

Guide to Safer Sex

What makes sex “unsafe”?

- Risk of spreading HIV
- Risk of spreading other Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) such as:
Chlamydia, genital warts, genital herpes, gonorrhea, Hepatitis B&C, syphilis, Trichomoniasis, HPV (HPV can cause cancer of the cervix, vulva, vagina, penis, anus, or throat)
- Risk of unplanned pregnancy
- Emotional risks
- Legal risks

How can I protect myself?

- Abstinence is the only 100% guaranteed way to avoid these risks.
- If abstinence isn't for you, you can *reduce your risk* by practicing safer sex. Safer sex tips are provided on the back of this sheet. **The more of these practices you put into place, the safer you will be.**



- **Limit your number of sexual partners.**
 - Get to know a person before having sex with them. Only have sex with somebody who is happy to practice safer sex and listen to your wishes.
 - Think about getting yourself and your partner tested for STIs before you start having a sexual relationship.

- **Always use a latex or polyurethane condom for all types of penetrative sex.**
 - Male condoms made of latex or polyurethane greatly reduce the risk of pregnancy or sexually transmitted infections, including HIV.
 - *Lambskin or other condoms made of natural materials DO NOT protect against STIs.*

- **Consider a barrier method for oral sex.**
 - STIs which can be passed on during oral sex include HIV, gonorrhoea, syphilis, human papillomavirus (HPV), hepatitis B and hepatitis C, genital warts, and genital herpes.
 - A dental dam is a sheet of latex (or similar material) used during oral sex to help stop STIs being spread.

- **Beware of having sex under the influence of alcohol or drugs.**
 - Alcohol and other drugs impair judgment, making you more likely to have higher-risk sex (e.g. sex with a stranger, without a condom, or anal sex)

- **Always go to your doctor as soon as possible if you have any symptoms of an STI**
 - Symptoms might include soreness, pain, or discharge from penis or vagina
 - Don't have unprotected sex until you have been checked out

- **Keep sex toys clean.**
 - STIs can be caught from infected sex toys. Therefore, to have safer sex, always wash and clean sex toys or use them with a barrier such as a condom.

- **Use contraception to protect against pregnancy.**
 - Contraceptive methods include pills, patches, injections, implants, vasectomy and female sterilization. Remember that these methods protect against pregnancy but not against STIs, so be sure to use a condom as well.

- **Understand that anal sex is particularly high-risk**
 - The lining of the anus and rectum are very thin. This makes it easier for germs to enter the body. HIV and hepatitis B in particular are more likely to be passed on through anal sex.

- **Make sure each partner consents**
 - Never assume consent; always ask.