





A GUIDE TO GOOD SEXUAL HEALTH FOR LESBIAN, GAY AND BISEXUAL PEOPLE



# INTRODUCTION

When most of us hear the words 'sexual health', our first reaction is to think of sexually transmitted infections (STIs). However, though STIs do play a role in sexual health, it is important to remember that there are many other factors.

Sexual health requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and relationships. Many people actually forget that sexual health should be...PLEASURABLE!

Unfortunately, from an early age, many of us have been told that sexual health is something we shouldn't talk about. As a result, a lot of us end up neglecting or avoiding our own sexual health.

This guide provides information around sex, sexual difficulties, STIs and common myths associated with sexual health.

This booklet has been produced by the Lesbian and Gay Foundation. For a large print format of this guide, please call 0845 3 30 30 30 or email: info@lgf.org.uk



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# WHAT IS SEX?

Sex means different things to different people. What does it mean to you? There's a huge range of sexual activities, some you'll have heard of, others you won't – therefore, there is no straightforward answer! Whilst one person may regard masturbation as 'sex', another person may only think of 'penetration' when it comes to sex.

There is also no right or wrong way to have sex. What matters is that it feels right for you. Above all, sex should be consensual, safe and fun. Our interest in sex continually develops throughout our lives. Thinking about having sex and experimenting is completely normal – whether this is in a fantasy, exploring your own body, or with your partner(s).

#### WHAT IS SEXUALITY?

In its broadest sense, sexuality describes the way in which a person goes about expressing himself or herself as a sexual being. Sexuality is generally used to describe our sexual interests and preferences. For some people these will stay the same throughout their lives, but for others they may change as they get older.

GAY LESBIAN BISEXUAL Men who are sexually attracted to men.

Women who are sexually attracted to women.

People who are sexually attracted to both sexes.



# GET IN TOUCH WITH YOURSELF

Men and women have their physical differences, most of us are guilty of comparing our bodies to celebrities or other people in the mainstream media.

What we need to remember is that we all have different body shapes and sizes, and that at the end of the day, there is no such thing as perfection when it comes to our bodies!

There is a lot of variation in the human body. Therefore, the most important thing is to be comfortable with our own bodies. Everybody's idea of attractiveness differs, and this is what makes things interesting. Whilst Alison may fancy tall, skinny people, Mike may fancy shorter, stocky people. Variety is definitely the spice of life!

# PLEASE YOURSELF

As a child, you probably explored your body (and sexual organs) quite a lot, in order to find out about yourself. It is this exploration that usually evolves into masturbation.

However, as children, we are often discouraged from touching ourselves or told off and this can leave us with the idea that sexual exploration is a bad or naughty thing - which it definitely isn't. In fact, through exploring and pleasing yourself, you can learn a lot about how to please your sexual partners. Here are some tips on enjoying masturbation:

- Choose a time when you can be alone, relaxed and comfortable. Use different types of touch such as stroking, caressing, pinching and gentle scratching.
- Take your time and try not to focus on just the most obvious bits. Even though stimulating your penis or clitoris will bring you to orgasm, touching yourself all over will provide a much more satisfying climax.
- Using different types of things to stimulate yourself can make masturbation much better. Once you've found out what works for you, try sharing your discoveries with your sexual partner. Show them what turns you on and ask them to do the same – not only is this very arousing, but it's also a great way to learn about what pleases each of you.

# **SEX TALK**

Communicating with your partner about what you like, and what you want during sex, will make the sex you have much more satisfying and can deepen your relationship as a whole.

Unfortunately, quite a lot of us find it very difficult to talk openly about sex, which can end up with us either having sex that we don't enjoy or finishing a perfectly good relationship because we feel the other person doesn't understand how to satisfy us.

Everyone responds differently to sex – some like gentle touches whilst others like it a bit more rough – so unless you're psychic, the only way to get to know what turns your partner on, and for them to get to know what turns you on, is by communicating. And communication doesn't just mean talking – a running commentary or barrage of instructions during sex is not only annoying, it can be off-putting too. Grunts and groans when your partner hits the spot or does something that drives you wild will let them know that they're on to a winner! If your partner needs a bit of guidance, don't just point. Gently guide their hands and let them know as they're getting closer.

Be positive. Don't tell your partner that they're terrible in bed, unless you like being single. Instead, remember something that they did which really turned you on and tell them about it (I loved it when you...). At the same time, there's no point in faking it or saying you like something you don't, so try and be honest. Finally, this is a two-way street, so don't just lie back and let your partner do all the work. Make sure you get to know as much about them as they do about you.



# **SEXUAL PROBLEMS**

As well as being one of the most enjoyable things in life, sex can also be a real nightmare for some people. However, many sexual problems can be treated successfully. In this section you'll find practical advice and information on overcoming the most common ones, as well as where to go for further help.

#### **GONE OFF SEX?**

Most of us will go off sex at some point, especially during times of stress or sadness. But what happens if your desire doesn't come back?

If you're single and have decided not to have sex for a while, you'll probably be okay with celibacy. But if you're in a relationship, there are two people to think about. Unless you've made an agreement with each other not to have sex, this could lead to feelings of rejection and loss, which could soon turn into resentment with both partners doubting their sexuality and attractiveness.

Going off sex could be particularly worrying for a man, because there is a very common myth that men are always gagging for it and if you're not, it could leave both you and your partner feeling confused.

In some cases, a lack of sex drive may be due to another problem, such as erection problems or painful sex (more details on these later in this section), or it may be due to a psychological problem. But in the majority of cases, it's due to negative thoughts or feelings, the most common of which are:

- Low self-esteem. If you don't feel good about yourself, you'll not be able to see yourself as a sexual person.
- There may be other problems in your relationship which may need to be addressed before sex is back on the cards.
- Your partner may not turn you on anymore. It's a difficult thing to admit, but sometimes we just go off our partners. It might be a physical thing or perhaps they have an annoying habit or are not very good at sex. Fortunately most of these problems can be overcome, but you'll need to be completely honest with each other.
- An inhibited childhood or a really bad experience may have left you with negative feelings around sex.
- You may have powerful fears about getting an infection or in some cases getting pregnant.

If you feel like any of the above is affecting your sex life, it's important you don't suffer in silence.

Make sure you talk to your partner about the problem or, if that isn't possible, a counsellor – The Lesbian & Gay Foundation has counsellors available, or your local sexual health clinic may have a psychosexual therapist who can help (for more details see the end of this booklet).



# You can also increase your desire by:

Relaxing – have a bath, use deep breathing techniques or buy a relaxation CD.

Checking your environment – make sure there are no distractions and that the atmosphere suits your mood.

**Using fantasy** – get yourself in the mood by slipping into your favourite fantasy or read (or watch) something raunchy.

Taking your time – don't go straight in for the kill. Give each other a massage or tease each other with plenty of sensual foreplay.

Focusing on the positive – if there's something about you or your partner that turns you off, don't think about it. Focus on something that turns you on instead.

Unfortunately, sometimes after the original cause has long gone, couples may find it difficult to restart their sexual relationship. So, after you've treated the problem, make sure you get lots of practice with your partner(s). It will be a bit scary to begin with, but before you know it, you'll be back in the swing of things!

# **ERECTION PROBLEMS**

At some stage in their lives, most men will have a problem getting or maintaining an erection. This is usually due to stress, tiredness or having one too many sherries! Unfortunately though, around 10% of the male population in this country (that's nearly 3 million men!) suffer from erectile dysfunction (ED), which means a more persistent, long-term erection problem.

There are a number of reasons for ED, but generally the problem could be down to either of the following two categories:

#### **PHYSICAL**

- ageing long-term smoking diabetes peyronies disease
- non-legal drug use hormone deficiency some surgical procedures ● some prescribed drugs

### **PSYCHOLOGICAL**

 depression ● anxiety ● stress ● low self-esteem ● performance anxiety

Of course your problem may be both physical and psychological, but if you can achieve an erection when you're wanking or sometimes get a 'morning glory', the likelihood is that your problem is a psychological one. If the problem is physical, there are a number of ways that it can be treated such as drugs (Viagra, Cialis), injections (Viridal, Caverjet), surgery or vacuum devices. However, if the problem is more psychological, whilst drugs like Viagra may give immediate relief, counselling and psychosexual therapy may be needed for a more permanent solution.

If you are suffering from an erection problem, make an appointment with your GP or your local sexual health clinic (details at the end of this booklet) and they will be able to let you know what can be done. However, if you think your problem may be psychological, there are some things you can do to help yourself:

#### **RELAX**

The more you tense up, the less likely it is that you will be able to get an erection. Contrary to popular belief, the muscles around your cock are in an active state when it's not erect and it's only when they are relaxed that blood can fill the cock and cause an erection.

#### **AVOID DUTCH COURAGE**

Having too much alcohol is a sure fire way to stop an erection.

#### **DON'T FOCUS ON IT**

Sex is about so much more than having an erection. It's about being intimate and sensual, so focus on other things such as massage and kissing. This will make sure you are enjoying the whole experience rather than concentrating purely on your erection.

#### **UPS AND DOWNS**

Cocks constantly change in hardness throughout sex and becoming softer does not mean there is a problem. Recognise that sometimes you just aren't horny – contrary to common belief, men do not always want nor are they always ready to have sex.

#### IT'S NOT A PERFORMANCE!

You do not always have to be the best shag ever. Just enjoy it and remember, the mind is very powerful, so you can easily sabotage your erection just by worrying about your ability to perform.

# **PAINFUL SEX**

Many people sometimes experience pain during sex. For the most, it will just be a passing phase, but for some people, pain can become a regular feature of sex.

There are a number of reasons why it can happen, but the most common causes are:

#### **LACK OF SEXUAL AROUSAL**

If you aren't aroused, your body won't be ready for sex. This is especially true for women, as when a woman is aroused, her vagina expands and becomes moist. So if you're not aroused, anything that involves penetration of your vagina could be painful.

#### **NERVOUSNESS**

Maybe it's your first time or maybe you're not feeling very confident. Whatever the reason, if you're tense your muscles will be too. This can make sex very difficult and painful. The problem is, once you've experienced pain whilst having sex, it might block your sexual arousal or make you nervous the next time, and before you know it, you're in what's called a 'pain cycle'.





The fear of pain blocks arousal and makes you nervous, the lack of arousal and nervousness causes more pain, and so the cycle continues. Here are some tips to help take the pain away:

#### **RELAX**

If you are tense, this will be reflected by your body. Take your time and don't feel like you have to rush. Taking deep breaths can help you relax, and this could help reduce any pain you may be experiencing.

#### **LUBRICATE**

Make sure you use plenty of water-based lubricant and reapply it. Don't grin and bear it – if you are uncomfortable or experiencing pain, stop, wait a few seconds and try again. Don't just try to carry on and ignore the pain because it probably won't go away and you may end up causing some damage.

If none of these tips help, you should consider getting professional help as the problem may be a physical one. You can talk to your GP or make an appointment at your local sexual health clinic (details at the back of this guide).

# SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) are infections which are generally picked up through close body contact or sex. They are usually caused by:

#### **BACTERIA**

Bacterial Vaginosis, Chlamydia, Gonorrhoea, Non Specific Urethritis and Syphilis.

#### **PARASITES**

'Crabs', Scabies, Trichomonas Vaginalis and Threadworms.

#### **VIRUSES**

Herpes, Hepatitis, HIV and Warts.

#### **FUNGI**

Thrush

And remember, if you do pick up an STI, don't feel embarrassed or dirty, and don't think you're alone – you aren't the first and you certainly won't be the last person to get an STI. Just get yourself treated as quickly as you can and, if it's possible, tell people that you've had sex with so they can get checked and treated (if necessary) too.

STI's can have a wide variety of symptoms (see infection descriptions), but sometimes the symptoms are easy to miss or the infection may not have any symptoms at all. So, if you're having sex, it's important that you have a sexual health check up at your local clinic (details at the back of this guide) at least every six months or more often if you have sex with a lot of people. You can go to any sexual health clinic you want to and you can make the appointment yourself, so you don't need to see your GP first. It is important to check what booking system your local sexual health clinic works to, as some clinics will have walk in sessions while others will work on an appointment-only basis.

## **BACTERIAL VAGINOSIS**

The exact cause of bacterial vaginosis (BV) is unknown. There are many bacteria that live in a 'normal' vagina. When you have BV, there are not enough 'good' bacteria. This causes harmful bacteria to grow in the vagina, causing the vaginal environment to be out of balance.

#### **SYMPTOMS**

Most women with BV have no symptoms at all. Sometimes a woman has more vaginal discharge than usual. The discharge might be milky with a 'fishy' odour. The odour can be worse after sex. Other symptoms women may experience include itching or burning in or near the vagina.

#### **TREATMENT**

BV is usually treated with antibiotics, but there is also a vaginal cream available.

#### **HOW TO AVOID IT**

Some women get BV again and again. It is not clear why or how this happens. But the following can help lessen the risk of getting it:

- Wipe from front to back (away from the vagina) after bowel movements to avoid spreading bacteria from the rectum to the vagina.
- Keep the vulva (outside of the vagina) dry and clean.
- On not douche. Douching is never a good idea, especially with BV.
- Avoid feminine hygiene sprays, harsh soaps, or soaps with lots of perfume.
- Avoid clothing that can trap moisture, such as nylon.
- Using condoms with sex toys, avoiding sharing toys and using dental dams for oral sex may help prevent infection.
- You should avoid sex until you have finished treatment in order to stop re-infection.

## **CHLAMYDIA**

Chlamydia is a very common bacterial infection, which affects both men and women. It is passed on through unprotected vaginal, oral or anal sex, rimming and sharing sex toys.

#### **SYMPTOMS**

About 50% of men and 70% of women with chlamydia show no symptoms at all. Often symptoms are very mild and go unnoticed or may not show up for a few weeks, but, if they do show, signs of infection with chlamydia can include:

- Unusual discharge from the cock or vagina.
- Pain when urinating.
- Bleeding between periods.
- Testicular pain or swelling.
- Pain during sex.
- Lower abdominal pain.

#### **TREATMENT**

Chlamydia is easily treated with antibiotics.

#### HOW TO AVOID IT

Using condoms and dental dams for oral sex and rimming, and condoms with lots of lubricant for anal and vaginal sex can help stop the infection from being passed on. To avoid re-infection, sexual partners should also be checked and treated if necessary.

## LGV (LYMPHOGRANULOMA VENEREUM)

Lymphogranuloma Venereum (LGV) is a particularly nasty form of chlamydia and up until recently was almost unheard of in the UK.

#### **SYMPTOMS**

A lot of people will suffer from proctitis, which means inflammation of the rectum. However, other symptoms include:

- Constipation, diarrhoea
- Pus or blood coming from the arse
- Ulcers and abscesses inside the arse or sometimes around the cock
- Swollen glands in the groin
- Inflammation of the urethra

#### **TREATMENT**

LGV can be easily treated with a three-week course of antibiotics. But if it's left untreated, it can cause serious damage to the arse and cock.

#### **HOW TO AVOID IT**

Using condoms for oral sex and condoms with lots of water-based lubricant for anal sex, gloves for fisting and fingering; and dental dams for rimming; can help prevent the infection from being passed on. Also, if you're using toys, make sure you clean them thoroughly and don't share them.

## GONORRHOEA

Often called 'the clap', gonorrhoea is caused by bacteria that live in moist parts of the body like the throat, vagina, cock, the tube inside the cock (urethra) and the arse.

It affects both men and women and is usually passed on through unprotected vaginal, oral or anal sex, rimming and sharing sex toys. But it can also be passed on through close body contact and from the genitals to the eyes by the fingers.

#### **SYMPTOMS**

About one in ten men and one in two women with gonorrhoea have no symptoms at all. Any symptoms that do occur should appear between one and 14 days after infection. Gonorrhoea in the throat rarely shows symptoms.

#### SYMPTOMS MAY INCLUDE

- White, yellow or green discharge from the tip of the penis or the vagina that can be strong smelling.
- Pain when urinating, irritation or discharge from the arse.
- Inflammation of the testicles and prostate gland.

#### **TREATMENT**

Treatment is simple and effective and involves a single dose of antibiotics. This is followed by a second test a month later to make sure the infection has gone. If there are any complications, another treatment may be needed.

#### **HOW TO AVOID IT**

Using condoms and dental dams for oral sex and rimming, and condoms with lots of water-based lubricant for anal and vaginal sex can help stop the infection from being passed on. To avoid re-infection, sexual partners should also be checked and treated if necessary.

## **SYPHILIS**

Syphilis is a bacterial infection, which was very uncommon until a few years ago. It is passed on through unprotected vaginal, oral and anal sex, and even close body contact.

#### **SYMPTOMS**

Syphilis happens in three stages and each stage comes with its own symptoms. Unfortunately though, the symptoms don't always show, but if they do they usually include:

#### **PRIMARY SYPHILIS**

A painless, red sore may appear on the vagina, cervix, cock, balls, mouth, throat or arse, which will heal quite quickly (up to 6 weeks). The glands closest to the sore may also swell up.

#### SECONDARY SYPHILIS

- A skin rash appears
- Fever
- Headaches
- Nausea
- Hair loss
- Heart problems
- Brain damage

#### **TERTIARY SYPHILIS**

- Heart problems
- Brain damage
- Nervous system damage
- Blindness

#### **TREATMENT**

Syphilis is usually treated with a course of antibiotics given as injections. Blood tests will be done after treatment to ensure the infection has completely cleared.

#### **HOW TO AVOID IT**

Avoiding contact with open sores and using condoms and dental dams for oral sex and rimming, and condoms with lots of water-based lubricant for anal and vaginal sex can help stop the infection from being passed on.



# NON-SPECIFIC URETHRITIS

NSU is caused by bacteria that live in the cock, arse and mouth, and is one of the most common infections in men. The exact cause is not always known, which is why it's called 'non-specific'.

#### **SYMPTOMS**

NSU usually affects your urethra and so you may notice a white discharge from it or a burning feeling when urinating.

#### **TREATMENT**

A short course of antibiotics is usually enough to clear the infection.

#### **HOW TO AVOID IT**

Using condoms for oral sex and condoms with lots of water-based lubricant for anal and vaginal sex, can help stop the infection from being passed on.

## **HERPES**

Herpes is caused by two types of the herpes simplex virus. One causes blisters around the mouth (cold sores) and the other causes blisters around or on the cock, the vagina and inside the arse.

It is generally passed on through contact with one of these blisters, so kissing, unprotected anal, vaginal and oral sex and rimming, can all cause the virus to be passed on. Once you have picked up the herpes virus, you will have it for life although the symptoms will respond to treatment and will not always be present.

#### **SYMPTOMS**

As well as blisters, you may suffer from flu-like aches and pains in your stomach, lower back, legs and feet. Itching or tingling in the affected area may also happen before the blisters appear.

#### **TREATMENT**

There are anti-viral medications such as Acyclovir, which help in the treatment of herpes, but your immune system should be able to keep the virus under control. There are also special tablets and creams, which can help get rid of the blisters and some drugs can stop the blisters before they appear.

#### **HOW TO AVOID IT**

Avoiding contact with open blisters and using condoms and dental dams for oral sex and rimming, and condoms with lots of water-based lubricant for anal and vaginal sex, can help stop the infection from being passed on.

## **GENITAL WARTS**

Genital warts are caused by a virus that lives under the skin. The virus is extremely common and is usually passed on through close body contact. Once you have picked it up, you will have the virus for the rest of your life, but that doesn't mean that you'll keep getting warts.

#### **SYMPTOMS**

A few weeks after infection, small fleshy growths will appear in the affected areas. These growths will get bigger unless treated and may become cauliflower shaped. They may itch, and warts in the rectum can bleed.

#### **TREATMENT**

Genital warts are usually frozen off or burnt off with chemicals. This treatment can take a long time to work, so you may need to return to the clinic several times before the warts disappear. There are also treatments available on prescription, which you can apply yourself at home, such as 'Aldara'. You should ask the doctor about these treatments and whether they would be suitable for you.

#### HOW TO AVOID

Avoiding contact with the warts and using condoms and dental dams for oral sex and rimming, and condoms with lots of water-based lubricant for anal and vaginal sex, can help stop the infection from being passed on.

## **HEPATITIS**

Hepatitis is a general term used to describe an inflammation of the liver. It can be caused by viruses or other things like long-term alcohol abuse and the use of certain drugs. The three most common types of hepatitis are hepatitis A, B and C, and these are caused by viruses. You can get vaccinated against hepatitis A and B at your local sexual health clinic. It's free of charge and will protect you for around five years.

## **HEPATITIS A**

Hepatitis A is generally caused by poor hygiene or from contaminated food and water, but it can also be passed on through rimming, scat and other arse play.

#### **SYMPTOMS**

If you do get any symptoms, they may include:

- Diarrhoea
- Fever
- Tiredness
- Aches and Pains
- Jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes)
- Dark urine and pale shit
- Weight loss

#### **TREATMENT**

There is no actual treatment for Hepatitis A. You should rest and avoid alcohol whilst your body overcomes the virus.

#### HOW TO AVOID IT

Get vaccinated (against it) at your local sexual health clinic.

## **HEPATITIS B**

Hepatitis B is usually found in blood, cum and pre-cum and can be passed on through unprotected anal, vaginal and oral sex and rimming. It can also be found in saliva and urine but is much less likely to be passed on this way.

#### **SYMPTOMS**

Some people will have no symptoms, but if you do get any they might include:

- Tiredness
- Jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes)
- Loss of appetite
- Dark urine and pale shit
- Stomach pains
- Generalised itching, especially if you are jaundiced

#### **TREATMENT**

There are some treatments available for Hepatitis B, but they're generally only given to people with a chronic infection (and even then it may be impossible to get rid of the virus).

Usually you will be asked to rest and avoid alcohol and paracetamol whilst your body overcomes the virus – this avoids putting stress on your liver!

#### **HOW TO AVOID IT**

Practising safer sex can reduce the chances of contracting Hepatitis B. You can also get vaccinated against it at your local sexual health clinic.



## **HEPATITIS C**

Hepatitis C is usually passed on through blood and is most common amongst injecting drug users. It is difficult to pass on sexually but the virus can survive outside the body for a long time (possibly up to a month). Sharing toothbrushes and razors are therefore possible routes of transmission.

#### **SYMPTOMS**

Few people will notice that they have symptoms associated with hepatitis C, so, the only way to know for sure if you have the infection is to have a blood test.

#### **TREATMENT**

Hepatitis C can be cured. However, treatment can be up to a year, and the drugs used can have bad side effects. Unfortunately, treatment does not always work, and there is no vaccination for Hepatitis C.

#### **HOW TO AVOID IT**

Using condoms for anal sex, dental dams for rimming and latex gloves for fingering and fisting can help prevent transmission.

But you should also avoid sharing needles, sex toys, razors or toothbrushes.

## HIV

HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) is a virus which weakens the immune system and leaves people open to unusual illnesses and cancers that would not normally be a threat.

HIV is in body fluids such as blood, cum, pre-cum, vaginal fluids and breast milk. The virus is also in spit, sweat and urine, but there is not enough of it in these fluids to cause infection.

#### **SYMPTOMS**

There are no symptoms to begin with and when they do appear, they are easy to miss, as they tend to be cold or flu-like illnesses such as fever, swollen glands or a sore throat. The only way to know for sure whether you have the virus is to have a blood test at your local sexual health clinic.

#### **TREATMENT**

There is still no cure for HIV, but there are treatments available which can dramatically improve and lengthen the lives of people living with the virus. However, these treatments can have very unpleasant side effects and may not work for everyone.

#### **HOW TO AVOID IT**

Using condoms for oral sex and condoms with lots of water-based lubricant for anal and vaginal sex, can help stop the infection from being passed on.



# **CRABS (PUBIC LICE)**

Crabs are small parasites, which live in your body hair and pubic hair. They can be passed on through close body contact, and from bedding and clothes.

#### **SYMPTOMS**

You'll know if you have crabs as they cause intense itching (especially at night) in areas where you have body hair - groin, armpits, chest hair, leg hair, facial hair, eyebrows and eyelashes. You will also be able to see them and their eggs.

#### **TREATMENT**

Crabs can be easily treated using a lotion available without prescription from most chemists. It's important to follow the instructions carefully and make sure your sexual partners are treated too. Also, wash all the clothes that you've worn and any bedding that you've used in order to stop re-infection.

#### **HOW TO AVOID**

It's very difficult to avoid crabs, but you should not have sex until they've been treated to avoid passing them on.



## **SCABIES**

Scabies are tiny parasitic mites that burrow and live under the skin. They can be passed on easily through close body contact and have even been known to be passed on through sharing clothes, towels and bedding - although this is not very common.

#### **SYMPTOMS**

May not appear for up to ten weeks, but usually include:

- Itching of the hands, wrists, between the fingers, genitals, abdomen, buttocks and feet.
- Red lines on the skin, especially between the fingers and around the wrists

#### **TREATMENT**

Scabies, as with crabs, can be easily treated using a lotion available without prescription from most chemists. It's important to follow the instructions carefully and make sure your sexual partners are treated too (itching can sometimes continue for a few weeks after treatment). Also, wash all the clothes that you've worn and any bedding that you've used in order to stop re-infection.

#### **HOW TO AVOID**

It's very difficult to avoid scabies, but you should not have sex until they've been treated to avoid passing them on.

# TRICHOMONAS VAGINALIS

Trichomonas Vaginalis (TV) is caused by a tiny parasite found in the vagina and urethra. It is passed on through unprotected vaginal, oral or anal sex or from a mother to her baby at birth.

#### **SYMPTOMS**

Sometimes there are no symptoms, especially in men. But if there are symptoms, they may include:

- Increased discharge from the vagina which may be thinner or frothy, yellow/green in colour and have a musty or fishy smell.
- Thin, whitish discharge from the tip of the penis, which can stain underwear.
- Itching, soreness and inflammation in and around the vagina.
- Pain when urinating.
- Pain when having sex.

#### **TREATMENT**

TV is easily treated with a course of antibiotics. Once successfully treated, it doesn't come back unless a new infection is picked up. To avoid re-infection, any sexual partners should also be treated.

#### **HOW TO AVOID IT**

Using condoms and dental dams for oral sex and rimming, and condoms with lots of water-based lubricant for anal and vaginal sex, can help stop the infection from being passed on.

## **THRUSH**

Thrush is caused by a fungus. This fungus lives on the skin and in the mouth, guts, vagina, cock and arse. It happens independently of sex, but can also be sexually transmitted through unprotected anal and vaginal sex, rimming and sometimes oral sex.

#### **SYMPTOMS**

Often there are no symptoms but if there are, they may include:

- A rash or inflammation of the affected area.
- A thick white discharge from either the cock or vagina.
- Pain during sex or when urinating.

#### **TREATMENT**

There are anti-fungal creams and tablets available which help to clear the infection. Sexual partners should be checked and treated if necessary to help stop re-infection.

#### **HOW TO AVOID IT**

Using condoms and dental dams for oral sex and rimming, and condoms with lots of water-based lubricant for anal and vaginal sex can help stop infection from being passed on.



# **CONDOMS/BARRIERS**

If you have had a look through the list of STIs in this booklet, you will be aware that the majority of the infections can be prevented by using a barrier such as a condom or a dental dam.

#### Below are some tips for condom use:

- Find a brand and type that suits you. e.g. size, shape, flavour.
- Store in an appropriate place away from sunlight and heat.
- Make sure it hasn't passed its expiry date.
- Check that it has a 'CE' or 'Kitemark' on the packet.
- Open the packet carefully.
- Only use one condom at a time.
- Use a new condom each time and for each partner.
- Apply the condom before any sexual contact.
- Use lots of water based lube
  - never use oil based, as this will destroy the condom.
- Condoms should also be used on sex toys.

# **HOW TO GET IT ON**



Place the condom on the erect penis (with the rolled edge on the outside).

Squeeze the tip of the condom to remove any air and roll the condom down to the base of the penis.



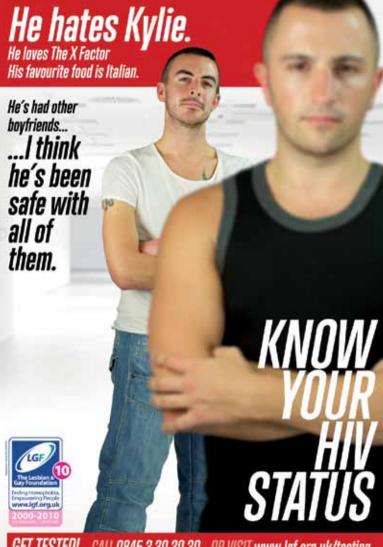


Apply lots of water based lube to the outside of the condom. Oil based lube will destroy the condom.

After cumming, hold the base of the condom as you pull out.

Remove the condom and tie a knot in the end. Do not flush it down a toilet but dispose of it in a bin.





GET TESTED! CALL 0845 3 30 30 30 DR VISIT www.lgf.org.uk/testing

# VISITING A SEXUAL HEALTH CLINIC

If you feel you have put yourself at risk of getting an STI, the best thing to do is to go for a sexual health check up.

Going to a sexual health clinic for a check up can be an intimidating prospect, especially if you have never had a check up before. However, there is no need to worry. The services provided are completely free and confidential.

The first step is to find the contact details for your local centre - details can be found on pages **38** and **39**. Some clinics operate on a drop in basis, whilst others work on an appointment only format. Therefore, it is important to know what format your local clinic works to.

The tests themselves are not as invasive as people sometimes expect. In fact, many tests only need a urine sample. However, some swabs may need to be taken, but the 'metal umbrella' (which is dreaded by so many men) does not exist. When screening for certain infections, including HIV and syphilis, a blood sample may also be asked for.

Getting the results varies from clinic to clinic, but they usually return within three weeks and often operate on a 'no news is good news' basis. This means, the clinic will only get in touch with you if you have any positive results. It is therefore important to clarify how you will get your results when you visit your clinic.

If an STI is detected, you will be asked to return to the clinic where the appropriate advice and treatment will be given. Treatment is FREE, and again, everything is fully confidential.

# **MYTH BUSTING!**

## SEXUAL HEALTH - THE FACTS

● You can pick up STIs from oral sex ● After oral sex, brushing your teeth will not prevent STIs from developing ● The metal umbrella so many men fear from check-ups does not exist ● You can not tell by looking at someone if they have an STI as some infections show no symptoms ● Condoms do not have small holes that allow diseases, infection and semen through ● You can have more than one STI at a time

### **HIV - THE FACTS!**

◆ HIV is **not** just a gay disease, anyone can be affected ◆ HIV can **not** be transmitted from toilet seats or by sharing eating and drinking utensils ◆ HIV is still a serious infection - treatment does exist but this is life-long and can result in a variety of side effects ◆ If two people have HIV, they should still use condoms - this is because there are different strains of HIV ◆ There is **no cure** for HIV

### THE LESBIAN & GAY FOUNDATION

The Lesbian & Gay Foundation can offer help and advice about your HIV concerns. Just pick up the phone.

0845 3 30 30 30

10am - 10pm, seven days a week.

## **WAS THIS GUIDE HELPFUL?**

Did you find the advice in this guide useful? Was it easy to understand? Did you learn anything? What's your opinion of the imagery? We want to make sure that the information we provide is relevant to you. Please take a few minutes to drop us an e-mail and tell us what you thought of this guide, both positive and negative. Send your opinions to:

# sexualhealth@lgf.org.uk

### **CREDITS & DISCLAIMER**

Selected pictures by Sarah Quinn, Kevin Allsop and Paul Jones Exposure. Publication of the name or photo of any person in this guide should not be taken as any indication of the sexual orientation or HIV status of that person.

# **USEFUL CONTACTS**

#### **GREATER MANCHESTER**

Clinical services at the Lesbian and Gay Foundation, Central Manchester.

**Bridge Sexual Health Clinic,**Rochdale Infirmary **0161 627 8753** 

Brook Advisory, Manchester. 0161 237 3001

Tameside & Glossop Centre for Sexual Health,
Ashton-under-lyne, Tameside.
0161 339 2222

Goodman Sexual Health Clinic, Salford. 0161 212 5717

Manchester Centre for Sexual Health, Central Manchester. 0161 276 5200

Wigan Health Centre, Wigan. 01942 822 277

Stepping Hill Sexual Health Clinic, Stockport. 0161 419 5377 North Manchester Hospital Sexual Health Clinic, Crumpsall. 0161 720 2681

The Barlow Suite Clinic, Fairfield Hospital, Bury. 0161 627 8753

The Bolton Centre for Sexual Health

01204 390 771

The Phoenix Centre, Royal Oldham Hospital. 0161 627 8753

The Trafford Centre for Sexual Health. 0161 746 2621

Withington Community Hospital Sexual Health Clinic. 0161 217 4939

#### **CHESHIRE**

Countess of Chester Hospital, Liverpool Road, Chester. 01244 363 091 Leighton Hospital, Crewe. 01270 612 255

Halton General Hospital, Runcorn. 01928 753 217

#### **LANCASHIRE**

Ashton Community Care Centre, Lancaster. 01524 387 402

Blackburn Royal Infirmary Sexual Health Clinic 01254 736 045

Burnley General Hospital Sexual Health Clinic 01282 644 300

**Royal Preston Hospital,** Sharoe Green Lane, Preston. 01772 522 814 Victoria Hospital Sexual health Clinic, Blackpool. 01253 306 926

#### **MERSEYSIDE**

Arrowe Park Hospital, Upton. 0151 604 7339

Liverpool Brook 0151 207 4000

Royal Liverpool Hospital, Prescott Street, Liverpool 0151 706 2620

#### **CUMBRIA**

Cumberland Infirmary, Carlisle 01228 814 814

Workington Community Hospital 01900 705 050

If you'd like to talk to someone about your sexual health, you can call The Lesbian & Gay Foundation anytime between 10am – 10pm and speak to one of our trained operators. Calls are charged at local rate, and the number is

0845 3 30 30 30

We believe in a fair and equal society where all lesbian, gay and bisexual péople can achieve their full potential.

This guide is available in large print by calling **0845 3 30 30 30** or email **info@lgf.org.uk** 



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