Safe sex

The best protection against sexually transmissible infections, including HIV/AIDS

This pamphlet has been prepared for sexually active people

Victoria
The Place To Be

What is safe sex?

Safe sex is choosing to protect yourself and others from sexually transmissible infections (STIs), including HIV/AIDS.

Safe sex is sex where semen (cum), vaginal secretions or blood are not exchanged between sexual partners.

The exchange of these body fluids can occur with the following sexual activities:

- Vaginal sex (penis in vagina).
- Anal sex (penis in anus).
- Oral sex (penis in mouth or tongue in vagina).
- Oral-anal contact (tongue in anus).
- Fingers or other objects (such as sex toys) in vagina or anus if they have these fluids on them.

How can I practise safe sex?

The basic rule for safe sex is to avoid blood, semen (cum) or vaginal fluids from a sexual partner entering your body.

Ways to protect yourself and others:

- Use condoms and water-based lubricants correctly with all sexual partners.
- Practise 'non-penetrative sex', such as kissing, mutual masturbation and touching, cuddling, body-to-body rubbing and erotic massage.
- Be monogamous, that is, only have sex with your regular partner. Unprotected sex with a regular partner can only be safe if both of you are tested and clear of all STIs and neither of you has sex with anyone else.

Talk to your partner openly about your sexual relationship and be aware that you have a right to insist on safe sex.

If you both agree that it's OK to have sex with other people, it's important that you both practise safe sex with each other and with all sexual partners.

What is a sexually transmissible infection (STI)?

An STI is an illness or infection that can be spread from one person to another during sex. Some STIs include: genital herpes, genital warts, chlamydia, gonorrhoea, HIV/AIDS, trichomonas, pubic lice, syphilis and hepatitis B.

STIs can cause a wide range of problems from mild itching to serious illness, with long-term health effects. If left untreated, some STIs can cause infertility or even death.

Can I tell if my partner has an STI?

You cannot tell if a sexual partner has an STI. People can look healthy and strong but still be infected. A person may not even know that they have an STI.

You risk getting an STI from any partner who has had, or is having, unsafe sex with another person.

Is withdrawal safe?

No. Withdrawal (pulling out before orgasm or cumming) is not safe because sexual fluids can be released before orgasm.

Is oral sex safe?

Although oral sex is low risk for spreading HIV, you can get other diseases this way, such as herpes, chlamydia and gonorrhoea.

You can lower the risk of getting an STI by avoiding ejaculation (cumming) in the mouth. An even safer alternative is to use condoms, female condoms or dental dams as barriers during oral sex.

You should use a protective barrier, or avoid ejaculation into the mouth, when:

- either partner has ulcers or bleeding gums; or
- has just brushed or flossed their teeth.

Why use condoms?

Condoms are an effective barrier against most STIs, including HIV, and are commonly used to prevent pregnancy.

Some STIs such as herpes, genital warts and pubic lice, may still be spread even if a condom is used.

How do I choose condoms?

You should choose carefully when buying condoms and always check the expiry date on the packet. Do not use condoms which have expired.

Be aware of novelty condoms and check the packaging to ensure that they are suitable for safe sex.

Condoms should feel comfortable, but snug, and should unroll easily all the way to the base of the penis. When choosing condoms the width is important. A number of sizes are available and you may need to try different sizes or brands. Condoms can be uncomfortable or can tear or break when they are the wrong size.

How do I use condoms correctly?

Always:

- Store condoms in a cool dry place away from direct sunlight.
- Only use condoms before their expiry date.
- Open the packet carefully and in a good light, so that you do not tear the condom. Pinch the tip of the condom and roll it carefully all the way down the shaft of the erect penis.
- Use plenty of water-based lubricant, especially for anal sex. Sex without lubricants may cause the condom to tear. Do not use oil-based lubricants like petroleum jelly or baby oil, which weaken the condom.
- Make sure the penis is withdrawn before erection is lost, so that the condom does not fall off. Hold the base of the condom during withdrawal to prevent spills.
- Do not reuse condoms. Dispose of them in a rubbish bin.

What other protection is available?

Female condoms are also available and should be used with lubricants. While female condoms are more expensive and not as widely available, some couples prefer to use female condoms. You can contact Family Planning Victoria on 03 9257 0100 for more information.

Dams are rectangular sheets of latex, which can be used to cover the vagina or anus during oral sex. Use a new dam for each oral sexual act, as you would a condom. Do not use dams as protection for anal or vaginal sex.

Can I have safe sex with a partner who has an STI, including HIV?

If your partner has an STI, including HIV, you need to follow the safe sex measures outlined in this brochure to minimise the risk of becoming infected. You should also seek advice from your doctor or clinic and talk to your partner about safe sex.

Where can I get further information or help?

Melbourne Sexual Health Centre
580 Swanston Street
Carlton 3053
Telephone: (03) 9347 0244
TTY for deaf callers: (03) 9347 8619
Enquires from rural Victoria: Freecall 1800 032 017
Website: www.mshc.org.au

All services at the Centre are completely free and confidential.

Staff can give you up-to-date advice on the phone, make an appointment to see you, or give you a referral to doctors in your area who are able to help you.

Statewide Services and Contacts

AIDSLINE
Telephone counselling service offering advice on HIV/AIDS, STIs and sexual health.
Telephone: (03) 9347 6099
Country freecall: 1800 133 392
TTY: 1800 032 665
Website: www.aidshep.org.au

Access Information Centre at The Alfred
Fairfield House, Moubray Street
Prahran 3181
Telephone: (03) 9276 6993
Website: www.accessinfo.org.au

Family Planning Victoria
901 Whitehorse Road
Box Hill 3128
Clinic and Education
Telephone: (03) 9257 0100
Website: www.fpv.org.au

Action Centre (for Youth)
Level 1, 92–94 Elizabeth Street
Melbourne 3000
Clinic and Education
Telephone: (03) 9654 4766
Freecall: 1800 013 952

Gay men's health

Victoria AIDS Council/Gay Men's Health Centre
6 Claremont Street
South Yarra 3141
Telephone: (03) 9865 6700
TTY: (03) 9827 3733
Freecall: 1800 134 840
Website: www.vicaids.asn.au

The Centre Clinic
C/- Darebin Community Health Centre
42 Separation Street
Northcote 3070
Telephone: (03) 9481 7155

Also located at:
The Centre Clinic (St Kilda)
Rear 77 Fitzroy Street
St Kilda 3182
Telephone: (03) 9525 5866

Rural STI Clinics

The Annexe Sexual Health Clinic – Ballarat Community Health Centre
710 Sturt Street
Ballarat 3350
Telephone: (03) 5320 7500

STD Clinic – Community Health Bendigo
Seymoure Street
Eaglehawk 3556
Telephone: (03) 5434 4330
Website: www.bchs.com.au

Geelong Sexual Health Clinic
Swanston Street entrance
Eastern Annexe
Geelong Hospital
Geelong 3220
Open Tuesdays 2–7pm
Telephone: (03) 5221 4735

STD Clinic – Vermont Street Clinic
Wodonga Regional Health Service
79 Vermont Street
Wodonga 3690
Telephone: (02) 6051 7535

STD Clinic – Latrobe Regional Hospital (Outpatient Department)
Consulting Suites 3 and 4, Cnr Princes Highway & Village Way
Traralgon 3844
Telephone: (03) 5173 8111

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