



SAFER SEX



Resources

FENWAY COMMUNITY HEALTH

7 Haviland Street
Boston, MA 02115
(a block off Mass. Ave. at Boylston St.)
617-267-0900
information@fenwayhealth.org

Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) | 617-267-0900

HIV Counseling and Testing | 617-267-0159

Violence Recovery Program | 617-927-6250
800-834-3242 (toll-free in MA)

The Fenway Institute | 617-927-6400
www.thefenwayinstitute.org

RAPE, ABUSE AND INCEST NATIONAL NETWORK (RAINN)

800-656-HOPE (4673)
www.RAINN.org

CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION

National STD and AIDS Hotline
1-800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636)
www.cdc.gov/std

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Many People Already Have Safer Sex

to protect themselves and their partners from unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. Use this brochure to learn how to reduce your risk of getting or passing on HIV and other STIs. If you already practice safer sex, you can use this brochure to teach a friend.

It's Not About Who You Are

Safer sex is about what you do. HIV is spread through blood, semen (cum), vaginal fluids, and breast milk. Some STIs, like herpes, can pass from one person to another by skin-to-skin contact between the penis or vagina, anus, and mouth. This can include areas not covered by a condom, like the balls.

Ways You Can Lower Your Risks

- Use condoms, latex dams and gloves
- Choose safer sex acts instead of riskier ones
- Use only new or clean needles and drug tools, and don't share
- Be open with your doctor about your risks
- Ask your doctor about STI vaccines
- Get tested for HIV & STIs regularly, because some STIs show few or no symptoms.

Why Have Safer Sex?

Sex is more fun if you're not afraid.

Some people do not have sex with anyone because they are worried about HIV & STIs. Other people do not worry and take a lot of risks. Most people try to find a good balance. You can find your own balance by thinking about which risks you are willing to take and which you are not. These are called your "risk limits." Your own risk limits can change over time as you learn new things or as your own needs and wishes change.

Decide Your Risk Limits

It can be helpful to write down or think through what kinds of sex feel safe and comfortable for you, and which don't. For many people, safe activities include things like kissing, hugging, or pleasuring your partner with your hands. Some people might also feel safe having oral, anal or vaginal sex with a condom or latex dam. There may be some activities you feel comfortable with part of the time and some you are not sure how you feel about. Writing these things down lets you picture what you consider not risky or too risky. It's one way to figure out in advance what you would feel comfortable doing in a sexual situation. **Once you know your limits, you can work to stay within them.**

In The Real World

Most people do not want to put themselves at risk for HIV and other STIs. At times, mistakes happen. One thing leads to another, and you find yourself having a sexual encounter that you later worry about. If this happens, there are many resources you can use to get help. Talking with a safer sex counselor is one way to sort things out. It can help you figure out ways to avoid doing risky things in the future "in the heat of the moment." If you were sexually abused or assaulted, speaking to a rape crisis counselor or hotline can help. Look at the end of this brochure for a list of resources.





Just What Are STIs, Anyway?

STIs can be caused by bacteria, viruses, yeast, or parasites. Many STIs can be treated or cured, but you can become re-infected with most STIs if you have sex with an infected person again. Which ones can you get again? Bacterial STIs, (like gonorrhea, chlamydia, and syphilis), and also yeast infections. Some STIs cannot be cured, but have treatments that can help symptoms. These STIs include many viral ones, like HIV, herpes and HPV.

Be careful! Herpes, HPV and syphilis can be spread through skin to skin contact, particularly through the skin around the penis, vagina, vulva, anus, and mouth, whether you can see the STIs or not. Some STIs can be passed on if you put fingers, sex toys, or other objects inside you that have touched someone else's cum, vaginal juices or anal juices. For more info on STIs, ask your doctor or see the resources at the end of this brochure.

Getting the Right Tests

If you have oral or anal sex without a condom and want to get tested for STIs, it's important to ask your doctor about swabbing your throat and/or anus for gonorrhea and chlamydia, since a pee-in-a-cup test or a penis swab can't test for gonorrhea or chlamydia in your throat or anus.

Having Safer Sex

Different kinds of sex have different levels of risk.

What's Safe?

- Kissing
- Caressing
- Massaging
- Masturbating yourself or your partner

Sex with Fingers and Hands (“fingering” “fisting”)

Touching a partner's penis or vulva or putting your fingers inside someone are very low risk with a few exceptions. On your hands, chapping, cuts, or scabs can increase your risk for some STIs. If one person's vaginal fluids, cum, or anal juices get on or in the other partner, they could be at risk for getting an STI.

Risks with back-and-forth between partners' genitals:

- ▲▲ **Possible Risks:** HPV, yeast infections, bacterial vaginosis (for vaginas/vulvas), trichomoniasis. (If fluid is present) gonorrhea, chlamydia, HIV & hepatitis B (especially with menstrual blood)
- ? **Unknown Risk:** hepatitis C

Safer Sex Tips:

- Use a different hand or glove to touch or penetrate your partner than the one you use on yourself.
- Use lots of lube to make it feel good and prevent mini tearing.
- Use gloves! Certain gloves can help reduce the risk of passing on STIs & HIV. Read the “Gloves” section for specifics.
- Trim and file your nails. Take off any jewelry that could scratch the vagina or anus.



ORAL SEX - WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Oral Sex on a Vagina (“cunnilingus” “eating out”)

STIs that are passed through skin to skin contact can be gotten or given through oral sex. Although less common, HIV also can be passed from vaginal fluids to any cuts or sores in the mouth, especially if the person on the receiving end has their period. Using a latex dam is an easy way to reduce your risks.

- ▲▲▲ **Known Risks:** herpes I and II, syphilis
- ▲▲ **Possible Risks:** HIV & hepatitis B (giving oral sex, if there is menstrual blood)
- ? **Unknown Risks:** HPV, chlamydia, gonorrhea

Oral Sex on an Anus (“rimming” “analingus”)

Rimming is very risky for hepatitis A. Parasites can also be passed on from anus to mouth. Gonorrhea, chlamydia and syphilis bacteria can live in your throat or anus. If the person on the receiving end has bumps, sores, or is bleeding from their anus, that could raise the giver's risk for STIs, so take a pass until they heal.

- ▲▲▲ **Known Risks:** hepatitis A, parasites, bacterial infections, herpes I and II, syphilis
- ? **Unknown Risks:** HPV, gonorrhea, chlamydia

Safer Sex Tips:

Oral-Vaginal AND Oral-Anal Sex

- Place a latex dam over the vulva or anus. Or use plastic food wrap or a cut-open condom instead.
- Put some lube on the inside of the dam to feel good. Use non-flavored and non-glycerin lube on vaginas.
- Put some flavored lube on the outside of the dam for fun!
- Dropped the dam? Get a new one — it's hard to tell whose fluids are whose!

Oral Sex on a Penis (“giving head” “fellatio” “sucking off”)

HIV risk with oral sex is low, but the risk of other STIs is still high. Depending on the STI, it can be passed easily through sores in the mouth or on the penis, cum in the mouth, or tiny invisible cuts in the mouth or gums.

- ▲▲▲ **Known Risks:** herpes I and II, HPV, syphilis, gonorrhea, chlamydia
- ▲▲ **Possible Risks:** HIV & hepatitis B (giving oral sex only)

Safer Sex Tips:

- Use a condom! Non-lubed condoms come in many styles, including flavored.
- Not into condoms? Don't take cum in your mouth.
- Avoid giving oral sex if you have bleeding gums or sores in your mouth. Wait at least an hour if you've brushed or flossed your teeth.
- Try not to “deep-throat” because this irritates the lining of the throat, making it easier to get an STI.
- Take a good look! If the penis and balls have any bumps, sores or strange fluid coming out, avoid having oral sex until they get checked out.



VAGINAL AND ANAL SEX - WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Sex with Penetration ("fucking" "having sex" "intercourse")

The risk of getting HIV is higher for the person being penetrated (in anal sex, the "bottom") than for the person doing the penetrating (in anal sex, the "top"). Both people are at risk for getting or giving STIs. Sharing sex toys can also put people at risk for HIV and STIs.

- ▲▲▲ **Known Risks:** HIV, gonorrhea, chlamydia, syphilis, herpes I and II, HPV, hepatitis B, trichomoniasis (vaginal sex only)
- ? **Unknown Risk:** hepatitis C (higher if there is blood or microtears)

Safer Sex Tips:

- Use a condom and some lube! Lube helps condoms not break and makes sex feel better.
- Don't use the condom if it's too old. You can tell by the expiration date on the wrapper.
- Adding a drop of lube inside the tip of the condom can make it feel good. After you put on the condom, lube up the outside, too.
- Pinch the tip of the condom as you put it on. This will leave room for cum so the condom won't burst when the person cums (ejaculates).
- When you put on the condom, make sure the side is up that will roll down smoothly. If you put it on wrong side up, don't flip it over; try again with a new condom.
- Hold onto the base of the condom as you pull the penis out so the cum doesn't spill and the condom doesn't come off inside the partner.
- Use a new condom with each sex act and each partner.
- If you insert toys for sex, use condoms on your toys, clean them with bleach and water, or don't share them. Leather toys can't be cleaned like this, so don't share those. Don't have bleach? Washing with soap and water can still help.

Sex without Penetration ("rubbing" "dry humping" "outercourse")

Some STIs can be passed on through this kind of sex, particularly STIs that are passed through skin-to-skin contact.

- ▲▲▲ **Known Risks:** herpes I and II, HPV, syphilis, trichomoniasis, yeast infections (between vulvas), bacterial vaginosis (between vulvas),
- ▲▲ **Possible Risks:** yeast infections (penis to vulva), gonorrhea, chlamydia
- ? **Unknown Risks:** hepatitis B & C, HIV

Safer Sex Tips:

- For vulva to vulva rubbing: put a latex dam or long piece of plastic wrap in between the two of you. For a hands-free version, drape plastic wrap around one of you like underwear so it won't slide off. Don't forget the lube!
- For vulva-penis or penis-anus rubbing: use a condom with lots of lube on the outside.



Condoms

Condoms used right can protect you from many STIs and can prevent pregnancy. Condoms WON'T completely protect you from STIs that are spread by skin-to-skin contact, like herpes, HPV and syphilis, which could be passed from a genital area not covered by a condom, like the balls, base of the penis, or the skin of the vulva around the vagina.



Needles & Drug Tools - What Are the Risks?

Not all HIV or Hepatitis risks are sexual. Sharing needles and syringes—whether for drugs, tattoos, hormones, steroids, or anything else—can put you at risk for HIV and Hepatitis B & C. Sharing other drug works such as cottons, cookers, and rinse water, can also put you at risk. If you share nasal bumpers or straws to snort drugs it can put you at risk for Hepatitis B & C.

Safety Tips:

- Don't share your tools! Use only your own if possible.
- Many states have needle exchange programs, where you can exchange used needles for clean ones for FREE. In some states (including Massachusetts), drug stores sell sterile syringes over the counter.
- If you share, clean your needle and syringe before you use them by drawing in, shaking, and then rinsing with water 3 times, then bleach 3 times, then finally water 3 times again. Each time you draw in water or bleach, shake the needle for 2 minutes before squirting the liquid out.
- Anything you do to clean your needle and syringe is better than not cleaning at all, but don't use dirty water since it could give you an infection.
- If you want support for reducing your drug use, see the resources at the end of this brochure.

What do you do if you've been exposed to HIV?

Post-exposure prophylaxis, or PEP, is a series of medicine you could take if you've been exposed to HIV to lower your risk of getting it. The medicine will not protect you if you get exposed to HIV a lot. **Timing is important! You have to start the medicine within 72 hours after getting exposed, so get medical help right away!** Many emergency rooms offer PEP. For more info, see the resources at the end of this brochure.

KNOW THE TOOLS



Condoms

Condoms greatly reduce the risk of getting or passing on many STIs, including HIV. Condoms come in many shapes and sizes. You can try out different kinds to see which ones feel best to you. The outside of the condom package will say whether it is lubricated or non-lubricated, and if it contains a spermicide. Most condoms are made out of latex. Some people are allergic to latex and can use other kinds, such as polyurethane condoms. Avoid lambskin condoms because they do not stop HIV from passing through.

Reality® brand condoms are polyurethane condoms that you put into the vagina or anus before sex. They are called “female condoms,” but they can be used by men for anal sex, too. Some people think Reality condoms feel better or are easier to use. Others prefer regular condoms. You and your partner(s) can decide which are best for you.

Spermicides and Nonoxynol-9

If you're worried about your risk of HIV and STIs, **avoid spermicides**, such as Nonoxynol-9. They can cause irritation of the vagina, anus, and penis. Irritation makes the risk of passing HIV and STIs higher. You may want to use Nonoxynol-9 or another spermicide with a condom if you don't need to worry about HIV/STIs but want to prevent pregnancy.

Latex Barriers and Plastic Wrap

You can use latex barriers or plastic food wrap when using your mouth and tongue to pleasure a vagina, vulva, or anus. (The vulva is all of the female genitals, including the outside parts.) These barriers prevent the spread of HIV and other STIs. Latex barriers, sometimes called “dental dams,” are square pieces of stretchy plastic. If you don't have a ready-made barrier, you can substitute a large piece of plastic food wrap, or cut a condom or glove into a flat square and use it the same way.

LUBE

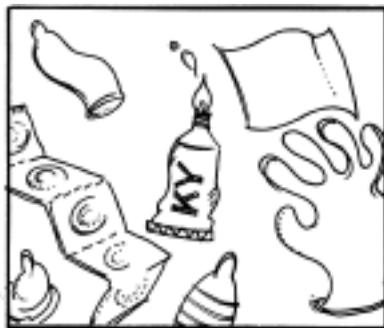
When putting a penis, fingers, or a sex toy inside a vagina or anus, using lots of water-based lubricant can lower friction a lot, make sex more pleasurable, and help keep a condom from breaking. With latex condoms, use only water-based or silicone-based lubes. Don't use oil-based lubricants, such as Vaseline or massage oils, because they can break down the latex in the condom.

GLOVES

When putting fingers inside an anus or vagina, you can wear latex, polyurethane, or nitrile gloves to reduce the risk of getting STIs through tiny cuts on your hands.

Keep Your Tools Nearby

If you have condoms, latex dams, gloves, lube, and other safer sex supplies nearby, they're easier to grab and use during sex. Anywhere you might be having sex, bring the supplies along with you. That could mean keeping a supply within arm's reach of your bed, or in your backpack or purse.



Talking About Sex

Talk, talk, talk. People who talk with their partner(s) about safer sex find it easier to have it. Many of us were taught when we were young that sex is shameful or dirty and should not be talked about. Those early messages can make it hard to talk openly about safer sex today. Comfort does come with time and practice. Start a trend and talk to your friends about safer sex or contact an anonymous resource, such as a hotline. Talking with a partner is a chance to learn what they do to practice safer sex, what turns them on, and what sexual things you might enjoy doing together.

Tongue tied? Talking not an option? Try breaking out your barrier of choice and putting it on your partner for them! Or, try putting a Reality condom in your anus or vagina ahead of time (can be put in up to 8 hours before sex).

Honesty and Trust

Some people want to have one partner and be monogamous (sexual only with each other). Others want to have more than one partner. Talking openly with your partner(s) about what you want builds honesty and trust in your relationship. Some people in long-term relationships explore the possibilities of having sex without condoms or other barriers. One term for this is “negotiated safety.” It means agreeing to have unprotected sex inside your relationship but using condoms and latex dams if either of you has sex with someone else. This way you will not infect each other with HIV or other STIs. Talking about your hopes and fears helps build trust and helps protect you and your partner.

Know Yourself

Sometimes it is harder to have safer sex. What those times are change from person to person. You probably know what they are for you. For some people, using alcohol or drugs before or during sex can make it harder to have safer sex. Other people find that some places, events, or partners make safer sex challenging. Some feel like their partner might hurt them if they asked for safer sex. If you sometimes have sexual experiences that feel out of control, you can get help and support at the agencies listed at the end of this brochure.

You Decide

Just as seat belts cannot guarantee your safety in a car accident, using condoms, gloves, latex dams and other barriers is also not a 100% guarantee. On top of using condoms and latex dams, some people choose to lower their risks by having no sexual partners, having very few, or having only one who only has sex with them.

Testing, Treatment, & Vaccinations

Many STIs are treatable and even curable. Cures cannot reverse physical harm already done, so it's important to find out early and get treated. Even for STIs that don't have cures, like herpes and HPV, treatment can often help. Medicines and medical care can help people with HIV live longer and healthier lives. You can prevent hepatitis A and B by getting vaccinated for them. Ask your doctor if there is an HPV vaccine available for you. For more information, see the resources at the end of this brochure.

Finally, and Most Importantly, SEX IS FUN

Part of feeling good about safer sex is feeling good about sex and ourselves. Enjoy!

