

Reducing the risks : a leaflet for people who use drugs / Terrence Higgins Trust ; cartoon by Mike Linnell.

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REDUCING THE RISKS



The Terrence Higgins Trust



A leaflet for people who use drugs



REDUCING THE RISKS

A leaflet for
people who
use drugs

Drug use can put us at risk of getting or passing on HIV through unsafe sex and through sharing works

WHAT IS SAFER SEX?

Safer sex is anything which does not allow blood, semen or vaginal fluids to pass from one person into the body of another.

Safer sex includes wanking, fingering, body rubbing, massage, oral sex and fucking with a condom and can be great fun as well as erotic. There are many ways to get into sex more safely – experiment and see what you can come up with!

ORAL SEX

There is only a small risk of HIV transmission through oral sex (licking or sucking a man or woman's genitals or anus), although other sexually transmitted diseases, like syphilis and gonorrhoea, are easy to get this way. If you have sores or ulcers in your mouth or bleeding gums, this will increase the risk of infection.

You can make oral sex safer by using a condom or dental dam. If you cannot get hold of dental dams, you can cut open a condom instead (use the non-lubricated or flavoured varieties)!

PENETRATIVE SEX – *Fucking*

The only way to make penetrative sex safer is to use a condom. Condoms may seem awkward at first, but the more you practise the easier using them becomes. You can get them free from most Needle Exchanges and Family Planning Clinics.

- For anal sex it is a good idea to use 'extra strong' or 'super strong' condoms.
- For vaginal sex, the female condom ("Femidom") will be available from late summer 1992. We will have to wait and see whether women find them easy and/or pleasant to use. In the meantime, here are some tips for using our old friend the male condom.

Some Condom Tips

- Do not use oil based lubricants like "Vaseline" or cooking/baby oil as these will damage the condom. Use water based lubricants like "KY" or "1-2-1". You can also get these free from most Needle Exchanges and Family Planning Clinics.
- Check the expiry date on the packet.
- Make sure the condom is the right way up.
 - A drop of lubricant in the tip of the condom will increase sensation for the wearer.
 - When pulling out, hold the condom tight to the base of the cock to prevent semen leaking out.
 - Keep condoms handy, so you don't have to go tearing around looking for them at that crucial moment!
- Being drunk or stoned can make anyone forget to use condoms, but if the condoms are easy to see or find there is a better chance that you'll remember to use them.
- Practise makes perfect, so use them when you're wanking or try them out on a vibrator, dildo or anything that's about the right shape.



SEX FOR MONEY

Sex for money carries the same risks as any other kind of sex. However, if you have a lot of sex, you are more likely to get cystitis, thrush and swollen genitals, anus and mouth. If you have any infection, your immune system won't be working as well and it will be easier for you to get other infections including HIV.

Unfortunately, some punters still offer more money for sex without a condom. Try not to get pushed into this – your health is worth more than a few extra quid. With a bit of practise, you can learn to put a condom on without the punter knowing you've done it!



Cartoon by Mike Linnell

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SAFER DRUG USE

In order to keep from getting – or passing on – HIV through drug use, don't share your works – this includes the spoon and filter as well as the needle and syringe. Don't share with anyone – not even your best mate or your partner.

You can buy new needles and syringes from a lot of chemists and you can also get them free from needle exchanges and chemists which are in an exchange scheme.

It is best to use a new set of works every time. If you can't do this, make sure you clean them. Bacteria can grow in dirty works and the next time you use them, you can give yourself a nasty infection or blood poisoning.

Cleaning

This is a last resort. If you have to re-use your own works, or need to share with someone, cleaning will lower the risk of infection. But remember it is lower risk – not no risk.

Bleach: This is the best way to clean your works, because bleach kills HIV and other bacteria. Draw cold water up into the syringe through the needle, flush out the water and repeat. Now do the same thing using thin (e.g. diluted) household bleach. Now rinse twice with cold water.

The easy way to remember it is:

2 x 2 x 2: 2 x cold water
2 x bleach
2 x cold water

Washing-up Liquid: If you can't get hold of bleach you can use diluted washing-up liquid instead. Washing-up liquid doesn't kill HIV, but it will help to draw blood and bacteria out of your works.

Water: If you have nothing else, at least use cold water to rinse out your works. The reason for using cold water is that hot water will make the blood congeal and make it harder to get out of the needle and syringe. Water on its own isn't brilliant, but it is better than doing nothing.



ALTERNATIVES

If your drug use is causing you problems, it is helpful to consider your choices. You may want to continue using drugs, but receive regular support or counselling. You may want to stop using, or go on to substitute drugs. The best thing to do is find someone to talk to about your options. Some places to go for help are: Street Agencies, Needle Exchanges, Drug Dependency Units, Community Drug Teams and Narcotics Anonymous (NA).

Many AIDS organisations have workers who are experienced in working with drug issues as well as HIV. If you are concerned about HIV, you can contact one of these organisations – they can refer you to a drug agency if necessary.

LOOKING AFTER YOUR HEALTH

Whether you are HIV positive or negative, it is important to look after your health.

Drug use can have a damaging effect on your teeth. Dental problems are painful and unsightly so try to see a dentist regularly. If you are on a low income, you may be able to get dental treatment for free or at a reduced cost. Your local drug project may be able to put you in touch with an understanding dentist or specialist dental clinic.

Most illnesses and infections are easier to treat if they are diagnosed early. This is why it is better to see a doctor when you first feel unwell rather than wait until it is so bad that you have to go to hospital. Everyone should have a GP, but it can be difficult to find one if you use drugs. Drug projects can help you find a GP. Some projects also run Well Person's clinics where you can see a doctor for a health check and Family Planning services.

If you are HIV positive it is a good idea to have regular health checks. This is usually done at a clinic or hospital. Many illnesses and infections associated with HIV can be prevented or treated with medication. Your local drug agency should be able to tell you more about available HIV services in your area.

Part of looking after your health is learning to be good to your body. You can do this by eating well, getting enough rest and relaxing.



FINALLY

Making changes in the way we use drugs, have sex or look after ourselves can be difficult. Try to find someone you can trust to talk to. This could be a good friend, partner, drug worker, HIV worker or helpline worker.

HELPLIST

The Terrence Higgins Trust
52-54 Grays Inn Road, London WC1X 8JU

The Terrence Higgins Trust offers a wide range of services which are open to everyone.

For people with HIV, help on welfare rights, housing and legal matters is available from the Advice Centre; practical help is offered by our Helper Cell Service and befriending by our Buddy Service.

Specialist support for present and ex-drug users concerned about HIV and AIDS as well as people in prison living with HIV or AIDS, is also provided.

**To access any of these services,
please telephone us on 071-831 0330.**

Helpline:

071-242 1010 3pm-10pm daily

Legal Line:

071-405 2381 7pm-10pm Wednesday

Advice Centre:

071-831 0330 10am-5pm weekdays

National AIDS Helpline**0800 567123 24 hours a day**

All calls are free from anywhere in the UK; a list of needle exchanges is available upon request.

Help is also available in the following community languages:

Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Punjabi and Urdu: 0800 282445

6pm-10pm Wednesday

Cantonese: 0800 282446

6pm-10pm Tuesday

Arabic: 0800 282447

6pm-10pm Wednesday

A Minicom is available for the hearing impaired:

0800 521361 10am-10pm daily

SCODA**071-430 2341/2**

The co-ordinating body for non-statutory services in the drugs field.

Scottish AIDS Monitor (SAM)**031-557 3885**

Provides a wide range of services to people affected by HIV and AIDS throughout Scotland.

Body Positive**071-835 1045**

A network of self-help groups for people affected by HIV and AIDS. Contact this number (or the National AIDS Helpline) for information about your local group.

Mainliners**071-738 4656 (client services)****071-737 7472****(administration)**

A Support Group for HIV positive drug users and ex-users in London.

Positively Women**071-490 5515**

Counselling and support for women with HIV and AIDS.

Turning Point**071-702 2300 (head office)**

Has an extensive range of counselling, advice and support centres throughout Britain for drug users. Contact the head office for information about your local services.

Release**071-729 9904 (advice line)****071-729 5255****(overnight helpline)**

Advice and information on legal and drug related problems.

The Terrence Higgins Trust

A Registered Charity to Inform, Advise and Help on
AIDS and HIV Infection

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