you at the time. The index at the back will help you. Happy reading!

answering all those questions

There is very little information available for straight men and women in relationships. This booklet aims to fill the gap by giving you more information on negotiating safe and satisfying sex in a relationship, dealing with disclosure, and keeping yourself sexually healthy. It also tells you where to find the support you need. It has lots of information about sexual health, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and safer sex. It answers questions like:

A

Can I have sex and relationships if I have HIV?

How do I know if I have an STI? What do I look for?

What does an STI test involve?

How can I prevent passing them on to my sexual partner?

Are they easily treated?

What is PEP?

2

Sexually transmitted infections are infections that are spread mainly through sexual contact with another person. They used to be called sexually transmitted diseases or STDs. The new name for them is STIs (sexually transmitted infections).

Safer sex is about looking after your health and the health of your sexual partner. It's about avoiding passing on HIV and other STIs while still being able to enjoy your sex life.

Safer sex means different things to different people. For some, it means avoiding sex altogether or having some time out from sex. For others, it means having sex just as often as usual, but using a condom every time. Or it can mean working out what the risks are and deciding what risks they're prepared to take.

Most positive men and women with regular partners are in relationships with people who are negative. Relationships are important for a person's health and quality of life, but they bring challenges for each partner, and they need attention and support. Here is information that may help you.



being safe

B Being safe may mean different things to people. For most it will mean minimising the risk of passing on HIV to a negative partner. It may mean preventing STIs being passed between you and your partner (positive or negative)...it may mean using contraception to avoid an unwanted pregnancy...it may mean being careful about using alcohol and other drugs so that it is easier for you to stick to your own safe sex rules...it may mean talking with your partner about the risks, and what you need to feel safe - physically and emotionally.

Talking about sex and sharing decision making can help to make sex safer and better.

At the back of this booklet you'll find a directory of services that can help you with this. Reading this booklet will help you understand what some of the risks are.

3

contraception

There is a range of contraceptive methods available. Each one has advantages and disadvantages. Most contraceptives have some side effects, although these may be minor.

C You and your partner can discuss together the type of contraception you would prefer to use, and you may want to discuss this with a healthcare worker as well. You need to take into account any health problems you may have, the impact a contraceptive method might have on your sex life, and any difficulties with contraception that you've had in the past. A GP or women's health nurse can take you through each method and help you to choose the one that is best for you.

Condoms protect against HIV and other STIs as well as pregnancy so for couples this is a good method to use. Some couples choose to use a condom plus a hormonal method of contraception to give extra protection against pregnancy.

Hormonal methods of contraception are extremely effective in preventing pregnancy. They include the Pill, injectable hormones and implants. Intra-uterine devices (IUDs) are also very effective, but are not usually recommended for positive women.

C

If you are having sex occasionally you may prefer to use a barrier method of contraception such as the condom, female condom, diaphragm or cap rather than taking a hormonal contraceptive regularly.

Withdrawal

Withdrawing the penis from the vagina before ejaculation (cumming) requires willpower as you need to do this every time you have sex for it to be effective as a method of contraception. Even one drop of semen contains millions of sperm.

Pre-cum (or pre-ejaculatory fluid) is a clear fluid that is released from the penis during sex but before ejaculation. Pre-cum can also contain sperm.

4

Withdrawal can make sex more stressful if you're a negative woman partner and feeling worried about being protected against pregnancy and HIV.

Sterilisation

Tubal sterilisation is a permanent form of birth control for women. It involves a medical procedure to block the Fallopian tubes so that sperm cannot travel up to meet the ovum (egg) and begin a pregnancy.

Vasectomy is a permanent form of birth control for men. It involves a medical procedure that prevents sperm travelling out of the testes (balls) and into the semen. If there are no sperm in the semen it is impossible to make a woman pregnant.

Contraceptive Choices for Positive Women

For positive women, choosing a contraceptive method can be a little more complicated than usual. Some hormonal forms of contraception can react with HIV drugs and can place extra strain on your liver. It is important to consider this if you also have hepatitis C, so talk to your doctor about it.

More detailed information on contraception for positive women is available from ACON.

Emergency Contraceptive Pill (ECP)

ECP is a hormone pill that you take to prevent pregnancy, up to 72 hours after having unprotected sex. You can get it from your GP, sexual health clinic, women's health centre or family planning clinic.

communication

5

Spilling the beans

C It's hard telling a new partner that you are positive. You may choose to put off having sex until you trust your partner enough to tell them and then discuss the implications. If having sex was a way that you got to know your partners in the past, learning to build relationships can be a challenge. Safer sex can be discussed as a way of protecting your partner. Your partner can then make an informed choice about having a relationship with you, knowing that you care about them and trust them enough to be honest about your HIV diagnosis.

Good communication is a skill. Nobody is good at talking about safer sex the first time but it is a really important thing to do.

You can get help to prepare for this conversation from a counsellor at a sexual health clinic or HIV specialist service. A peer support

service, like Pozhet (Positive Heterosexuals) is also a good source of support for you through this difficult period.

A counsellor will help you to work out the words you could use, and to think in advance of questions that might come up and how to answer them. They will also arrange follow-up counselling and support for you and your new partner, and help you to prepare yourself emotionally for the possibility of rejection.

Plan to talk to your partner when you both have time and are in a private place. Try to pick a time when you are feeling close, but not sexual. Make sure you talk with your partner and not just to your partner. Let your partner know that you want to use condoms to protect both their health and yours.

6

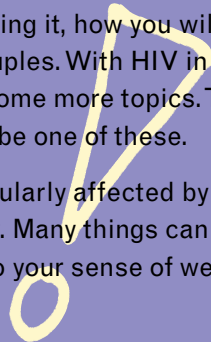
doing it, dams & problems with sex

D

When it comes to sex, talking about doing it, how you will do it and what feels good is important for all couples. With HIV in the picture, talking about it also means including some more topics. The impact of HIV on your libido (sex drive) might be one of these.

Positive men and women can be particularly affected by problems with sex - when sex doesn't flow easily. Many things can impact on your sex drive as it's generally linked to your sense of wellbeing, both physical and emotional.

If you're having diarrhoea or nausea for example, or feeling tired or stressed, you're unlikely to feel like having sex.



For positive men, reduced testosterone levels caused by the HIV can often lead to tiredness and reduced desire for sex. Testosterone treatment is available to help with this.

Impotence (being unable to maintain an erection) can be caused by nerve damage as a result of HIV, or by HIV drugs. A range of hormonal injections or other treatments, for example Viagra, can help with impotence.

Some positive women may have early menopause. The symptoms that often come with menopause, like vaginal dryness or pain, can lead to reduced sexual desire. Hormone replacement therapy (HRT) and complementary therapies can help.

If you or your partner have reduced desire for sex and it feels like a problem, talk to your doctor or a counsellor at a sexual health clinic.

Dams

7

Dams (sometimes called dental dams) are a rectangular piece of soft latex. They are designed for oral-vaginal and oral-anal sex. The dam is held over the vagina or anus and acts as a barrier between your partner's sexual fluids and your mouth. In this way it prevents STIs like herpes, warts and chlamydia being passed from one partner to another. Dams also come in a range of colours and flavours.

easy help is always at hand

There are many different services available to help you live better with HIV, whether you are positive or negative.

All services listed in the directory at the end of this booklet have good knowledge about HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). The clinicians, counsellors, phone support staff and peer educators will respect your confidentiality and work hard to meet your sexual health and counselling needs.

E

fears and anxieties

F

Many couples feel anxious about whether their safe sex practices are working. Some deal with this by having regular HIV and STI tests. Some couples however, may feel that regular HIV testing only reminds the negative partner that they can become infected with HIV/AIDS. The anxiety of waiting for test results, for both partners, can also put you off getting tested regularly.

Another way to deal with this is to improve your knowledge of the ways in which HIV and STIs are passed on and to talk to a counsellor about managing the risk in your sex life. Sexual health clinics and HIV specialist services can provide qualified counsellors who are available to positive people, negative partners and couples for single sessions or a series of sessions.



8

getting help

G

Sexual health clinics are specialist services which have clinical and counselling staff who are experienced in sexual health. Sexual health clinics are not just about STIs but take a broader approach to sexual health. They are places that you can go to and discuss relationships, sexuality and safety.

Clinics offer free sexual health check-ups and counselling. All consultations are confidential. You don't need a Medicare card so you can choose to remain anonymous by using a different name or being allocated a client number.

Sexual health clinics are able to arrange telephone interpreters in different languages if they are needed, and counsellors are available at the clinics. All sexual health clinics also offer a needle and syringe service, free condoms and lube. Most sexual health clinics have HIV and hepatitis C specialist doctors on staff.

Sexual health clinics also offer a telephone information service. A list of contacts and resources you may find useful, is in the directory on pages 36 to 38.

hormones

H

Hormone levels change throughout life. If you are positive, these changes may be more extreme. Positive women may experience changes to their menstrual cycles. Positive men may have lower levels of testosterone. See 'D – doing it, dams & problems with sex' on page 6 and 'W – women's sexual health' on page 26.

infection & co-infection

9

Coping with Co-Infection

For positive men and women with suppressed immune systems, STIs can spread more rapidly and symptoms can be more severe. Warts may grow and spread more quickly. Herpes outbreaks can be more frequent and more severe, and complications with syphilis may develop more quickly.

Taking HIV treatments may help to strengthen the immune system which makes the treatment and management of STIs easier. Remember that the fluid in ulcers caused by STIs like syphilis and herpes can contain HIV. As soon as you notice symptoms of STIs avoid having sex and make an appointment at your nearest sexual health clinic for free treatment. That way you will be less likely to pass on any STIs or HIV to your partner.

'jerking off' / masturbation

J

Your skin is a 100% effective as a barrier to stop HIV entering your body or your partner's body. Masturbating yourself or masturbating each other is a safe sexual activity. To make it extra safe be sure you have no cuts or abrasions on your hands, and if you do, always cover them with band-aids or wear a latex glove.

kissing

K

Kissing can be very exciting and sexual. Kissing does not pass on HIV. Saliva does not pass on HIV.



10

licking

L

Again, saliva does not pass on HIV. Licking skin can be an erotic part of foreplay. Licking genitals can be low risk for passing HIV between partners but has a higher risk for some other STIs. See 'O – oral sex & other sexual practices' on page 13.



men's sexual health

Check your Balls! Testicular Cancer

M

Cancer of the testes (balls) is a rare type of cancer that is most common in men aged 20 to 44. Testicular cancer may cause no symptoms, but some men notice changes in their testicles such as swelling, heaviness, a change in size or shape, or a painless lump may appear. If you notice any of these changes you should let your doctor know. Your doctor can then test you for testicular cancer.

Your Penis – Erectile Dysfunction

Problems with erections can be an issue for all men at some time or other. It can be more common for positive men. See 'D – doing it, dams & problems with sex', on page 6 for more information.

11

Fertility

For positive men, reduced levels of the hormone testosterone which is caused by HIV can often lead to tiredness and reduced sex drive. This in turn can lead to difficulties not only with having sex, but also with starting a pregnancy if that is what you want. Testosterone treatment is available to help with this. See 'D – doing it, dams & problems with sex', on page 6, for more information.

negotiation – the key to it all

'Stepping over the line is necessary if you want to start a pozneg relationship.' Carlos.

N If you are HIV positive and starting a new relationship, once you have told the person about your HIV status you will want to talk with them about how the HIV will affect your sex life. You may both want to talk with a counsellor before having this discussion. A counsellor can help you get clear about what matters to you. They can give you some tips on how to raise your issues and how to feel more comfortable talking about them with your partner.

You and your partner need to agree on what you're both going to do to help make sex enjoyable and relaxed. This can include:

- safe sex practices such as using condoms and dams as well as contraceptives.
- the type of sex you both feel comfortable with. This could be vaginal sex, anal sex, oral sex, mutual masturbation, using sex toys, kissing and cuddling, massaging and touching each other – one or all of the above or other things.
- what you'll do if a condom breaks or comes off during sex.
- if you're worried about HIV being passed on for some other reason.
- what you'll do in the case of an unexpected pregnancy.

You both need to feel comfortable with your decisions. This way sex will include only what you have talked about and feel safe with. You need to stick to your decisions. If you're not happy talk with your partner.

'The other week there was an exposure episode. I don't know if I am still negative. So it's condoms all the way now, without fail. It was the hardest decision we've had to make but at least I feel safe now.' Rebecca

oral sex & other sexual practices

Sexual Practices

O

The stress associated with unprotected sex can be overwhelming even when there is not much sexual activity and not much risk. The important thing is to work out a plan for safer sex and try to stick to this.

'A definite relationship issue is transmission during sex – I feel my positive partner could not handle the impact of my becoming infected.' Jennifer.

Oral Sex

Oral sex is where you use your mouth to stimulate your partner's genitals – vagina, penis, anus. It's important to keep your mouth and gums healthy by regularly visiting your dentist. If you have ulcers, cuts or sores in or around your mouth you should use a condom or dam if you are giving oral sex. Be aware that sometimes simply flossing your teeth can cause cuts and bleeding. Think about how healthy your mouth is before having oral sex.

13

Oral sex is less risky than anal or vaginal sex, but it is not risk free as oral sex can pass on other STIs such as herpes.

You may decide that the risks of passing on STIs or HIV with oral sex are low enough for you not to use condoms or dams, or you may decide to use them to minimise the risk. You can also lower the risk by not ejaculating into your partner's mouth, or by avoiding oral sex during menstruation.

Anal Sex

Many couples also have anal sex. Anal sex without a condom is high risk for passing on HIV. If you're going to have anal sex, use a condom with lots of water-based lubricant.

Hands and Fingers

You can safely use your fingers and hands to stimulate or masturbate your partner's genitals during sex. This may include putting your fingers or hand on or inside your partner's vagina or anus, or using your hands to stimulate the penis or clitoris. There is a very low risk of HIV being passed on if you do any of these things. To make it extra safe be sure you have no cuts or abrasions on your hands, and if you do, always cover them with band-aids or wear a latex glove.

You might also masturbate in front of your partner to arouse them.

Kissing

Kissing has no risk. HIV is not passed on by saliva. See 'kissing' and 'licking' page 10.



Rimming

Using your tongue to stimulate your partner's anus. This has no risk for HIV but can transmit hepatitis A. If you think your partner may have hepatitis A use a dam when rimming.

14

Sex Toys

Sex toys like vibrators or dildos can be used to penetrate the vagina or anus. If you are sharing toys with your partner you should wash them between uses or use a new condom on them each time. If you do this, sex toys present no risk for passing on HIV.

Vaginal Sex

Vaginal sex without a condom has a high risk for HIV transmission. To avoid this, use a condom with lots of water-based lubricant. Using extra lubricant makes sex safer and also more pleasurable.

But wait, there's more...

There are other sexual things that you can do safely without fear of passing on HIV - erotic kissing, erotic massage, bodies rubbing – with or without clothes, fantasy play... These can replace more usual types of sex or can be added to make sex more interesting.



'We need to be constantly aware of my wife's health in relation to safe sex practices.' Mike

prevention

Making condoms work for you

Condoms are the best things we have to prevent HIV being passed on during vaginal, anal and oral sex. Condoms are very thin tubes of soft latex and come in a range of sizes, thicknesses, colours, textures and flavours. To work best they need to be used correctly and every time you have sex. Practice makes perfect!

To use a condom correctly:

- Check the expiry date.
- Use one every time you have sex.
- Put the condom on the penis as soon as the penis is erect (hard).
- Squeeze the tip of the condom to release any air and make a little space for the cum, as you are rolling it on.
- Roll the condom right down to the base of the penis.
- Add extra water-based lubricant to the condom.
- Keep the condom on the penis until after you have cum.
- Remove the condom while the penis is still erect by holding it firmly at the base.
- Wrap it in tissue and throw it in the bin.
- Never re-use condoms.
- Store condoms in a cool, dry place away from direct sunlight.

You can buy condoms at chemists, supermarkets and vending machines. Free condoms are available from sexual health clinics.

P

15

'Today, the only change occurring in my life from HIV is using condoms. Sexual pleasure has a lot to do with your mind. Also, good sex has got a lot to do with practice and lots of good lube!' Ruby

Lubricant... & lots of it!

P

There are different types of lubricant or lube available - gels, liquids, water-based, oil-based, flavoured. It's important to pick the right one for you. But remember only water-based lubricants can be used with condoms and dams. Some lubricants can cause vaginal thrush. You may want to test a few brands until you find the one that suits you both.

As well as preventing tearing, lubricant can make sex more stimulating for you and your partner. To increase sensitivity, some people like to put a little lubricant inside the tip of the condom before rolling it on. Just a dab - too much may make the condom come off. Lubricant can be added to the outside of the condom as well as around the entrance to the vagina or anus.

16

Accidents can happen...

Condoms can slip off, tear or split during sex. You can forget to use a condom, put a condom on too late, not put it on properly or not remove it carefully.

If any of these things happen during sex **STOP** having sex, **WITHDRAW** the penis, **THROW AWAY** the condom. If you are worried about the risk of HIV, call the 24 hour PEP Hotline on 1800 737 669. PEP, or Post Exposure Prophylaxis, is a four-week course of HIV pills available to you if you think you've been at risk of exposure to HIV.

You may feel nervous or anxious when you ring. PEP staff are trained to help you work out whether you've been at risk of HIV infection and what to do next. There's only a short time to act before the virus takes hold. PEP is strong medication. If taken immediately after exposure, within a few hours and no longer than 72 hours, it may give your immune system time to clear up any infection. The PEP Hotline staff will tell you where you can get PEP.

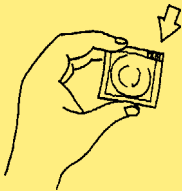
Dams

Dams (sometimes called dental dams) are a rectangular piece of soft latex. See 'Dams' page 7 for details.

P

PUTTING ON A CONDOM

17



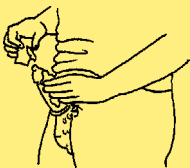
1. Check the expiry date. Push the condom to the side of the packet.



2. Tear the condom packet carefully. Use fingertips to take it out of the packet.



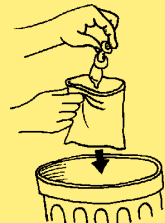
3. Squeeze the teat on the tip of the condom and hold it hard against the head of the penis.



4. Smoothly unroll the condom down to the base of the penis. Add plenty of lube.



5. After sex, take the hard penis out by holding onto the base of the condom and penis.



6. Place the condom in a plastic bag and put it in the bin.

Female condoms

The female condom is a 14cm long, loose condom, which a woman wears inside her vagina. It has a flexible ring at each end. The ring at the open end sits outside the entrance to the vagina. The other ring is at the closed end inside the vagina. The female condom is made from polyurethane which conducts heat, so sex can feel more sensitive. It provides protection from STIs including HIV and can be an alternative to the male condom as a barrier method for safer sex. The female condom is inserted by the woman, in a similar way to a diaphragm. For details of where to buy female condoms phone FPA Healthline 1300 658 886.

USING A FEMALE CONDOM

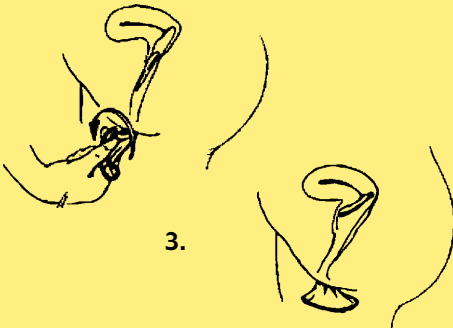
18



1.



2.



3.

1. The outer ring at the open end covers the area around the opening of the vagina. Rub condom with lubricant for more comfortable insertion.

2. Hold the inner ring between your thumb and middle finger. Put your index finger on the pouch between your thumb and other fingers and squeeze the inner ring.

3. Slide it into your vagina as far as it will go. Push up the front of the inner ring so it slips into place. When it's in the right place you can't feel it. Don't worry - it can't go in too far and **IT WON'T HURT!**

After sex, remove the Female Condom before you stand up. Squeeze the outer ring and twist it. Pull it out gently. Place it in a plastic bag and put it in the bin.

Glove up

Latex gloves are another protective barrier. They're good to wear during sex when you want to use your hands but have a cut, sore or damaged cuticle which can be 'entry points' for STIs, including HIV.

A healthy mouth

It's important to keep your mouth and gums healthy by seeing your dentist regularly. If you have ulcers, cuts or sores in or around your mouth you should use a condom or dam if you are giving oral sex. Sometimes cuts and bleeding can be caused simply by flossing your teeth. Think about how healthy your mouth is before you have sex.

P

Summing up... prevention of STIs

Using condoms correctly every time you have sex reduces the spread of most STIs.

However, some STIs produce rashes or sores which could be in places that are not usually covered by condoms or dams, like the buttocks, thighs or scrotum.

19

Condoms don't prevent all STIs, so watch for any early signs of infections or outbreaks and avoid contact with the infected areas.

Check your body regularly for any changes and ask your health care provider for advice if you feel unsure, or have visible signs or symptoms of STIs.

Remember, PEP may stop you becoming infected with HIV if you take it within 72 hours.

puzzling symptoms

If you notice any symptoms of STIs – redness, itching, pain when urinating, sores or blisters, unusual discharge, abdominal pain - don't waste time worrying. Arrange a check-up with your health care provider as soon as possible. Most STIs can be easily and quickly treated, but it's best to get treatment early.



questions?

If you have questions that aren't answered here, call one of the information and support lines listed in the directory at the back of this booklet. A useful resource for people living heterosexually with HIV is *Changing Lives*. Call Pozhet on 1800 812 404 for a copy.

razors, toothbrushes, towels

To share or not to share? This is a common question for couples. So, what is passed on by sharing household items?

Hep A can be passed on by touching things with unwashed hands that have been dirtied with faeces. These could be towels, sheets, cutlery, dishes, food, etc.

20

R

Hep B is passed on by blood and sexual fluids during sex, or by the sharing of razors and toothbrushes or drug injecting equipment. It can also be passed on from a mother to her baby at birth.

Hep C is passed on very easily in blood. You can get Hep C by sharing needles and other things used to inject drugs, or personal items like a toothbrush or razor. You can also get Hep C by having tattoos or skin piercing done with used needles. There is a 5-10% risk that Hep C can be passed on from a mother to her baby during pregnancy, at birth, or when breastfeeding. This is higher if the mother is also HIV positive.

If you're worried about hepatitis, have a blood test. Some positive people are also Hep B or Hep C positive. Using condoms every time you have sex and not sharing injecting drug equipment are ways of avoiding passing on the infection. Vaccinations are available for Hep A and B and there are treatments for Hep C. Contact your local GP or sexual health clinic for an appointment to talk about it.

sex matters

Caring for your sexual health as a positive person is important. Some people have put sex and relationships on hold, some have a sex partner, others are still deciding if they are ready to have casual sex or start a relationship. Whatever the case, looking after yourself and talking to your GP or sexual health counsellor about any issues you may have is an essential part of this.

As a negative partner you may have your own issues and experiences to sort out. It is important that your own sexual and emotional needs are being met and you are able to enjoy sex without worrying about becoming infected with HIV. Looking after yourself and your needs and talking to your GP or a counsellor about any issues you may have is an essential part of this.

'We have safe sex, I get tested once a year. The protection comes from a vigilance about safe sex.' Maria

21

S

Counsellors are available at all sexual health clinics in NSW for both HIV positive and HIV negative partners. Visits can be one-off sessions or can be a series of appointments. This service is free of charge.

Relationships Australia is another service that can provide you with individual and couples counselling. There is some cost involved, however the charges are 'means tested' or calculated on your income. See the directory at the back of this booklet for details.

sexually transmitted infections (STIs)

Transmission of STIs

STIs are most easily passed on through vaginal sex (penis in the vagina) or anal sex (penis in the anus) without a condom. Some STIs can be carried on fingers from one person's penis or vagina to another. When passed on this way you will generally have symptoms in or around your penis, vagina or anus.

It is important to know that a number of STIs, for example chlamydia and genital warts, often have no symptoms. This means that you can have them in your body without knowing.

A number of STIs can also be passed on during oral sex (using your mouth on a vagina, penis or anus). If this happens, symptoms will generally appear in or around your mouth or in your throat.

22

Dealing with an STI

If you have an STI, you might notice some of these changes in your body:

S

- Change in vaginal discharge
- Sores, rash or redness on your vagina
- Itching
- Pain in your lower abdomen
- Pain during sex
- Pain or tingling when urinating
- Heavy periods
- Spotting between periods
- Discharge from the penis

S

Testing – better off knowing

Testing for STIs is straightforward and easy. A full sexual health checkup will test for a range of STIs and may include a urine test, a blood test, taking a swab from the end of your penis or just inside your vagina and if needed, a swab from your anus and inside your mouth.

Test results are available within seven days.



Treatment

Most STIs are easily treated. Chlamydia and gonorrhoea can be treated quickly and effectively with antibiotics. Syphilis is treated with a single dose of penicillin.

Genital warts can be treated in a number of ways: using lasers, burning, freezing which may be a bit uncomfortable but not painful, or creams.

Viral STIs, like herpes, hepatitis and HIV cannot be completely cured but there are things that can help. Herpes is easily managed with an antiviral tablet, eg Zovirax. The different types of hepatitis will be treated differently.

For a complete list of STI's, including information on symptoms and treatment, see the Table on pages 30 to 35.

testing

Advantages to regular HIV and STI testing are:

- Regular HIV testing of a negative partner can reduce the stress of not knowing about their HIV status.
- STI testing allows STIs to be diagnosed and treated quickly.
- Treating STIs can reduce the risk of passing on HIV and STIs.
- STI testing and treatment can improve your general sense of 'wellness'.
- Testing is an opportunity to have other sexual and reproductive health checks, like testicular checks, or breast checks, Pap smears, and contraception or pregnancy counselling.

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using alcohol & other drugs

Negotiating and practicing safe sex can be tricky at the best of times. It can be difficult to remember to be safe and use a condom or dam if you're drunk or high.

viral load

Viral load measures the amount of HIV in a person's blood. Viral load testing suggests that HIV can almost always be found in semen and vaginal fluids. Having a high viral load in the blood usually means that the viral load is high in the semen. The reverse is not necessarily true however. Even though you may have a low viral load in your blood, the viral load in your semen may be higher. It is not safe to assume that taking HIV drugs will protect your sexual partner.

The levels of HIV in vaginal fluid vary. They are likely to be highest around the time of menstruation.

'My partner has HIV and I don't. We use a condom during sex most times. Sometimes though we just want to forget he has HIV. We want the intimacy and closeness we had pre-diagnosis. It is during these times we have unprotected sex. He doesn't ejaculate inside me but there is still a risk.'
Corinne

See 'O – oral sex & other sexual practices' on page 13 for more information on reducing risk.

venereal disease or stds

These are the old words used for sexually transmitted infections, or STIs.

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visiting a clinic

Sexual health clinics offer free sexual health check-ups and counselling. All consultations are confidential. You do not need a Medicare card and you can remain anonymous by using a different name or being allocated a client number, if you choose to do so.

Staff at sexual health clinics are able to arrange telephone language interpreters if they are needed, and counsellors are available at the clinics. All sexual health clinics offer a needle and syringe service, free condoms and lube. Many clinics also have HIV specialist doctors on staff.

There are over 20 sexual health clinics in NSW. Look under 'S' in the white pages.



women's sexual health

Vaginal Health – Quick Tips for a Healthy Vagina

- Change tampons and pads regularly.
- Wipe from the front to the back after using the toilet.
- Avoid douches, perfumes and deodorants around your vagina.
- Use condoms and water based lubricants for penetrative sex.
- If using sex toys, use different toys for anal sex, vaginal sex, and oral sex and always use with gloves and condoms.
- Wash your hands and toys after sex.
- See your health worker if you notice any changes that concern you.
- Have regular Pap tests – every six months for positive women.

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Breast Checks

It is good to get to know your breasts and find out what feels normal for you. This way you can spot any breast changes if they happen.

W

Whatever your age, do a breast self-examination each month. If you notice any changes in the way your breasts look or feel, make an appointment with a doctor or women's health nurse for a check-up.

Women who are between 50 and 69 years old should have a mammogram (or breast screen) every two years. Free mammograms are available from BreastScreen.

Cervical Cancer

Cervical cancer is one of the most preventable types of cancer. A Pap test checks for any changes to the cells of a cervix that may lead to cancer. A nurse or doctor will use a small brush to wipe the cervix to get a small sample of cells. These are then analysed by a laboratory.

W

A Pap test may feel a bit uncomfortable but it doesn't hurt. Having a Pap test is the best way to make sure that your cervix is healthy.

Women should have a Pap test every two years if they have ever had penetrative sex. This means sex where a penis or a sex toy has entered the vagina. For women over 50 years old, annual pap tests are recommended.

Positive women are encouraged to have a Pap test every 6 months. A lowered immune system may mean that any abnormal cells in the cervix can develop more quickly. Having a Pap test every 6 months means that changes to the cervix are seen early and can be treated quickly.

Fertility

Irregular periods can affect fertility levels and make it more difficult for you to become pregnant. If you are bleeding at irregular times, it will be harder to monitor your menstrual cycle and to predict when ovulation is likely to occur. Check with a women's health nurse, doctor or your specialist whether any menstrual irregularities you may be having could affect your chances of becoming pregnant.

Menstruation

Irregular periods are common in all women but may be more common in women who are HIV positive. If you are having problems with menstruation, including pre-menstrual syndrome (PMS) contact the FPA Healthline or visit a women's health centre or family planning clinic.

Menopause

Menopause is the term given to a woman's last menstrual period. A woman is said to have gone through menopause when she hasn't had a period for twelve months. Menopause happens when a woman's body runs out of eggs, and the ovaries stop producing the hormones oestrogen, progesterone and testosterone. This generally happens when women are around 50-51 years of age but can be anywhere from 40 - 55 years of age. Like fertility and menstrual cycles in general, menopause is different for each woman.

W

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If you think you may be going through menopause, ask your GP or prescribing doctor for more information and a check-up, or visit a women's health centre or family planning clinic.

Pregnancy Testing & Counselling

If your period is late or much lighter than usual you may be pregnant. Other signs of pregnancy can be tender breasts, weight gain, nausea and passing urine more often. Pregnancy tests can be done quickly and easily from a urine sample. You can also buy pregnancy testing kits from the chemist or supermarket and do the test yourself at home.

Pregnancy testing and counselling is available at sexual health clinics, women's health centres and family planning clinics. You can also see your doctor. At a sexual health clinic you can see a qualified counsellor as well as a nurse or a doctor if you want to.

W



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Sperm Washing

Sperm washing is a technique in which the semen of an HIV positive man is put into a special machine which is able to separate the virus from sperm. The woman partner can then be artificially inseminated using this 'washed' sperm. Sperm washing is the subject of ongoing clinical research and trials.

X, Y, Z

Put your troubles on the shelf! If there's something we've missed out, ring Pozhet, Freecall (Aust) 1800 812 404 and tell us!

Chlamydia

Transmission

Chlamydia is passed on through vaginal or anal sex without a condom.

Chlamydia can also be passed on through oral sex, with symptoms showing in the throat.

You may have no symptoms at all. This is particularly true for women. Chlamydia is often referred to as 'the silent STI'.

Women: most women have no symptoms at all. If symptoms are present they may include a burning or tingling sensation when urinating, increased discharge from the vagina, bleeding or spotting between periods, heavier periods, and pain in the abdomen.

Men: men may have a burning or tingling sensation when urinating, and a discharge or stickiness from the opening in the penis.

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Gonorrhoea

Transmission

Gonorrhoea is passed on through oral sex, vaginal or anal sex without a condom.

You may have no symptoms at all. The best way to find out if you have gonorrhoea is to have an STI check-up.

Women: most women have no symptoms. If symptoms are present they may include a burning or tingling sensation when urinating, increased discharge from the vagina, bleeding or spotting between periods, heavier periods, pain in the abdomen, sore throat and eye infection.

Men: men may have a burning or tingling sensation when urinating, and a discharge or stickiness from the opening in the penis, sore throat and eye infection.

Syphilis

Transmission

Syphilis is passed on through vaginal, anal or oral sex without a condom.

Symptoms of syphilis may not be noticeable.

About three weeks after catching syphilis one or more painless sores may appear on the body, usually around the penis or vagina. A few weeks and up to a few months later a rash may appear. Other sores may also appear and you may feel generally unwell, as if you have a bad cold.

Consequences

If left untreated chlamydia can lead to serious health problems including:

Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID) in women. This is where the Fallopian tubes are infected and can cause infertility.

Ectopic pregnancy – pregnancy outside the uterus (womb), in a Fallopian tube.

Inflammation of the testicles (balls) - can cause infertility.

Transmission to a positive partner can cause more severe disease and increase the risk of transmission of HIV.

Transmission to a positive partner can cause more severe disease and increase the risk of transmission of HIV.

If left untreated, syphilis can cause serious health problems.

Transmission to a positive partner can cause more severe disease and increase the risk of transmission of HIV.

Treatment

Chlamydia is easily cured with antibiotics.

Gonorrhoea is easily cured with antibiotics.

Syphilis is easily cured with penicillin.

STI

Signs & Symptoms

Genital Herpes

Transmission

Both types of herpes can be passed on through skin-to-skin contact eg oral sex, vaginal or anal sex without a condom.

Can also be transmitted when no symptoms are showing.

There are two types of herpes.

Herpes Type 1: cold sores (blisters) around the mouth.

Herpes Type 2: tingling and blisters, like cold sores, around the vagina, penis or anus; flu-like symptoms.

Genital Warts

Transmission

Easily passed on through skin-to-skin contact eg anal or vaginal sex without a condom.

Wart virus is a very common virus. It is also called the Human Papilloma Virus or HPV.

Usually there are small warts on the penis or vulva and in or around the vagina and anus. There may also be no symptoms and no visible warts.

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Thrush

Transmission

Thrush is not usually sexually transmitted. Can be the result of changes caused by pregnancy, diabetes, obesity or when a person is taking antibiotics, steroids or hormones like the Pill or HRT.

Thrush can be common in men and women. Also called candida or monillia. Is more likely to occur if you are HIV positive.

Symptoms include redness, a rash or itching and soreness around the genitals or in the mouth. White patches in the mouth or a thick white discharge from the vagina.

Trichomoniasis

Transmission

Trichomoniasis is passed on through vaginal sex without a condom.

Trichomoniasis is caused by a small parasite. It is also called Trike. Most men, and about half the women who carry this infection have no symptoms.

Women: thin, frothy vaginal discharge, with an unpleasant fishy smell; sore and itchy vagina; burning or tingling sensation when passing urine.

Men: burning or tingling sensation when passing urine.

Consequences

Treatment

Transmission to a positive partner can cause more severe disease and increase the risk of transmission of HIV.

Symptoms may be present more frequently, and may be more severe in positive men and women.

There is no permanent cure for the herpes viruses, but there are treatments that can help with symptoms. Ask your doctor about this.

For women, having HPV is associated with cervical cancer. Regular Pap smears are recommended for all women. Six-monthly Pap smears are recommended for positive women.

There is no permanent cure for the wart virus but warts can be removed using different methods. Ask your doctor about this.

Can recur regularly if you are feeling stressed or run down.

Easily treated with anti-fungal creams from the chemist, or tablets from the doctor. Positive people will need longer courses of treatment.

Transmission to a positive partner can cause more severe disease and increase the risk of transmission of HIV.

Easily treated with antibiotic tablets.

Hepatitis A

Transmission

Hep A is caused by coming into contact with faeces, contaminated water or food, and oral-anal sex (using your tongue and mouth on the anus).

In adults with Hep A there are always obvious symptoms: mild flu-like illness, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain and yellowing of the skin and eyes (jaundice).

Symptoms may last six weeks or up to six months in positive people.

Hepatitis B

Transmission

Hep B is passed on:

- through sharing drug injecting equipment and by vaginal, anal or oral sex without a condom
- by getting a tattoo or body piercing with unsterilised equipment
- from mother to child during childbirth
- by sharing toothbrush or razor.

Hepatitis B is sexually transmitted.

There can be no symptoms with Hep B. If there are symptoms these may be: yellowing of the skin and eyes (jaundice), fever and lethargy, stomach pains and vomiting, dark urine and pale faeces.

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Hepatitis C

Transmission

Hep C is passed on:

- through sharing drug injecting equipment including needles/ syringes, spoons, tourniquets, water.
- by getting a tattoo, body piercing or acupuncture with unsterilised equipment.
- from mother to child during childbirth.

Sexual transmission of Hep C is extremely rare, but is more common if one partner is HIV positive.

Most people will have no symptoms when they are first infected with hepatitis C.

If you do have symptoms these will be:

yellowing of the skin and eyes (jaundice), flu-like symptoms, tiredness, pain in the abdomen, nausea, dark urine and pale faeces.

Consequences

Treatment

Symptoms clear after several months. You will then develop immunity to Hep A.

Most people will have life-long protection against Hep A and will not be infectious.

Hep A causes inflammation of the liver.

Transmission to a positive partner can cause more severe disease and increase the risk of transmission of HIV.

A quick and easy vaccine is available from your doctor for Hep A.

Symptoms may take up to six months to appear. Can cause cirrhosis, liver failure and liver cancer.

Most people recover from Hep B. Some keep the virus in their body.

Transmission to a positive partner can cause more severe disease and increase the risk of transmission of HIV.

A quick and easy vaccine is available from your doctor for Hep B.

Alcohol should be avoided so as not to stress the liver.

Can cause serious damage to the liver. Some people may develop cirrhosis of the liver, liver failure or liver cancer.

Transmission to a positive partner can cause more severe disease and increase the risk of HIV transmission.

People with HIV get more severe complications of Hep B and C.

There are treatments available for Hep C. Ask your doctor about this.

Changes to your lifestyle are also recommended. Ask your doctor about this too.

Alcohol should be avoided so as not to stress the liver.

Directory of useful contacts and resources

Getting Help

For anonymous telephone advice and referral to clinics or other services you can call any of the numbers below:

(Pozhet) Positive Heterosexuals

Positive men, positive women, their partners and family members. A social events calendar includes workshops, retreats, support groups, country visits and phone counselling.

1800 812 404 Freecall (Aust)

www.pozhet.org.au

NSW HIV/AIDS Information Line

For the closest help to where you live. Find an HIV/AIDS doctor, clinic, counsellor or social worker.

(02) 9332 9700

1800 451 600 Freecall

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PEP Hotline

Call immediately if you think you might have been at risk of HIV infection.

1800 737 669 Freecall 24 hours

FPA Healthline

Answers your questions on reproductive and sexual health including pregnancy, emergency contraception (ECP) and the female condom

1300 658 886

www.fpahealth.org.au

Multicultural HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C Service

Bilingual/bicultural HIV/AIDS information and support for people from a non-English speaking background

(02) 9515 3098

1800 108 098 Freecall

www.multiculturalhivhepc.net



Hep C Helpline

Hepatitis C Council of NSW
Information and support
(02) 9332 1599
1800 803 990 Freecall
www.hepatitisc.org.au

Sexual Health Clinics

For your nearest clinic to see a doctor, nurse or social worker, look under 'S' in the White Pages.

Contraception and Women's Sexual Health

Pozhet

Women's Health Promotion Officer
1800 812 404 Freecall (Aust)

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Women's Health Centres:

Bankstown	(02) 9790 1378
Blacktown	(02) 9831 2070
Caringbah	(02) 9525 2058
Leichhardt	(02) 9560 3011
Liverpool	(02) 9601 3555
Penrith	(02) 47 218 749

Women's HIV & Health Promotion (ACON)

HIV positive women's support
(02) 9206 2015
1800 063 060 Freecall

BreastScreen NSW

Mammogram appointments
132 050



Other Contacts

Relationships Australia

Relationship and family counselling
1300 364 277

Cancer Council

Information on cancer including breast and testicular cancer
131120
www.cancercouncil.com.au

Useful Resources

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Contraception

Women & HIV Fact Sheet No 7 (FPA Health/ACON publication)
Treat Yourself Right (AFAO publication).
Call ACON on Freecall 1800 063 060 for copies.

Living with HIV/AIDS

Changing Lives

A resource for heterosexual people living with HIV/AIDS
Call Pozhet on 1800 812 404 for copies.

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Sex Matters A-Z
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