

take the condom off before the penis goes completely soft.

- Then tie in a knot to prevent leakage and place in a bin (do not flush down the toilet!).
- If you do have an accident with a condom and think you are at risk of a sexually transmitted infection or pregnancy, contact your local GUM clinic as soon as possible for further advice on emergency contraception and/or other treatments.

## Water-based lubrication

Water-based lubrication can make condom and femidom use more effective and much more pleasurable. Condoms and femidoms are already lubricated. They have to be for us to get them on and off. But they actually work and feel better when extra lubrication such as KY or Liquid Silk is used. Water-based lubrication increases sensitivity and also helps prevent the condom splitting. They are available from most places distributing condoms and can be purchased from most pharmacies. Lubrication must be water-based. Any alternative methods of lubrication that are oil-based will rot the condom very quickly and render it useless. Lubricants to avoid include massage oil, body creams, Vaseline, lipstick, sun tan lotion etc!

Further confidential information & support for anyone affected by HIV/AIDS is available from:

**The Eddystone Trust (Plymouth)**  
36 Looe Street  
Bretonside  
Plymouth  
PL4 0EB  
Tel: 01752 257077

**The Eddystone Trust (Torbay)**  
24 Braddons Hill Road West  
Torquay  
TQ1 1BG  
Tel: 01803 380 692

**GUM Clinic**  
Derriford Hospital  
Plymouth  
Tel: Appointments 0845 1558189

**GUM Clinic**  
Torbay Hospital  
Torbay  
Tel: 01803 656500

**Sexual Health Information 24hr Helpline**  
Tel: 0800 567 123

**Terrence Higgins Trust Direct**  
Tel: 0845 12 21 200

### Useful Websites:

[www.icw.org](http://www.icw.org)  
[www.tht.org.uk](http://www.tht.org.uk)  
[www.unaids.org](http://www.unaids.org)  
[www.plusve.org](http://www.plusve.org)  
[www.worlddaidsday.org](http://www.worlddaidsday.org)  
[www.bodyandsoulcharity.org](http://www.bodyandsoulcharity.org)

[www.nat.org.uk](http://www.nat.org.uk)  
[www.avert.org](http://www.avert.org)  
[www.dipex.org/hiv](http://www.dipex.org/hiv)  
[www.eddystone.org.uk](http://www.eddystone.org.uk)  
[www.positivenation.co.uk](http://www.positivenation.co.uk)  
[www.hivandhepatitis.com](http://www.hivandhepatitis.com)

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# HIV

## An Introduction



### ABOUT THIS LEAFLET

This leaflet provides you with an overview of HIV. It outlines what the virus is, how it can be transmitted and ways of reducing the risk of becoming infected, information on testing and treatments as well as safer use of condoms and lubricant use. If you have concerns about HIV you should seek advice from a qualified health professional.

## What is HIV?

HIV stands for *Human Immuno-deficiency Virus*. It is a virus that can be passed on from an infected person to someone else in specific ways only, primarily attacking certain cells in the immune system. It affects the way our bodies can respond to infections and disease. If someone has HIV, they can become prone to certain illnesses and symptoms.

## Transmission

HIV cannot pass through unbroken skin or through the air. It is not contagious and cannot be passed on through ordinary social contact. HIV can be present in some body fluids, namely: blood, vaginal and cervical secretions, semen (cum) and breast milk. For HIV to be passed on, a certain amount of infected body fluids have to find their way into someone else's blood.

Luckily, HIV is actually quite a fragile virus that cannot live in body fluids outside of the human body for very long. But the virus can get into someone's bloodstream in 3 main ways:

- Sharing needles (and works)
- Unprotected penetrative sex (intercourse), both vaginal and anal
- From an infected mother to her unborn child

Other possible ways include:

- Breast-feeding
- Giving oral sex to a man with HIV
- Healthcare workers experiencing needlestick injury

## Protecting yourself

**HIV does not discriminate.** It can affect anyone, regardless of sexuality, gender, race, ability, age, etc. You cannot tell who has got HIV simply from looking at them.

It is vitally important, therefore, for everyone to practice Safer Sex and Safer Drug Use. Safer Sex involves reducing the risk of infections through using barrier contraception (i.e. condoms or femidoms) and water-based lubricant. Or having sex which does not involve the penis penetrating the vagina or anus. Safer Sex is also important in preventing pregnancy and other sexually acquired infections.

Oral sex only becomes risky if the person doing the sucking has cuts, sores or bleeding gums in their mouth. This could be made safer by not getting semen (cum) in your mouth, or by using a condom.

Sex toys such as vibrators and dildos should be cleaned thoroughly between partners, or covered by a fresh condom each time.

Safer Drug Use means not sharing any injecting equipment at all. This includes filters, spoons, water, etc. There are many needle exchange programmes around the country where clean needles can be obtained. Needles should also be disposed of safely after use (in a sharps bin or crushed tin can). Safer Drug Use also means being aware of how certain mood-altering drugs (including alcohol) can affect behaviours, such as, the possibility of making the practise of Safer Sex less likely.

**Remember that saliva, sweat and urine do not contain enough HIV to infect someone.**

## Testing

It is possible to have a blood test to determine whether you have HIV. This is usually done using an *antibody test*. Antibodies are created by the infected person's immune system in response to HIV. The blood test will only be accurate if you have waited 3 months or more after infection (i.e. the last time you were at risk). Anything less might not give an accurate result. This is known as the 'window period' or 'seroconversion', which simply refers to the time it takes for the antibodies to develop and show up in a test. It is possible to get a confidential blood test at your local GUM clinic. You may have to wait a few days for the results. It is important to think very carefully before you have a test and make sure you can access support should you need to. If you feel you may have been at risk of HIV, the sooner you get tested, the more options you have available to you in terms of treatment.

## Treatments

Because of recently developed anti-HIV medication, in many cases, people are now living longer with HIV than ever before. Indeed, in this country and others in the western world, even though infection rates have increased, death rates have fallen. This is primarily due to life-long courses of drug treatment that are available to control the virus. (They do not provide a cure.) If someone has HIV, by sticking to treatments, they may feel well and be able to prevent life-threatening diseases and infections.

We are lucky in this country to have access to such medical treatments. Let's not forget, the infection and mortality rates in the developing world are still increasing, and many countries do not have access to the same facilities as us.

## Safer use of condoms

- *Regular condoms are suitable for vaginal and anal sex. It is the proper use of condoms and the use of water based lube that decrease the likelihood of condoms breaking or coming off during sex.*
- *Some people will feel more confident using a thicker condom for anal sex, rough sex, prolonged sex or sex when one partner has a genital piercing.*
- *Do not store condoms in warm places, check the expiry date on the packet, and check for either the CE mark, or the British Kite mark. Be careful when opening the packet!*
- *Always use a generous amount of water-based lubricant on the outside of the condom, not on the inside as this can cause the condom to come off during sex.*
- *Always ensure the condom is put on the right way round. If you find it's not, discard it and use another.*
- *Never re-use a condom. Always use a fresh one.*
- *Put the condom on before the penis touches the genital area.*
- *After climax, hold the rim of the condom while withdrawing.*
- *Remove the condom away from the partner's genital area.*
- *Ensure the condom remains on until the penis has been withdrawn but*