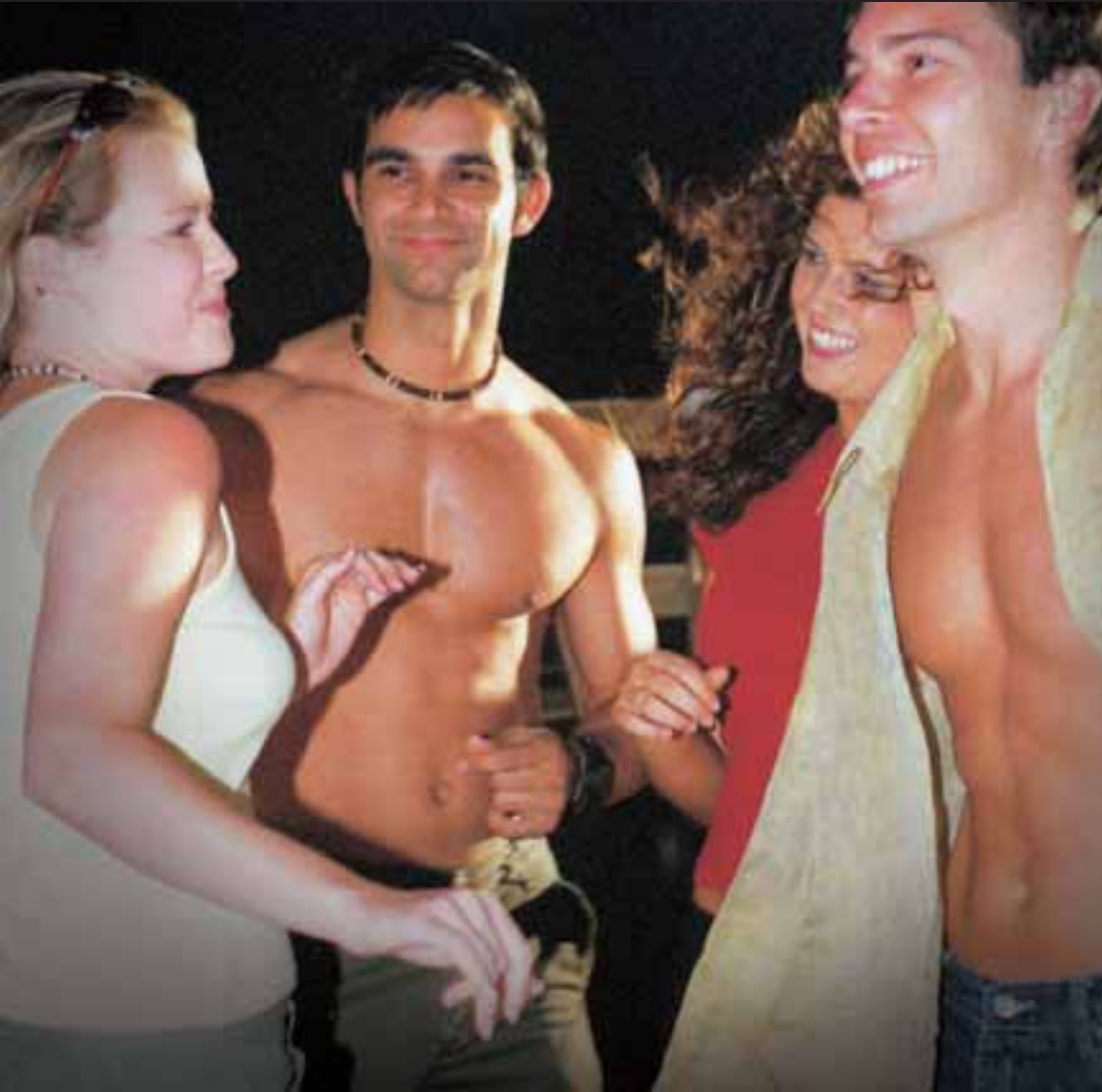


Anyone can get ~~infected~~  
condoms



Safe Sex. No Regrets.

## The ABCs of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) are infections that can be passed from one person to another during sexual contact. Bacteria cause some STIs and some are caused by viruses. STIs vary greatly in terms of symptoms and treatment. Many STIs can be cured with treatment. This booklet is about the most common STIs in Australia.

You can reduce your risk of getting STIs by practising safe sex.

### Chlamydia and Gonorrhoea

Chlamydia and gonorrhoea are bacterial infections with similar symptoms. Chlamydia is one of the most common STIs in Australia especially in young people 15-25 years of age.

#### Transmission

Chlamydia and gonorrhoea are easily transmitted from vaginal or anal sex without a condom. Gonorrhoea can also infect the anus and throat from oral and anal sex, without any symptoms at all.

#### Signs and Symptoms

These infections, especially chlamydia, are often called 'silent infections' as people may have them and not know and are still able to pass it on. However, women may notice their vaginal discharge is different or have bleeding in between their periods or pain with sex. Men may have pain when peeing and a discharge from their penis.

#### Treatment

Both infections are easily cured with a single dose of antibiotics. Your sexual partners will also need treatment so they don't give it back to you or pass it on to someone else. Make an appointment with your local doctor or sexual health clinic for a simple urine test.

#### Prevention

Both chlamydia and gonorrhoea can be prevented by safe sex (see how to be safe on page 12).

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*If not treated, chlamydia can lead to pelvic inflammatory disease, which can cause difficulty in falling pregnant.*

*Testing for gonorrhoea and chlamydia is easy – you only need to give a urine sample!*

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*Put on a condom... before you have genital to genital contact.*

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## Genital Herpes

Genital herpes is a very common STI caused by a virus. Genital herpes is like cold sores around the mouth, except the sores are in the genital area.

#### Transmission

Genital herpes is passed on by skin-to-skin contact with someone who has the infection. This often happens during vaginal, anal or oral sex. However, it can also be passed on without sexual intercourse because many sexual practices involve genital-to-genital or skin-to-skin contact. Herpes can also be passed on through asymptomatic shedding. This is where someone who has the infection sheds the virus from the skin without knowing it because they don't have any symptoms or aren't aware of them.

Both cold sores and genital herpes can be transferred from mouth to genitals. They can also be passed on to other areas such as the buttocks, hands and eyes.

#### Signs and Symptoms

Herpes affects people in different ways. Some people may get painful blisters or ulcers and have flu-like symptoms when they first get infected, others may only get a red patch with tiny breaks in the genital skin.

Once a person already has herpes they may get recurring outbreaks of the symptoms. Some people may get some symptoms before the blisters/ulcers appear like tingling, nerve pain, itching or a general feeling of ill health or irritability.

#### Treatment

There are tablets that can control herpes but there is no cure. The tablets should be taken the first time someone catches herpes to stop the possibility of complications. If a person has many outbreaks they may need to take the medication continuously for a period of time to stop the outbreaks occurring. Make an appointment with your doctor or local sexual health clinic.

#### Prevention

Even though condoms don't protect you 100% they certainly help to reduce your chances of catching genital herpes.

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*Herpes on the mouth (cold sores) can be passed onto the genitals of someone else during oral sex. Do not give oral sex if you have a cold sore on your mouth or receive oral sex if your partner has cold sores on their mouth!*

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*Condoms don't protect you 100% but they do reduce your chances of catching genital herpes. If you think you may have genital herpes... make an appointment with your local doctor or sexual health clinic for a test.*

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## Genital Warts

### Transmission

Genital warts are very common in Australia. They are caused by a virus that is passed on by direct skin-to-skin contact during sexual activity with someone who has the virus.

### Signs and Symptoms

Genital warts look just like the warts you get on the rest of the body – they look like lumps. Genital warts are sometimes itchy but aren't usually painful.

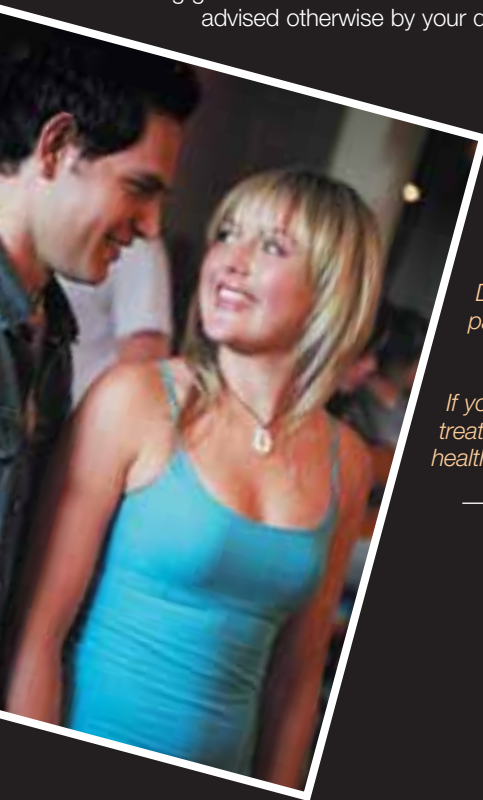
The virus that causes genital warts may sometimes show up on a pap smear on women.

### Treatment

There are many treatments available that will get rid of the warts. They are available through prescription from your local doctor or sexual health clinic.

### Prevention

Even though condoms don't protect you 100% they certainly help to reduce your chances of catching genital warts. Women should also have regular pap smears (every two years) unless advised otherwise by your doctor.



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*Condoms can reduce the chance of infection but don't protect you 100%.*

*Treatments are available from your local doctor or sexual health clinic.*

*Do not treat genital warts yourself with body wart paint from the chemist.*

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*If you suspect you have genital warts there are many treatments available. See your local doctor or sexual health clinic.*

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## Hepatitis B

Hepatitis B is a virus that affects the liver. It is different to hepatitis A and hepatitis C in terms of how it is transmitted and treated.

### Transmission

The virus can be found in semen, vaginal secretions, saliva and especially blood. It can be passed on through vaginal, anal or oral sex without a condom; sharing drug injecting equipment or any blood contaminated sharps injury; from an infected mother to her baby at childbirth; or by sharing toothbrushes, razors, tattooing or piercing equipment.

### Signs and Symptoms

Some people have no symptoms. Others develop symptoms within three months and these may include mild flu or nausea, vomiting, stomach pains and yellowing of the skin and whites of the eyes.

### Treatment

Although we know a lot about hepatitis B there is no cure for it. There is, however, a vaccine that can protect you from catching it. See your local doctor or sexual health clinic to get this.

### Prevention

Hepatitis B is one of the few STIs that can be prevented by a vaccine. Ask your local doctor or sexual health clinic about the vaccine.

If you are concerned you have come into contact with someone who has hepatitis B in the last two weeks you may be able to have a special vaccination that may stop you getting the disease. See your local doctor or sexual health clinic.

Even though condoms don't protect you 100% they certainly help to reduce your chances of catching it. Don't share any injecting drug equipment or toothbrushes, razors, piercing or tattooing equipment with anyone.

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*The best way to avoid catching hepatitis B is to get vaccinated. Ask your local doctor or sexual health clinic for more information.*

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## HIV

HIV is a virus that causes damage to the body's immune system. Over time HIV can develop into AIDS.

### Transmission

HIV virus can be found in semen, vaginal secretions and in blood. HIV is usually passed on by anal or vaginal sex without a condom. It is also passed on from an infected mother to her baby during pregnancy, at childbirth or by breastfeeding. HIV can also be transmitted by sharing drug injecting equipment, piercing or tattooing equipment.

### Signs and Symptoms

Most people with HIV look and feel perfectly healthy. Some people may develop a fever (with swollen glands, night sweats or rash on the body) in the weeks following infection. However, many people have no symptoms at all. Some time later HIV may cause conditions including pneumonia, brain infections, skin cancers, severe fungal infections and many other problems – this is AIDS.

### Treatment

Although we know a lot about HIV there is still no cure or vaccine. Treatments for HIV have improved dramatically over the last 10 years. Many people with HIV are able to remain well and live healthy lives.

### Prevention

HIV can be prevented by safe sex (see how to protect yourself on page 12). Also, don't share drug injecting equipment, piercing or tattooing equipment with anyone.

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*If you have been exposed to HIV there is a four-week treatment that may prevent you becoming infected. It is called PEP (post exposure prophylaxis). If you think you may have been exposed ask your local doctor or sexual health clinic or emergency department for more information – but you need to do this as soon as possible and not more than 72 hours after exposure!*

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*Be prepared... remember to always carry condoms with you... in your wallet, handbag or pocket... then you will have them when you need them. Make sure you regularly check the expiry date and make sure they are in good condition before you use them.*

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## Pubic Lice and Scabies

Both pubic lice and scabies are tiny mites. The scabies mites burrow into the skin whereas pubic lice hang on to the hair.

### Transmission

You can catch these mites by close physical contact including sexual contact and sharing clothes, towels, bed sheets and beds. There does not need to be sexual penetration for these to be passed on.

### Signs and Symptoms

The most common complaint is intense itching and a rash in the genital area. Scabies also occurs on other parts of the body such as between the fingers and toes and you can often see trails where the mites are burrowing under the skin.

### Treatment

You can effectively get rid of both scabies and pubic lice by using special creams and shampoos. See your local chemist, doctor or sexual health clinic. You will also need to wash any clothing or linen that has touched the affected area. Sexual partners and possibly household contacts need to check themselves and get treated if necessary so they don't give it back to you or pass it on to someone else.

### Prevention

There is no way to prevent pubic lice or crabs as they are passed on by close physical contact, but they can be treated.

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*You can effectively get rid of both scabies and pubic lice by using special creams and shampoos.*

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*Remember to let your sexual partner know so they can be treated too!*

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## Syphilis

### Transmission

You can get syphilis from having vaginal, anal or oral sex without a condom. It can also be passed from an infected mother to her unborn baby in the womb.

### Signs and Symptoms

Painless sores may appear on the mouth and/or around the genitals. In later stages a person may have a rash on their upper body, soles of their feet and hands. The symptoms may be so mild that you don't notice them or you may not have any symptoms at all.

### Treatment

Syphilis is treated with antibiotics, usually injections. Your sexual partners will need treatment too so they don't give it back to you or pass it on to someone else.

### Prevention

Even though condoms don't protect you 100% they do help to reduce your chances of catching it.

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*This is only some of the information about syphilis. It is very important that you see a doctor or sexual health clinic if you are concerned about any symptoms.*

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*If you are sexually active and have had unsafe sex... go to your local doctor or sexual health centre for a regular sexual health check up.*

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## Trichomoniasis (Trich)

Trichomoniasis is a genital infection caused by a parasite. It prefers to live in the vagina, but can also live in the urethra (inside the penis) in men.

### Transmission

Trich is passed on by vaginal sex without a condom. It may also be transferred between women by passing on vaginal discharge through hands or shared sex toys.

### Signs and Symptoms

Many women wouldn't know they have it, however, some women may have a frothy, yellowish discharge from their vagina, genital itching or vulval pain. Symptoms are rare in men but it may cause pain when peeing.

### Treatment

Trich is easily cured with a single dose of antibiotics. Your sexual partners will need treatment too so they don't give it back to you or pass it on to someone else.

### Prevention

Trich can be prevented by safe sex (see how to be safe on page 12).

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*Treatment is just one dose of antibiotics, which you can get from your local doctor or sexual health clinic.*

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*Remember to let your partners know to have a check up too!*

---



## What is **Safe Sex**?

Safe sex is using condoms and water based lubricant as well as a range of other things you can do during sex to help reduce the risk of catching or passing on STIs or HIV.

A list of sexual practices and their levels of risk are on page 14.

Safe sex can:

- prevent HIV
- prevent pregnancy
- help prevent STIs

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*The most common way STIs and HIV are passed on is through vaginal or anal sex without a condom. Safe sexual practices, including using a condom, prevent HIV and some STIs being passed on through sex.*

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## How are STIs and HIV transmitted?

- STIs and HIV are transmitted during vaginal or anal sex through blood, semen or vaginal fluids of an infected person entering the bloodstream of another person.
- STIs may also be passed on by skin-to-skin genital contact.
- Oral sex is relatively safe for HIV, however STIs like gonorrhoea, herpes and syphilis can be transmitted by oral sex.

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*Having an STI can greatly increase your risk of catching HIV.*

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Using condoms and water-based lubricant during sex can help prevent you from catching STIs and HIV.

Other ways to prevent catching STIs and HIV are:

- to not have sex; or
- to have sex with only one partner (and for your partner to only have sex with you) and both undertake a sexual health check-up including a HIV test early in the relationship to ensure neither of you has HIV or any STIs.

You can find a list of sexual activities and their risks on page 14.



Remember, if you do have sex:

- always use a condom and water-based lubricant;
- discuss vaccination against hepatitis B with your doctor or sexual health clinic, and possibly hepatitis A depending upon your sexual practices; and
- have regular sexual health check-ups with your local doctor or sexual health clinic.

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*Remember you can have an STI and not show any symptoms, but still pass them on to other people*

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## Why have **Safe Sex**?

Safe sex is the best way of protecting you and your sexual partners from STIs, including HIV.

There are very good reasons why sexually active people need to practise safe sex including the following:

- You can't tell whether someone has an STI based on how they look, dress, behave or who they have slept with.
- Practising safe sex provides you with peace of mind.
- Thinking 'it won't happen to me' provides no protection.
- Some STIs are quite common and using condoms will reduce the risk of infection.
- People with HIV or STIs often don't know that they are infected.
- Condom and water based lubricant prevents HIV transmission.
- Safe sex protects you from unintended pregnancies.
- STIs and HIV exist in all countries and cultures and can affect anyone. Worldwide HIV most commonly affects heterosexuals. Remember that in certain parts of the world condoms, lubricant and dams may be hard to find so pack some before you go.
- It can be fun to explore other sexual practices.



## How should I negotiate **Safe Sex?**

If you want to practise safe sex, there are a number of things you can do to make sure you stick to that decision.

Know how to use a condom and make sure you have a supply of condoms always available, including when you travel overseas.

Be clear about the reasons why you want to use a condom – your sexual partner may have all sorts of arguments about why they don't want to use them.

*'I always use condoms, it protects me and you...'*

*'If it's not on... it's not on.'*

*'Don't worry I have some right here in my drawer..'*

*'I'm glad I know what I am doing, it makes me look good...'*

*'We don't have any condoms but we could do other things...  
let me show you...'*

*'Here, let me put the condom on for you...'*

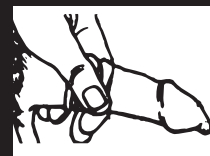
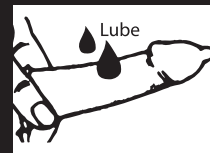
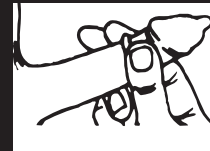
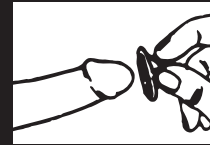
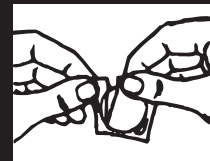
*'I have had too much to drink, I am just going to go  
home and be safe...'*

*'I find these condoms are the best for me... want to try them?'*

Your sexual partner needs to respect your decision regarding safe sex – if they don't then you need to consider how much they value you and your beliefs.



## How to use a condom



- Check the expiry date and make sure the label says it meets Australian standards (novelty condoms may not meet Australian standards).
- Store condoms in a cool place. It is not a good idea to leave condoms in a car. If you do keep condoms in your wallet or purse, make sure you replace them regularly.
- Condoms come in different sizes. Find a condom brand and size that is comfortable for you.
- Unwrap the condom from the packet but be careful not to tear the condom. Don't unroll the condom until it's on the penis.
- To roll the condom on, make sure the penis is erect. Make sure the condom is the right way up. Squeeze the teat of the condom to remove the air bubble and then roll the condom to the base of the penis. If uncircumcised, pull back the foreskin.
- Apply a water-based lubricant to the outside of the condom to increase pleasure and to reduce the risk of the condom breaking. Oil-based products will weaken the condom and lead to breakage.
- When withdrawing, make sure the penis is still erect and hold the condom so that it doesn't slip off.
- Dispose of the condom in a rubbish bin. Don't flush it down the toilet.
- Use a condom only once. Make sure you have more than one condom available.
- Don't put two condoms on for strength – they may tear more easily because of friction. If you want extra safety, buy extra strength.

Non-latex condoms are available for people with latex allergy.

If you think the condom has broken during sex pull out immediately and replace the condom. If the condom broke or slipped off during sex, you might want to consider emergency contraception, Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) (see page 6 for more details), or getting a sexual health-check-up.

### Where can I get condoms and lubricant?

You can get condoms and lubricant from chemists, many supermarkets, convenience stores and vending machines in the toilets of pubs and clubs. Condoms and lubricant are easy to access, and you do not need a prescription to get them.

### Dams

Dams are a thin rubber latex sheet for use in oral sex. When properly used, they may help reduce the risk of catching an STI. Your local sexual health clinic can tell you where you can get dams.

# So what is **Safe Sex**?

## Quick Reference

NOTE: This table lists only some of the many sexual practices people perform. Contact your local doctor or sexual health clinic for more information on any not listed.

*Oral sex is relatively safe for HIV, however STIs like gonorrhoea, herpes and syphilis can be transmitted by oral sex.*

*Vaseline or oil will damage the condoms surface! Always use water-based lubricant!*

## SAFE

- Tickling your partner
- Mutual masturbation
- Kissing your partner's nipples
- Oral sex using a condom or dam
- Body rubbing or genital-to-genital contact
- Vaginal or anal intercourse using a condom every time
- Ejaculating inside your partner with a condom on
- Sharing sex toys, covering the toy with a new condom for each partner

*Some STIs such as herpes, genital warts and syphilis can be transmitted by skin-to-skin contact or if the condom doesn't fully cover an infected area, like at the base of the penis.*

- Oral sex – without a condom/dam – no ejaculation in the mouth
- Oral sex through your partner's underwear keeping pre-ejaculation or ejaculate out of your mouth
- Oral Sex - without a condom/dam – with ejaculation or with cuts or sores in the mouth

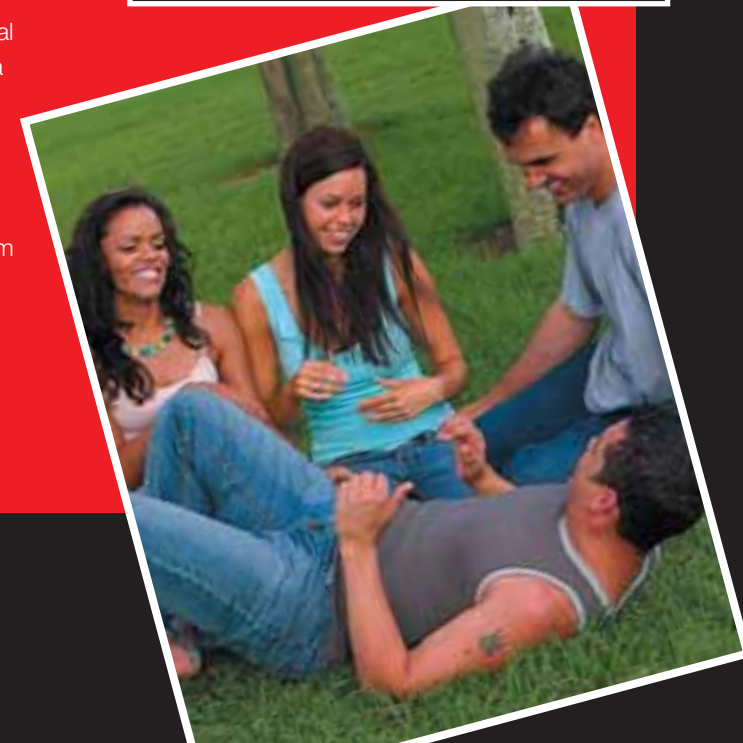
*Intercourse with a condom and no lubricant can cause friction and the condom can tear.*

*While research shows HIV transmission can occur through oral sex, it is uncommon. However, to reduce this small risk make sure your mouth and gums are in good condition before engaging in oral sex. Not allowing your partner to ejaculate into your mouth and using a condom or dam will also reduce the risk.*

## UNSAFE

- Using oil-based lubricant with condoms
- Having vaginal or anal intercourse and pulling out
- Ejaculating into your partners open eyes
- Having anal intercourse with a condom and without lubricant
- Having vaginal or anal intercourse without a condom
- Sharing sex toys without using a condom or not changing the condom between partners

*Pulling out before coming is UNSAFE as fluid leaks from the penis during sex. This fluid can pass on HIV and also cause pregnancy.*



## Where to get help

- Local doctors are listed in the telephone Yellow Pages under medical practitioners.
- Sexual health clinics are located all over NSW and are listed under 's' in the White Pages. You can be tested for HIV and other STIs without a Medicare card. You can also request a health care interpreter to be present at appointments.
- For more information contact:
  - Sexual Health Infoline: 1800 451 624 (free call)  
TTY: 02 9221 6515
  - FPA (formerly Family Planning Association)  
Healthline: 1300 65 88 86  
TTY: 02 9916 8360

### Glossary

**STIs** – (sexually transmitted infections) are infections that can be passed from one person to another during sexual contact. STIs can be passed on in different ways and as a result of different sexual activities. Some STIs are passed on as a result of skin-to-skin contact (genital herpes, genital warts, syphilis), while others require contact with body fluids or vaginal/anal penetration (gonorrhoea, chlamydia, trichomoniasis, hepatitis B, HIV).

**GENITAL CONTACT** – is when the genitals touch or rub together. It also includes intercourse/penetration.

**SEXUAL INTERCOURSE** – is any vaginal, oral or anal sex (see below).

**VAGINAL SEX** – is when a penis, fingers, or other objects enter the vagina of another person.

**ORAL SEX** – is when the mouth of one person is placed on the genitals (vagina/penis/anus) of another person.

**ANAL SEX** – is when one person inserts their penis, fingers, tongue or other objects into the anus of the other sexual partner and vice versa.

**HIV** – Human Immunodeficiency Virus (see page 6).

**PEP** – Post Exposure Prophylaxis (see page 6).

**Safe Sex. No Regrets.**

**NSW HEALTH**

[www.health.nsw.gov.au](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au)