

Fact sheet: HIV & safer sex

HIV can be transmitted via unprotected sexual intercourse.



Check out how to have safer, enjoyable sex!

Condoms

HIV lives in the sexual fluids of someone with HIV, such as vaginal secretions, semen (cum), pre-seminal fluid (pre-cum), rectal mucosa and menstruation blood.¹

Unprotected sex risks HIV transmission, so have safer sex using condoms to prevent contact with your partner's sexual fluids.²

Use condoms consistently and correctly, to protect you from most sexually transmitted infections (STIs), pregnancy and sexual transmission of HIV.

Two types of condom:

- **Male:** fits on a man's erect penis
- **Female:** fits inside a woman's vagina

Do not re-use condoms, or use two at once.

Use for vaginal, anal and oral sex, and also on sex toys (remember to use a new one when swapping partners!).³

Read AVERT's '[Condoms & Lubricants](#)' fact sheet for more information.

Lubricant

Lubricant/lube is a liquid that is designed to reduce friction during sex. You can buy bottles of different kinds of lube.

Most condoms are coated in lube: this makes penetration easier and prevents condoms breaking or causing tissue damage.

Oil-based lube damages latex condoms, so use water-based, or silicone-based lube instead.

You can use lube for any type of sex, but it is important to use it for anal sex, as the anus does not self-lubricate.⁴

Dental dams

Square piece of latex, used as a barrier method like the condom.

- Use during oral sex on a woman's genitals, or on the anus, to prevent oral-vaginal, or oral-anal contact.
- A condom can be cut open to provide the same effect.⁵
- There is a small risk of HIV infection from oral sex on the penis, vagina or anus but only if bleeding sores are present.

Latex gloves

Latex gloves are another barrier method.

- Use when there are cuts/sores on your hand, and to prevent sharp nails causing tissue damage when fisting.

Sex toys

There are a wide variety of sex toys available. Share sex toys safely:

- Use a condom on a toy.
- Change the condom when using a toy in different parts of your body (e.g. anus to vagina) and when switching between partners.
- Wash toys thoroughly (disinfect) when using them in different parts of the body.
- Wash them thoroughly when switching between partners.
- Use toys carefully to prevent tearing the vagina/anus or drawing blood.⁶

STI and sexual health check-ups

- Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) increase the chance of HIV transmission, especially those that cause sores.⁷
- If you notice any symptoms, go for a sexual health check-up.
- Many STIs have no symptoms, so have sexual health check-ups regularly.
- Ensure you are clear of STIs before you have sex again.

Read AVERT's '[HIV & Sexually Transmitted Infections](#)' fact sheet for more information.

Number of sexual partners

Unprotected sex is an option if you are in a monogamous relationship (when you and your partner only have sexual relations with each other) and you've both tested negative for all STIs and HIV.

Male circumcision

Male circumcision reduces the risk of a man getting HIV but does not eliminate it.⁸

Read AVERT's '[HIV & Male Circumcision](#)' fact sheet for more information.

Hormonal contraception

The contraceptive pill prevents pregnancy, but has NO protection against STIs or HIV. Use other forms of safe sex alongside the pill in order to stay safe.

HIV testing

- Have regular HIV tests, especially if you have multiple sexual partners.
- Know your status so you can access HIV treatment if necessary.
- A person who has HIV but is not on treatment carries a higher risk of transmitting HIV to others.⁹

Read AVERT's '[HIV Testing](#)' fact sheet for more information.

Know your rights

You have the right to:

- use a condom
- use contraception
- a confidential STI or HIV test.



- 1. [aidsmap](#) (accessed February 2016) 'Presence and quantity in body fluids'
- 2. [Terrence Higgins Trust](#) (2014) 'Unprotected sex and HIV'
- 3. [NAM](#) (2015) 'Condoms'
- 4. [NAM](#) (2015) 'Condoms'
- 5. [Planned Parenthood](#) (accessed February 2016) 'Safer Sex ('Safe Sex')'
- 6. [NAM](#) (accessed February 2016) 'Sex toys'
- 7. [CDC](#) (2015) 'STDs and HIV - CDC Fact Sheet'
- 8. [World Health Organisation](#) (2012) 'Voluntary medical male circumcision for HIV prevention'
- 9. [WHO](#) (2015) '10 facts on HIV/AIDS'

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