

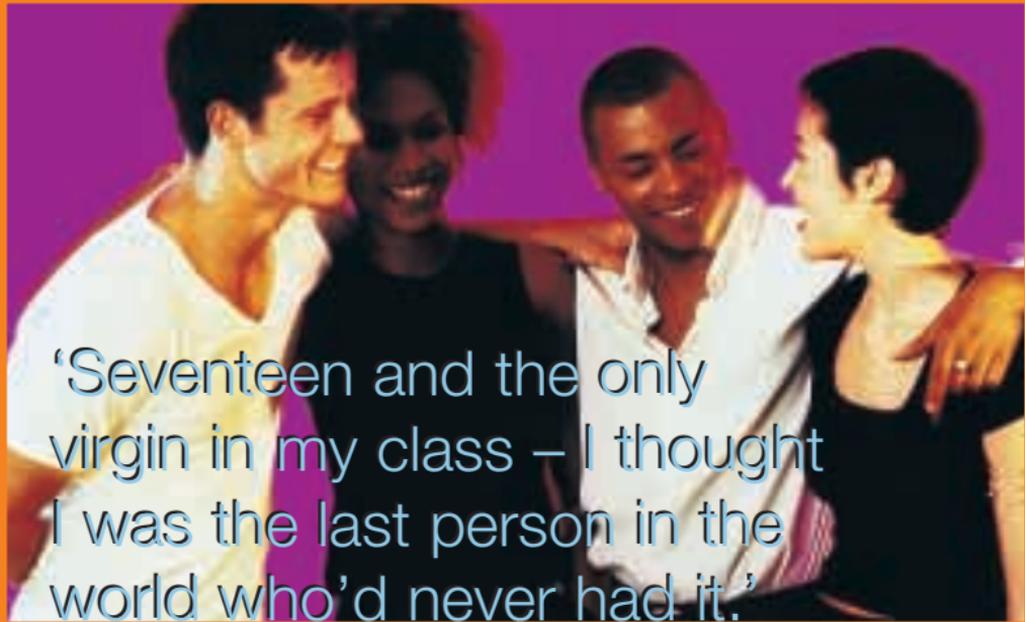


Loveline

Sexual health for young people



Introduction



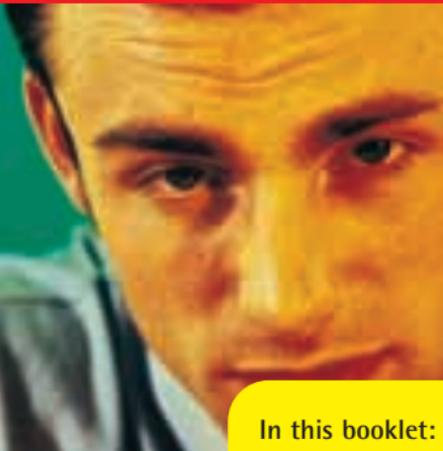
‘Seventeen and the only virgin in my class – I thought I was the last person in the world who’d never had it.’



‘Everybody’s doing it – maybe I should too.’

‘I don’t want to – but how do I say ‘no’?’

Contents



It can be hard to decide if you should have sex or not. But in the end it's what's right for you, and only you can answer that.

This booklet aims to help you through the maze – giving you the facts about sex, answering your questions, and telling you where you can get help and advice.

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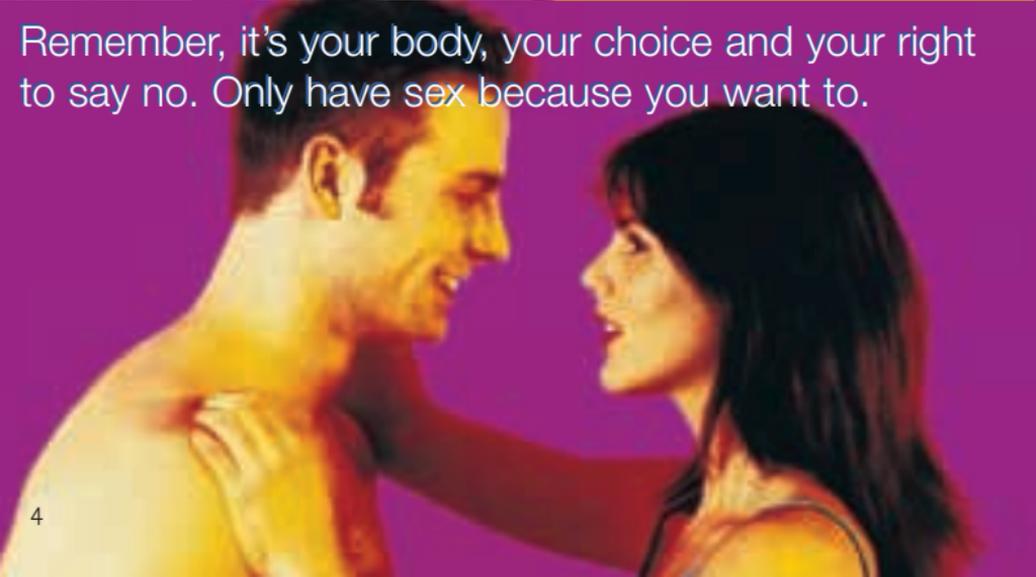
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How you can make sex safer



Fact: only condoms provide 'all-in-one' protection against pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV.

Remember, it's your body, your choice and your right to say no. Only have sex because you want to.



If you and your partner decide you both want to have sex, there's a lot of new things to think about such as contraception, pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. Here are some good reasons for making it safer.

Babies

To keep the risk of pregnancy low, you or your partner need to use a reliable method of contraception. There are many different types of contraception, but only condoms provide 'all-in-one' protection against pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV.

Sexually transmitted infections

Sexually transmitted infections are very common. Having sex without a condom puts you at risk of a sexually transmitted infection. And that includes HIV, the virus which causes AIDS.

Not all sexual infections have symptoms. So you or your partner could have one and not even know about it. That's why it is important to have safer sex instead of taking a risk.

Listen to what your partner wants. If they don't want to have sex, don't put pressure on them

→ You can find more information about contraception on page 6

→ For more information on sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, go to page 19

Always use a condom that carries the European CE mark or the CE and British Kitemark every time you have sex.



Be prepared



Being prepared doesn't mean taking the fun out of sex. And it doesn't mean you are planning to sleep around. It just makes sense.

'But I'm embarrassed buying condoms'

You may feel embarrassed but the shop assistant won't give it a second thought. If you don't like to ask for condoms, buy them from a machine or in a supermarket where you can get them off the shelf with other goods. Once you've bought them a few times you'll find it much easier.

Discuss what protection you are going to use early on – that way it'll be easier to agree on safer sex, or to change your mind about having sex at all if either of you don't feel happy. The best way to make sure that you don't have unprotected sex is to plan ahead.

And remember that you can usually get free condoms in most of the following places:

- ⇒ family planning clinics;
- ⇒ Brook Advisory Centres;
- ⇒ sexual health or STD or GUM (sexually transmitted disease or genito-urinary medicine) clinics;
- ⇒ young people's clinics, if you're under 25; and
- ⇒ gay pubs and clubs.

For details of your nearest GUM or STD clinic, look up the [lovelife website: www.lovelife.uk.com](http://www.lovelife.uk.com)

Be in control



Practise putting one on first and you'll soon get used to it.

You've bought the condoms – now how do you suggest using one? Talking about safer sex doesn't have to be difficult. Once you mention it you might find your partner is just as keen to talk about it as you are. If you can't find the right words to talk about it, you could try one of these ideas.

- ⇒ Wait until you're both undressing and then ask 'Your condoms or mine?' It's easier to do this when you've still got your underwear on and you're not in any danger of getting carried away.
- ⇒ Say 'We need to use a condom. I would never have sex without one.'
- ⇒ Say 'Let's use a condom – better safe than sorry.'

Don't forget there are also lots of ways of having sex that don't involve penetration (where the penis enters the vagina, anus or mouth)... kissing, stroking and touching can be just as exciting!

'But they're difficult to put on'

Practice makes perfect.

'But they spoil the flow'

Not if you make it part of the fun!

Condom tips



Condoms come in different shapes, textures and flavours. There is also a female condom which fits inside the vagina. Whichever type of condom you choose, make sure you use one with the CE mark or CE and British Kitemark symbols.



- **Be prepared** – if you're likely to be in a situation where you may have sex – maybe after parties, clubs, raves, or going to the pub – make sure you've got condoms with you. It is better to be prepared than risk unsafe sex. After all, you can easily hide condoms in your pocket or purse.

Watch out – drink (not to mention drugs) can change the way you behave. You may not think so, but even a little drink can affect what you do, and you could end up doing something you'll regret later.

Going abroad – buying condoms abroad can be difficult. So remember to buy them before you go.



When you're using a condom, remember the following.

- ⇒ If you are using a condom for the first time, read the instructions on the packet.
- ⇒ Always put the condom on well before the penis enters the vagina, anus or mouth. A small amount of semen comes out of the penis before ejaculation (pre-cum), which you may not even notice.
- ⇒ Heat can damage condoms, so keep them in a cool, dry place.
- ⇒ Condoms don't last forever – so check the expiry date on the packet.
- ⇒ Most condoms are already lubricated to make them easier to use, but you might find that using extra lubricant can make sex better and help prevent the condom tearing. Only use water-based lubricants, such as KY jelly, Clinigel or Boots lubricating jelly. Oil-based lubricants, such as Vaseline or baby oil can damage the condoms, so don't use them.
- ⇒ Spermicide, a chemical that kills sperm, gives extra protection against pregnancy when you use it with a condom. Many condoms already have spermicide on them but you can also buy it separately as a foam, cream, pessary or gel.
- ⇒ For anal sex (where the penis enters the anus), make sure you use plenty of water-based lubricant.

Using a male condom

- ⇒ Wait until the penis gets hard.
- ⇒ Take the condom out of the pack carefully. Do not use your teeth to open the pack, and watch out for rings and sharp fingernails which can tear the condom.



- ⇒ If the penis has a foreskin which is easy to roll back, you may find it easier to do this before putting on the condom.

- ⇒ Unroll the condom a bit to check that it's the right way round before putting it near the erect penis. Squeeze the tip of the condom to get rid of any air. Place over the tip of the hard penis.



- ⇒ Roll the condom all the way down to the base of the penis.



- ⇒ If you're using a water-based lubricant, spread it over the outside of the condom when it is on the penis.
- ⇒ Check during sex that the condom hasn't slipped off. After sex, pull the penis out of the vagina carefully while it is still hard. Hold the condom at the base when pulling out, to stop it slipping off.
- ⇒ Wrap the condom in a tissue and put it in a bin, not down the toilet.
- ⇒ Never use the same condom more than once – use a new condom every time you have sex.



Practise putting one on first and you'll soon get used to it.

For a demonstration of how to use a condom, look up the [lovelife website: www.lovelife.uk.com](http://www.lovelife.uk.com)

Using a female condom

The female condom lines the vagina. It has two rings to keep it in place. The ring at the closed end of the condom fits inside the vagina. The one at the open end stays outside.

- ⇒ Take the condom out of the packet carefully, watching out for jewellery and sharp fingernails which could tear it.
- ⇒ Hold the condom by the closed end, squeezing the inner ring between your thumb and middle finger. Keep your index finger on the ring too, to hold it steady.
- ⇒ At the same time use your other hand to open your vagina. Still holding the condom between your thumb and fingers, put it in the vagina. Push it up as far as it will go.
- ⇒ Then put your finger inside the condom until you can feel the inner ring at the closed end. Push it upwards, curving your finger round slightly until you can feel your pubic bone.



- ⇒ Make sure that the outer ring at the open end lies flat against the outside of your vagina (vulva).
- ⇒ It's a good idea to guide your partner's penis in during lovemaking, just to make sure it goes into the condom and not down the side of it.
- ⇒ Don't worry if the condom moves about a bit during sex – this is quite normal and safe.
- ⇒ To remove the condom, just twist the outer ring to keep the sperm inside, and pull it out gently. Wrap it in tissue and put it in a bin, not down the toilet.
- ⇒ Never use the same condom more than once – use a new condom every time you have sex.



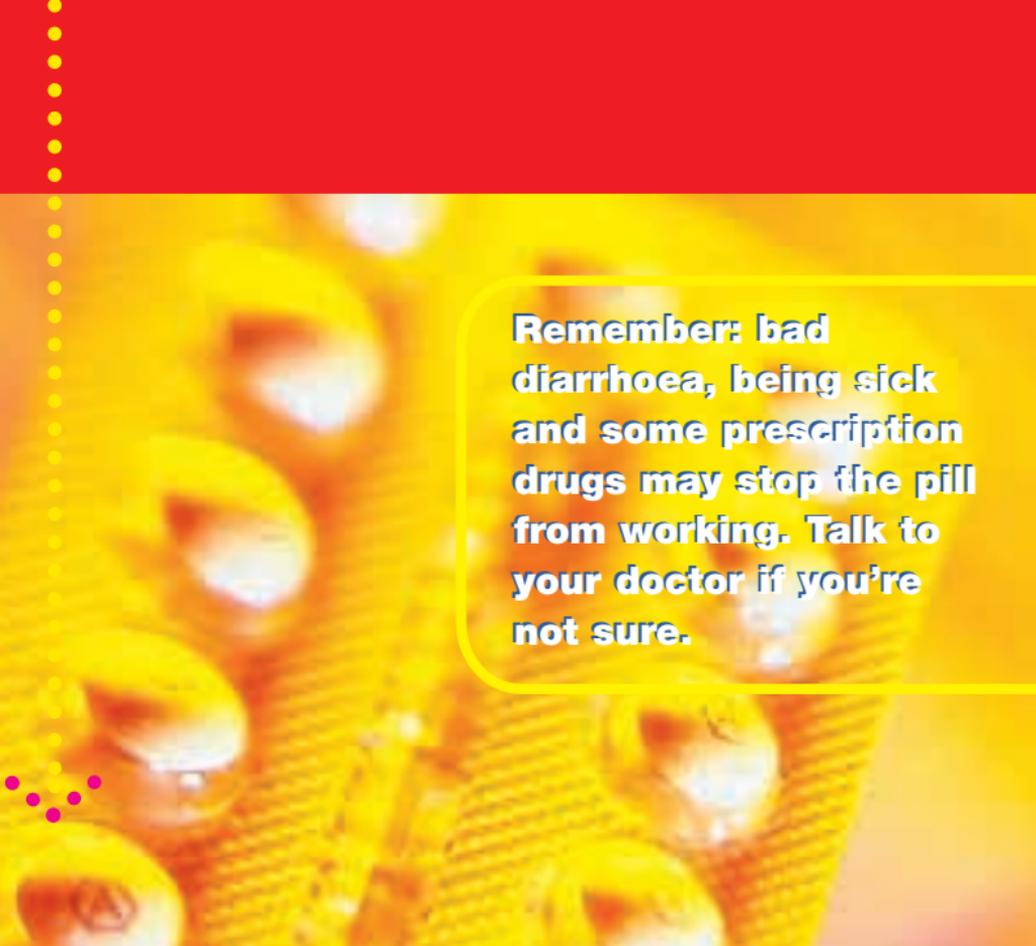
You might want to ask about the female condom next time you see your doctor. Your doctor or staff at a sexual health clinic can show you how to fit and use the female condom properly.

Contraception

At the moment there are twelve methods of contraception including both types of condoms. Some of the other most common methods are listed below.

- The **combined pill** stops a woman releasing an egg from her ovaries every month (ovulation). An egg may develop into a baby if fertilised by a sperm.
- The **progestogen-only pill**, which must be taken at the same time every day makes it hard for the egg to be fertilised and may also prevent ovulation.
Both of these methods are known as 'oral contraception' and work 99% of the time if taken correctly.
- An **IUD (intrauterine device)** is put in the uterus (womb) by your doctor and prevents pregnancy. It is 98% to 99% effective and lasts for up to 5 years. It may make periods heavier and more painful.
- An **IUS (intrauterine system)** like the IUD is put in the uterus (womb) by your doctor but also contains progestogen. It is 99% effective and lasts up to 5 years. It usually makes periods shorter and lighter.

Remember: male and female condoms are the only forms of contraception that protect you against both unplanned pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.



Remember: bad diarrhoea, being sick and some prescription drugs may stop the pill from working. Talk to your doctor if you're not sure.

But which contraceptive method is right for you?

This depends on your individual circumstances, which may change at different times in your life. A GP, Brook Clinic, young person's clinic or family planning clinic will help you to choose the kind of contraception that is best for you and your partner.

For more information or advice on contraceptives, sexual health and details of local clinics call the **Contraceptive Education Service Helpline** on 0845 310 1334.

Emergency contraception



If you think your contraceptive method has not worked, or you have had sex without using contraception, there are two types of emergency contraception women can use.

- **Emergency contraceptive pills** – these must be started within three days (72 hours) of sex. They work best if they are started within 24 hours of sex.
- **An IUD** – this must be fitted within five days.

You can get emergency contraception free from most GPs or from a Brook Clinic, young person's clinic or family planning clinic. You may also be able to get them from doctors in NHS sexual health (GUM) clinics or hospital accident and emergency departments. You can also buy emergency contraception from most pharmacies if you are 16 years or over.

To find out more about emergency contraception and where to go for help contact your GP or phone the Contraceptive Education Service Helpline (see page 15).

Pregnancy



Signs of pregnancy can include missed periods, tender breasts and feeling or being sick. You can get pregnancy tests free from organisations listed below. Many chemists and most pregnancy advisory services also offer tests, usually for a small charge.

If you or your partner are pregnant, take time to think about what you want to do. You will have to decide if you are going to carry on with the pregnancy or not. This is a big decision and you can get information and advice on what you can do from:

- your doctor;
- Brook Helpline on 0800 0185023;
- British Pregnancy Advisory Service on 08457 304030;
- Marie Stopes Clinics on 020 7574 7400; and
- your local young people's services.

If you choose to keep your baby, be prepared for mixed reactions from your friends and family. Having a baby is a big responsibility. It can limit your chances for education and training, as well as making it harder to have a social life.

Pregnancy

Social services or special agencies can arrange adoptions. You can't formally agree to an adoption until your baby is six weeks old – in case you change your mind.



If you choose not to keep your baby, there are different things you can do.

It is not easy to decide that an abortion is what you want. Under the Abortion Act 1967 the operation can be carried out up to the 24th week of pregnancy, but the earlier it's done, the safer it is. Most abortions are done before week 16. You will have to meet some legal conditions. Get advice on what you can do from your doctor or the organisations mentioned previously.

If you choose to have the baby you should know about folic acid. This is a B vitamin which can greatly reduce the chances of your baby having certain birth defects such as spina bifida. You should take 400 micrograms of folic acid supplement every day until you are 12 weeks pregnant. Ask your doctor or chemist for more information or call the Health Information Service free on 0800 665 544.

What about sexually transmitted infections?

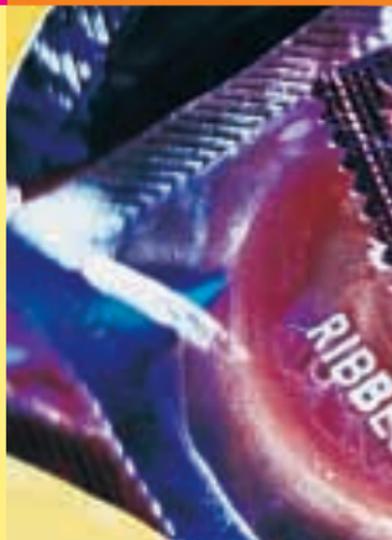
The most important thing to realise about sexually transmitted infections is that anybody who is having sex can get them – young or old, male or female, straight, gay or lesbian.



There are many types of sexually transmitted infections. Some of the more common ones are:

- ⇒ chlamydia
- ⇒ herpes
- ⇒ genital warts
- ⇒ gonorrhoea
(sometimes known as the clap).

The good news is that most sexually transmitted infections can be quickly and easily treated if they're discovered early on. But some can cause serious long-term problems, such as infertility in women, if they are not treated.



Most sexually transmitted infections can be treated if discovered early on.



What should I look out for?



If you have a sexually transmitted infection you may get symptoms which show that there's something wrong, but often there aren't any symptoms at all.

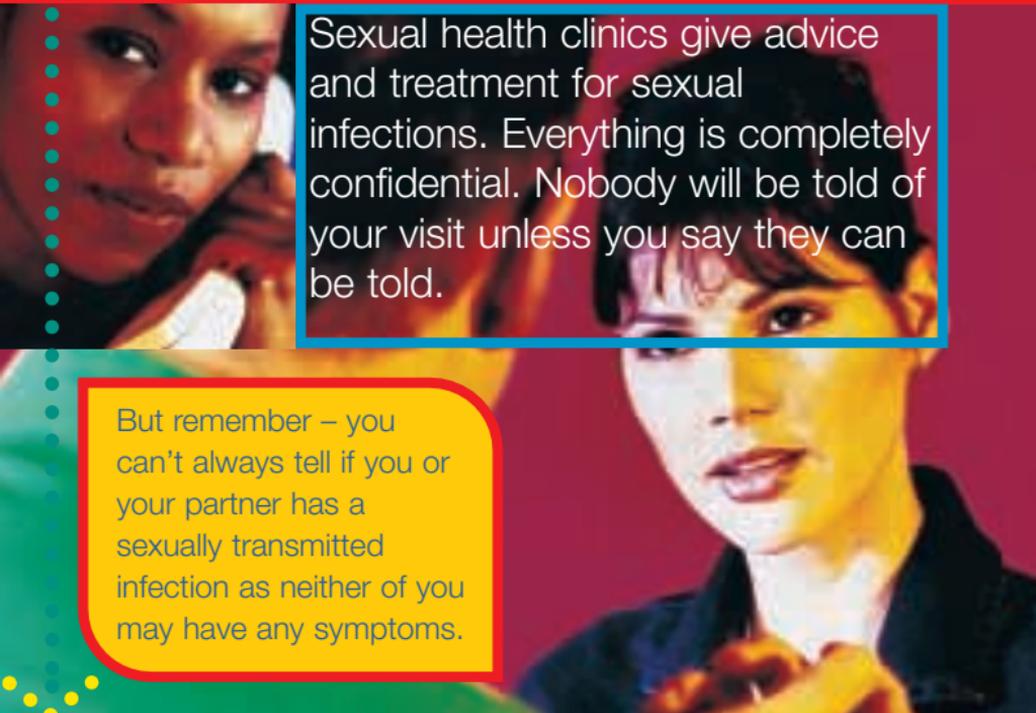
Some infections have no clear signs. Others have symptoms that come and go even though the infection is still there. Sometimes you can have more than one infection at one time. So if you've had unprotected sex and think you might have got an infection, it's really important to get medical advice straight away – even if you don't seem to have any symptoms.

Some of the warning signs to look out for include:

- ⇒ an unusual discharge from the penis or vagina;
- ⇒ rashes;
- ⇒ itchiness;
- ⇒ sores;
- ⇒ blisters;
- ⇒ pain in the genital area;
- ⇒ a burning sensation when you pass urine (pee) or have sex; and
- ⇒ urinating (peeing) more than usual.

You can get some sexually transmitted infections like herpes, genital warts and pubic lice if you have contact with the affected area. Condoms may not provide protection in these cases

Where to go for help



Sexual health clinics give advice and treatment for sexual infections. Everything is completely confidential. Nobody will be told of your visit unless you say they can be told.

But remember – you can't always tell if you or your partner has a sexually transmitted infection as neither of you may have any symptoms.

You can go to either

→ a sexual health clinic, usually called an STD (sexually transmitted disease) or GUM (genito-urinary medicine) clinic, or your own GP.

You can go to any clinic anywhere in the country – you don't have to go to a local one – and you don't have to be sent by your GP.

Information about clinics can be found at www.lovelife.uk.com or ring the National AIDS Helpline free from the UK on 0800 567 123 for details of a clinic in your area.

What about HIV?



HIV is the virus which causes AIDS. HIV damages the body's defence system so that it can't fight off certain infections.

Human
Immunodeficiency
Virus

Acquired
Immune
Deficiency
Syndrome

Most people with HIV look and feel healthy for a long time (sometimes 10 ten years or more). They may not even know they have the virus, but they can still pass it on to others through semen, blood and vaginal fluids.



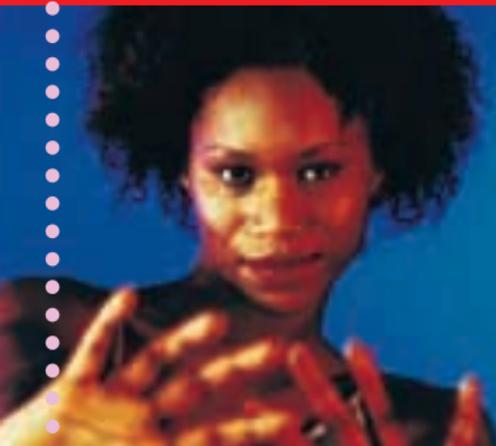
Remember – you cannot get HIV from kissing, touching, sharing cups, plates, forks or spoons, sneezing, toilet seats, insect or animal bites or swimming pools.

If someone with HIV goes on to develop certain serious illnesses, this condition is called AIDS. There is still no cure for HIV or AIDS. New treatments have been developed which mean that most people can stay well for longer, although these don't suit everybody.

In the UK there are three main ways HIV can be passed on:

- by having vaginal or anal sex without a condom with someone who has HIV, and unprotected oral sex also carries some risk;
- by a mother with HIV to her baby during pregnancy, at birth or through breastfeeding; and
- by injecting drugs using needles, syringes or other equipment that is infected with HIV.

If I stick to one partner, do we need to use condoms?



If for any reason you are thinking of not using condoms, think about the following.

- You can have a sexually transmitted infection including HIV but look and feel well, and have no symptoms.
- Many people will not know for sure whether they or their partner have a sexually transmitted infection.
- The only way to find out if you have any sexually transmitted infection is to have a test.

The more partners you have unprotected sex with, the more likely you are to come into contact with a sexually transmitted infection. It is always safer to use a condom and only stop using them when you are sure that neither you nor your partner or partners have an infection. Consider having regular check-ups at a NHS sexual health clinic.



If you're a woman and aged 20 or over, you should think about having a cervical smear test. For most women, it shows that the cells of the cervix (neck of the womb) are normal and healthy. The smear can show signs that cancer of the cervix may develop and the growth can be stopped before it even gets started. You should be tested at least once every five years. You can get a smear test at your GP surgery, or at family planning or NHS sexual health (GUM) clinic. For more information about the cervical smear test, ask your doctor for a copy of the NHS Cervical Screening leaflet *Your smear test* or call the following freephone helplines:

Cancerbacup on 0808 800 1234

Cancerlink on 08088 080 000

How safe is oral sex?



Oral sex is where one partner uses their tongue or mouth to excite their partner's sexual parts (genitals). There is a small risk of HIV infection through oral sex, but it is probably safer than unprotected vaginal sex and certainly less risky than anal sex without a condom.

You can reduce the risk of HIV infection even more by:

- ⇒ avoiding getting semen in the mouth, particularly if there are any cuts, sores or ulcers in the mouth;
- ⇒ using a condom for oral sex with a man;
- ⇒ using a dental dam (a latex square) for oral sex with a woman. If you hold this over the woman's sexual parts (genitals), it can protect you against infection from vaginal fluid and blood if she is having her period. You can get dental dams from some clinics, chemists and some mail-order agencies. Contact the National AIDS Helpline for details free on 0800 567 123.

What about skin piercing?

Anything that breaks the skin, including tattooing, acupuncture needles and equipment for ear or body piercing or removing hair by electrolysis, could pass on HIV, hepatitis B or hepatitis C and other infections. Only go to someone who uses sterile equipment or new equipment for each customer. Ask if you are not sure, and only go ahead if you are certain that they are using safe equipment.

I think I might be gay – who can I talk to?



Sexuality can be confusing at the best of times and if you're not sure which sex you're attracted to, you're not alone. Discovering your sexuality may take time, and you're the only one who can decide where your true feelings lie.

If you want a private chat with people who understand what you're going through, there are organisations such as the London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard who you can call on 020 7837 7324. They can give you information about local services.

Or you can look at the Terrence Higgins Trust website:
www.tht.org.uk

More advice



You can get free, confidential treatment and advice at any sexual health (GUM) clinic. To find one in your area, call the National AIDS Helpline free on 0800 567 123, phone your local hospital and ask for the GUM clinic or look in the phone book under genito-urinary medicine (GUM), sexually transmitted diseases (STD) or the old term, venereal diseases (VD). NHS sexual health (GUM) clinics offer free testing for HIV and other infections. You can find information about clinics on our sexual health website: www.lovelife.uk.com

For more information about safer sex, contraceptives and pregnancy, sexual health, AIDS and HIV you can ring one of the groups on page 30. Many of the services are national ones. To find out if there are local branches and helplines in your area, contact the national group or the National AIDS Helpline.

Contact a sexual health clinic, or your doctor, if you are worried or not sure about anything to do with your sexual health.



Health Promotion England produces a range of leaflets about sexual health, including:

- Facts about AIDS, HIV and the test
- Sexually transmitted infections: How to prevent them and where to go for help, plus a range of factsheets
- NHS Cervical screening: Your smear test (only available from health promotion units in England)

To order free copies of any of these leaflets phone the National AIDS Helpline free on 0800 567 123 or contact your local health promotion unit (look in the phone book under Health Promotion Unit or Health Education Unit). Or you can look at our website: www.lovelife.uk.com.

This leaflet only gives you basic information about sexual health. We have used information based on the evidence and medical opinion available at the time of printing.

Contact numbers



Brook Helpline: 0800 0185023

Open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm

Free, confidential sex advice and contraception for young people.

website: www.brook.org.uk

Contraceptive Education Service (CES)

0845 310 1334

Open Monday to Friday, 9am to 7pm with advice on all sexual health matters including contraception and local clinics.

website: www.fpa.org.

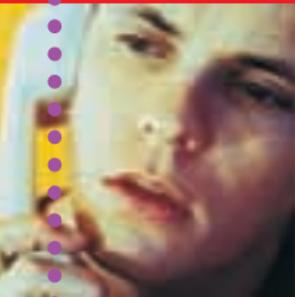
London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard: 020 7837 7324

A 24-hour, seven-days-a-week helpline offering a number of services, including sexual health advice.

Terrence Higgins Trust Helpline: 020 7242 1010

Open 12 noon to 10pm every day with information, advice, practical support and counselling on HIV and AIDS.

website: www.tht.org.uk



National AIDS Helpline (NAH): 0800 567 123

A 24-hour, seven-days-a-week, free and confidential telephone service with advice about HIV, AIDS, sexual health, local services, clinics and support services. Calls are free and confidential, and will not appear on your phone bill (this does not apply to calls made from some mobile phones – check with your mobile phone company for details).

National AIDS Helpline Language Line: 0800 917 2227

This is a multi-language line with an opening menu in Punjabi, Bengali, Urdu, Hindi, Gujarati, Arabic and Cantonese. You will be able to listen to messages in each language. From 6pm to 10pm on the following days, you will be able to talk to someone who is fluent in each language.

Monday	Bengali	Thursday	Gujarati
Tuesday	Urdu	Friday	Hindi
Wednesday	Arabic	Saturday	Punjabi
		Sunday	Cantonese

You will need to listen out for your own language and choose the number you want.

The **Welsh Language Service** is available on 0800 567 123 every day between 11am and 11pm. Welsh-speaking advisers and Language Line staff provide this service.

A **minicom service** is available for people with hearing difficulties on 0800 521 361 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

In **Northern Ireland** phone the AIDS Helpline (NI) 0800 137 437.

Open Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm and 7pm to 10pm, Saturday 2pm to 5pm.

The law

The legal age of consent for sex between a man and a woman in England, Scotland and Wales is 16. In Northern Ireland it's 17.

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 18, provided both men consent. A lower age of consent is currently being considered in Parliament.

There is no specific law on the age of consent for sex between two women. However, certain laws suggest that both women must consent and be over 16, except in Northern Ireland where they must be over 17.

Published by Health Promotion England
First published by the Health Education
Authority 1999.

Designed by: Ideology.
Photography by: Garry Hunter.



The Plain English Campaign
Crystal Mark applies to the text only.

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