



LEARN 2 LIVE TEAM GUIDE TO SEXUAL HEALTH

Adapted from www.avert.orgwww.youngpeoplefriendly.co.uk

AM I READY FOR SEX?



Almost everyone asks themselves "am I ready to have sex?" at some point in their lives, but unfortunately not many people will be able to answer it with a definite "yes" or "no".

Having sex for the first time can be a very special experience, but it can also lead to all sorts of complications. Sex without a condom or other form of contraception can result in pregnancy, and if your partner has HIV or a sexually transmitted infection (and you might not always know they do), you can become infected too. There can also be emotional consequences to having sex with someone – it can really change a relationship, and not always for the better. Sex can be enjoyable with the right person, but it's very easy to make mistakes and end up hurt, which is why people advise you: "don't have sex until you're ready!"

Of course it's all very well saying this, but how do you know when you're ready? Legally, you aren't allowed to have sex with anyone until you're over the **age of consent**. But it takes more than just being a legal age to make you ready for sex – you need to be emotionally ready too. Here are some questions to help you work out if you're ready to have sex.

1) Are you doing this because YOU want to?

Or are you thinking about having sex because someone else wants you to? Maybe you're not sure you're ready, but your partner is keen? Or perhaps there's a bit of 'peer pressure' – all your friends seem to be having sex, so you feel you should be too?

Do any of the following sound familiar? -

- “You would if you loved me!”
- “It’s only natural!”
- “Everyone else is doing it!”
- “Don’t you want to make our relationship stronger?”
- “You’ll have to do it sometime – why not now, with me?”
- “I’ll be gentle, and it’ll be really great, I promise!”
- “I’ll only put it in for a second...”

If you recognise any of these phrases, then you should think carefully! These are **not** the right reasons to have sex. A partner who says things like this is probably trying to put pressure on you and might not really care whether you’re ready or not – this person doesn’t respect your feelings, and they’re probably not the right person to have sex with.

Nor should you have sex just because your friends are saying things like :

- “You mean you’ve **never** done it?!?”
- “I lost it when I was twelve. . .”
- “Yeah, I’ve had sex loads of times. . .”
- “You’re a virgin, you wouldn’t understand. . .”
- “No-one’ll be interested in you if they hear you’re frigid.”
- “It’s amazing - you don’t know what you’re missing!”

It may feel like your friends are all more experienced and knowledgeable, but we guarantee they’re probably not! Many of them will only be saying this sort of thing because they think everyone will laugh at them if they admit they’ve never really done anything! Besides, being sexually experienced at a young age doesn’t necessarily make someone mature or sensible - in fact, it usually indicates the opposite.

2) Do I know my partner well enough?

If you’ve only just met your partner, haven’t been going out with them very long, or perhaps don’t even really know them, then sex is never going to be a really good experience because there won’t be much trust between you. If you’ve never even kissed the person you’re with, then you’re definitely not ready to have sex with them!

Sex can leave you feeling very vulnerable afterwards in a way you might not be prepared for, so it’s better to be with someone that you know is likely to be sticking around. Usually, you’ll have better sex with someone you know really well, are comfortable with, and who you can talk to openly about relationships and feelings. Sex will be best with someone you love.

3) Is it legal?

The age of consent differs between countries. In most states of the U.S, for instance, it ranges between 16 and 18. In the UK and India it's 16. In Spain, it's 13 while in some Muslim countries, sex is illegal unless you're married.

So why do countries have a legal age for having sex? Because this is the age when the government believes young people are mature enough to handle the responsibilities that come with having sex. All too often people think they are ready when they're not. Age of consent laws are also designed to prevent older people from taking advantage of children and young teenagers who may not understand the consequences of having sex, or even what sex is.

4) Do I feel comfortable enough with my partner to do this, and to do it sober?

It's natural to feel a little embarrassed and awkward the first time you have sex with someone because it's not something you've ever done before. Your boyfriend or girlfriend will probably feel the same. But if you don't trust your partner enough not to laugh at you or you don't feel you can tell them you've never had sex before, then it's far better to wait until you can.

And if you think you'll have to drink a lot of alcohol before you do it so you feel relaxed enough, or you only find yourself thinking about having sex when you're drunk, then that suggests you're not ready. A lot of people lose their virginity when they're drunk or on drugs, and then regret it. So if you're worried that you're going to be in a situation where you might be tempted to do something you wouldn't do normally, restrict your drinking, keep off the drugs, or make sure you stick with a sober friend who can look after you!

5) Do I know enough about sex?

Do you know what happens during sex? Do you know how it works, what it's for and how and why a woman can get pregnant? Do you know about **sexually transmitted infections**? Lots of people worry that they're going to make a fool of themselves or do something wrong. Well, you shouldn't have to worry if you're with a partner who cares about you - (s)he won't laugh. And if you're not with a partner who cares, you probably shouldn't be doing it! Physically, sex is actually quite simple, but the more you know, the more comfortable you'll feel.

6) Will I be glad when I'm older that I lost my virginity at the age I am now?

Imagine that you're looking back at yourself in ten years time. What do you think you'll think then about how and when you lost your virginity? Is there any way in which you might regret it? The answer should be 'no' – if it's not, you're probably not yet ready for sex.

7) Can I talk to my partner about this easily?

If you can't talk about sex, then you're not ready to have sex. It's as simple as that. Being honest about how you're feeling will make it easier for both of you, and will make sex better in the future.

8) Do I know how to have sex safely?

It's really important that you know how to protect against pregnancy, STIs and HIV. Again, this is something you need to talk to your boyfriend or girlfriend about before the event, so you're both okay about what you're going to use. Especially with things like condoms, it's good to have a bit of practise putting them on, and to feel okay about doing it – it's not enough just to get a condom if you're not confident enough to use it – they're no good if they stay in your pocket the whole time!

9) Do we both want to do this?

You may decide that you are ready to have sex, but it might be that your partner isn't, even if they have had sexual partners before. For sex to work, you both have to be willing to do it. Don't ever pressure anyone to have sex if they're not sure – this is very wrong, and it'll cost you your partner's respect and the respect of other people.

Also - there's a fine line between pressuring someone to have sex and forcing someone to have sex – if you put too much pressure on someone, it can become force – and if you force someone into sex, you can be prosecuted for rape.

10) Does sex fit in with my/their personal beliefs?

It may be that you, your partner or your family have beliefs that say sex at a young age (or before marriage) is wrong. Do you feel comfortable going against these views? Will it cause you unnecessary worry and guilt if you do (or frustration and heartbreak if you don't!)? Some young people will have sex simply because their family has banned them from doing so, even if they don't realise that this is the reason. Having sex as an act of rebellion may feel great at the time, but if anything goes wrong, you face a very difficult situation, as you may not be able to rely on your family's support.

Even if everything goes well, keeping sex (and all the emotions that go with it) a secret can be very hard – so, if possible, you should make sure you have someone else to talk to that you can trust to keep it to themselves. But remember, the decision to have sex should be an agreement between you and your partner, and while other people may help or influence your decision, they shouldn't make it for you.

So, are you ready for sex?

If you answered “Yes!” to all ten of these questions, then you’re probably pretty much ready, as long as BOTH of you feel okay about it.

If you didn’t, then there are probably some issues you need to work through first, because all of these questions are important.

First time sex is always going to be scary whatever age you are when you have it. It can sometimes seem like losing your virginity is the most important thing in the world. But you can’t get your virginity back once it’s gone, so what is really important is that you have enough respect for yourself to wait until you’re truly ready, and can truly trust the person you’re with. Good luck, have fun, and stay safe!

QUESTIONS ABOUT SEX



What is sex?

The word sex is used to refer to a variety of sexual activities, and can mean different things to different people. Usually when people talk about sex they mean sexual intercourse or 'penetrative sex' between a man and a woman. But sex can also refer to sexual activities between two men or between two women. Sex does not just refer to vaginal sex, it can mean oral sex and anal sex as well.

There are many sexual activities that people enjoy doing which don't involve sexual intercourse, for example kissing or mutual masturbation. Sex is also not just physical; it can involve strong emotions and have a significant effect on people's feelings.

How do you have sex?

How to have sex is actually quite simple. When a man's penis becomes hard, he places it inside a woman's vagina, and moves it in and out. This creates friction which is pleasurable for both the man and the woman. After a while, this friction will usually cause the man to have an orgasm and ejaculate. It may also cause the woman to have an orgasm, although it can take a bit of experimentation and practice to get it right!

You can have sex in lots of different positions, but one of the most common and intimate ways is for the man to lie on top of the woman, so that they can kiss and cuddle while having sex.

What is the age of consent?

The age of consent is the age at which a young person is legally able to understand and agree to consensual sex. In most countries, until you reach this age it is illegal for somebody to have sex with you, however old they may be. Sometimes the law is slightly different when the partners are of a similar age, but there is usually still a minimum age below which sex is always illegal. Although some young people may feel that they are mature enough to engage in a sexual relationship, others may lack the emotional development to deal with this or to feel confident enough to say 'no'. Age of consent laws are there to protect young people from being sexually exploited by adults.

The age of consent varies according to the country and even in different states, and in some places the age of consent is different for boys and for girls. In the UK the age of consent is 16 years old, whether between a male and female couple, male and male couple or female and female couple.

Statutory rape is the crime that someone can be charged with if they have sex with a person who has not reached the age of consent but who agrees to have sex.

Sexual abuse is the term for an adult using their age or authority over a young person to make any type of sexual contact. There is a difference between this and two young people who are in a consenting relationship. If you are a young person involved in an abusive relationship it is important to talk to someone about this.

If you are worried because you know of a young person who you think is in an abusive sexual relationship, you must think carefully about what would be the right thing to do. **Please ask your YPA (young person's advisor) for further advice.**

What is safer sex?

Safer sex is protecting yourself and your partner from any sexually transmitted diseases including HIV. It is wrong to assume this only applies to young people as STDs and HIV can affect anyone at any age. Having sex safely isn't just about stopping the conception of a child and safer sex doesn't even have to be sexual intercourse.

To have safer sex it is important to either use a condom or to make sure neither you nor your partner are infected with HIV or any STD. It is also essential to make sure you are not at risk of infection by any other means such as health care work or injecting drug use.

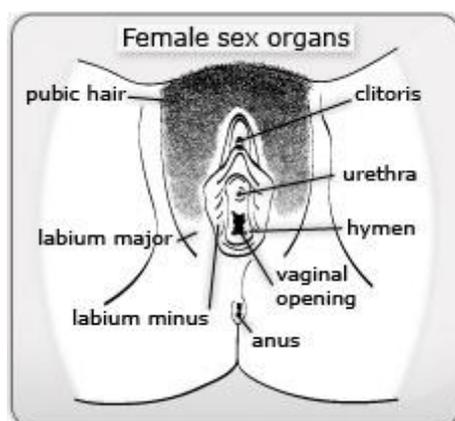
Alternatively, as STDs and HIV can be transmitted through sexual fluids and blood, there is the option to do sexual acts that do not involve any contact with these. Therefore safer sex can be non-penetrative sex and just foreplay acts, or to a greater extent safer sex can be abstinence.

Where is the G-spot and what is it?

The G-spot is a controversial term as some sex researchers dispute its existence. However most believe it is an area located behind the front wall of the vagina, between the back of the pubic bone and the cervix. When stimulated, it can produce intensely pleasurable feelings for the woman, and may cause her to have an orgasm.

Where is the clitoris and what is it?

The clitoris is a small pea-sized lump towards the top of the vaginal area above the urethra (urine hole) and the entrance to the vagina. It is very sensitive and when stimulated can lead to orgasm.



Is there any way of telling whether a girl is a virgin or not without going to the doctor?

The only true way of knowing if a girl is a virgin is to ask her. Many cultures believe that a girl is only a virgin if she still has an intact hymen. The hymen is a thin membrane of skin that partially covers the entrance to the vagina. This membrane can bleed when it is torn as a man's penis enters the vagina. Some cultures therefore believe that blood on the sheets on a woman's wedding night is the only proof that a girl was a virgin.

Neither the presence of the hymen nor bleeding during intercourse can truly indicate virginity. Some girls are born without hymens, others will have hymens that stretch and don't break during sex, and some will have torn their hymens during sport, inserting tampons, masturbation or even riding a horse.

How do you masturbate?

Men usually masturbate by grasping the penis and moving their hand up and down rapidly until they ejaculate ("come"). Women rub their clitoris and vulva and may move one or several fingers up and down inside their vagina until they orgasm.

Everybody has their own way of masturbating that feels good for them.

Is too much masturbation bad for you?

Masturbation is a normal and natural activity and is not bad for you unless you masturbate so much that you make your genital area sore. Masturbation does not stunt your growth, damage your health or cause you to become physically or mentally weak. If it did, the vast majority of people in the world would be very short and unhealthy!

Where can I get condoms from?

Condoms can be bought from a chemist or supermarket. Condoms can also be bought from a number of suppliers on the internet. They are often available from vending machines in public toilets and in the UK they are available free or at low-cost from sexual health clinics. **Please ask your YPA (young person's advisor) for a list of free sexual health services in your area or refer to pages 40-58.**

How often do people have sex?

Sexual appetite is entirely a matter of personal taste. Some people have sex once a day and others once a month. It probably varies for most people depending on whether they are in a relationship, how busy they are and how they feel. Most people think about sex far more often than they do it.

Is there a way of preventing premature ejaculation ('coming' too soon)?

Many men find the best way to prevent premature ejaculation is to think about something dull to regain control over their time of ejaculation. When first starting a sexual relationship, some men find that the sexual excitement causes them to ejaculate before intercourse has even begun. With time most men learn how to control this. Wearing a condom can help as it can reduce sensitivity a little.

Does sexual intercourse hurt?

Sex can sometimes be painful for a woman if she is nervous or tense. Stress and fear can mean a woman does not get sexually excited enough to produce natural lubrication, or that she involuntarily tenses her vaginal muscles, making penetration difficult. Sex can also hurt the first time a woman does it as her hymen may be torn.

If sexual intercourse is painful, using a lubricant can help to make it more comfortable. When using a condom it is important that a water-based lubricant (such as KY Jelly) is used, as oil based lubricants (such as Vaseline or moisturising cream) can cause the condom to rot and fall apart. Ensuring that the woman is as relaxed as possible, and that intercourse is initiated slowly, can also help to make things more comfortable.

If a woman experiences a deep internal or burning pain when she has sex, she should discuss this with her doctor, as it could be a sign that she has an infection or other medical problem.

Sex is not usually painful for a man (unless the penis is bent into an awkward position) so he should also check with his doctor if he experiences any pain during erection or intercourse.

If a woman has problems reaching an orgasm with her boyfriend, can she do anything about it?

It is not always possible to achieve orgasm through vaginal penetration alone; it often needs more direct stimulation of the clitoris, which you could request from your boyfriend orally or manually, before, after, during or instead of intercourse. Talking to your boyfriend and exploring what stimulates you and what doesn't should help you to achieve orgasm during sex.

How do you French kiss?

French kissing (sometimes known as getting off with someone or snogging) is kissing with open mouths and touching tongues.

What is oral sex?

Oral sex is when one person licks or sucks another person's penis or vaginal area. When oral sex is done to a man it is sometimes called a blowjob or giving head. When it is done to a woman it is sometimes called licking out or eating pussy. If two people have oral sex with each other at the same time it is sometimes called a 69 because of the shape their bodies make. A woman cannot get pregnant from giving oral sex to a man, even if she swallows his sperm.

What STDs are transmitted through oral sex?

You can only become infected with or pass on an STD if you or your partner is infected with an STD in the first place. The following sexually transmitted diseases or infections can be passed on through unprotected oral sex:

- Hepatitis A, B and C
- Herpes, especially if the sores are in the infectious stage
- HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) is fairly low risk in terms of transmission via oral sex
- Gonorrhoea
- Syphilis
- NSU (Non-specific urethritis)
- Chlamydia
- Yeast infections such as thrush are fairly low risk in terms transmission via oral sex
- Genital Warts

If you are concerned about becoming infected with an STD as a result of oral sex use a condom when giving oral sex on a man or a dental dam (latex square) or cut open condom when giving oral sex to a woman.

Is receiving or giving oral sex using a condom safe?

As long as they are used properly i.e. they don't split or burst, condoms can be very effective in protecting against STDs when giving oral sex to a man. When giving oral sex to a woman a thin square of latex called a dental dam, or a cut-open condom can also be used to protect against possible transmission of any existing STDs. Flavoured condoms and dental dams are available to make using them more pleasant during oral sex.

Can you pass on or become infected with STDs through French kissing?

No, you cannot pass on or become infected with an STD as a result of kissing. However, you could pass on a cold sore (herpes simplex, HSV1) to your partner through kissing.

Do you need to use a condom during anal sex?

Yes, it is important to use condoms when having anal sex to reduce the risk of passing on or contracting a STD. If two people are considering having anal sex they should make sure they use a good quality condom and a water-based lubricant such as KY Jelly.

If my girlfriend is using birth control, do I still need to use a condom?

When taken regularly and according to the instructions birth control pills/ injections/ implants can be an extremely effective way of preventing unwanted pregnancy. However, birth control does not offer any protection from sexually transmitted diseases or infections. Using a condom as well as birth control will protect both you and your partner from passing on or becoming infected with a STD and also offer extra protection against pregnancy.

Is it safe to have sex when a woman is having her period?

Not all women feel comfortable having sex when they are menstruating, and some men dislike the idea of blood being present during sexual intercourse, but there is generally nothing wrong with having sex during a woman's period and it will not cause either partner any harm.

This said, it is worth remembering that HIV and a few other sexually transmitted infections may be passed on more easily during a woman's period (both from the woman to the man and from the man to the woman), so a condom should always be used if there is any doubt over either partner's sexual history and HIV status. HIV cannot be 'created' by having sex with a woman on her period if both partners are HIV negative however - it is only ever passed from one person to another.

How do you have an orgasm?

When sexual excitement builds up and reaches a peak a person might experience an orgasm, also called a climax, or 'coming'. The sexual excitement might start from someone masturbating on their own, or through kissing, masturbating or having sex with another person.

Sexual excitement usually grows gradually and a person feels more and more pleasure and a kind of exciting tension. All the feelings of tension then disappear when the orgasm happens, and the person experiences feelings of intense pleasure. The feeling can be so strong that a person might not be able to see, or hear or think about anything for a moment. They might even groan and call out with the pleasure. Orgasms usually last only a few seconds but the feelings might last a lot longer.

When a man has an orgasm he ejaculates. This means that sperm mixed with semen comes out of the end of his penis in a sticky white fluid. After a man has ejaculated he loses his erection and usually needs to stop for a while. When a woman has an orgasm, her vagina often becomes very wet, but she can continue being sexually aroused as long as she likes. Some women can experience more than one orgasm without stopping.

If a person doesn't have an orgasm, it doesn't mean anything is wrong. In fact, worrying about reaching an orgasm or being nervous is quite likely to make it hard for a person to relax enough to have one.

What is anal sex?

Anal sex (also known as anal intercourse) is when a man puts his penis into the anus and rectum of another man or woman.

Some people might have strong objections, especially religious or moral objections to anal sex. Others may feel uncomfortable about the idea of anal sex simply because it's not something they think they will find enjoyable or want to try. For others however, anal intercourse is a very enjoyable way to have sex.

If a couple do decide to have anal sex, they should think about using a water-based lubricant, like KY Jelly, and a good quality condom.

Anal sex is often portrayed as something that only gay men do. This is not true. Many straight couples engage in anal sex, while many gay men have never tried it.

Anyone wanting to try anal sex should make sure that their partner really wants to do it. If one person wants to try it but the other doesn't, it is better to stick to other forms of sex that both partners enjoy.

If a couple do decide to have anal sex, they should think about using a water-based lubricant, like KY Jelly, and a good quality condom. They should also take it slowly. The lining of the rectum is delicate and easily damaged during vigorous thrusting, particularly if the receiving partner is not relaxed.

There is a popular misconception that anal intercourse between a woman and man is a good way to avoid pregnancy. Anal sex does carry a lower risk of pregnancy than vaginal sex, but pregnancy can still occur if any semen leaks out of the anus and into the vagina. Using condoms is a more reliable way of preventing pregnancy, and they will also protect against sexually transmitted infections.

QUESTIONS ABOUT PREGNANCY



How does a woman become pregnant?

A woman usually becomes pregnant after having sexual intercourse. This is where a man puts his erect penis inside a woman's vagina. The friction caused by moving his penis in and out of her vagina will cause him to get increasingly excited until eventually he ejaculates (or 'comes') and releases a sticky white substance called semen. This semen contains millions of tiny sperm cells, which then swim up the woman's vagina, into her uterus (womb) and then into her fallopian tubes where they may join with the tiny egg that she releases from one of her ovaries every month. If this 'joining' (also known as fertilisation or conception) occurs, then she will become pregnant.

How can I prevent pregnancy?

If you don't want to become pregnant or make your partner pregnant, you will need to use contraception. There are lots of different forms of contraception available. The most well known are the contraceptive pill and the condom.

Is there a safe time to have sexual intercourse?

Pregnancy can only occur in the few days following ovulation (the release of an egg). This usually takes place at some point in the middle of a woman's menstrual cycle, between her periods. Unfortunately, women have no definite way of knowing exactly when they are ovulating, so there is no guaranteed "safe" time to have unprotected sex.

Sperm can survive inside the body for several days while they wait for an egg to be released, and the egg takes several days to travel to the uterus, meaning a woman can potentially become pregnant over quite a long period of time. This is why even unprotected sex during a woman's period can sometimes result in pregnancy. If she has irregular periods (as many girls do in the first few years of menstruation) "safe" days can be particularly difficult to predict. Some couples do use the so-called 'rhythm' method as a form of contraception (i.e. only having sex on certain days), but the success rate is not high, and it also offers no protection from STDs such as HIV.

What are the chances of becoming pregnant from a single act of sexual intercourse?

The likelihood of becoming pregnant from a single act of unprotected sex (for example, from a one night stand) varies from person to person, and also depends on the stage of a woman's menstrual cycle. The probability is highest around the time of ovulation (when the egg is released), when, on average, up to one third of women will become pregnant from having sex once.

If a man pulls his penis out before he comes or does not insert it all the way in, can a woman still become pregnant?

Unfortunately even if a man doesn't insert his penis all the way, or withdraws his penis before ejaculation, a woman can still become pregnant. This is because 'pre-come' (the lubricating fluid that leaks out of a man's penis before and during sex) can contain sperm. If this fluid gets in or around a woman's vagina, it can find its way inside, and she can become pregnant.

Can a woman become pregnant as a result of anal sex?

A woman cannot become pregnant as a result of anal sex directly, although if any sperm leaks from the anus and enters the vagina, pregnancy could occur. Anal sex is therefore not the best way of avoiding pregnancy on a long term basis. It is better to use regular contraception such as the birth control pill or condoms.

Anyone wanting to try anal intercourse should be 100% certain that their partner is willing too, as the idea of anal sex makes many people very uncomfortable. It also carries a higher risk of transmission for HIV and other infections, so it is a good idea to use a condom if you do decide to try it.

Can a woman become pregnant through oral sex if she swallows sperm?

No, a woman cannot become pregnant as a result of oral sex even if she swallows. A woman can only become pregnant if sperm get inside her vagina.

Are there ways to tell if you are pregnant without using a pregnancy test?

The first sign of pregnancy is usually the absence of a period. Other symptoms of pregnancy can include tender breasts, nausea and tiredness but not everybody experiences these. If you suspect you are pregnant you should take a pregnancy test. This can be done at a clinic, or you can buy a home testing kit from most major supermarkets and pharmacies. If you use a home test kit it is important to get the result confirmed by your doctor or healthcare professional at a local clinic.

How long should I wait before carrying out a pregnancy test?

It depends on the type of test you buy. Most tests recommend testing on the day your period is due, although you can buy some that can detect the pregnancy hormone in your urine up to four or five days before this. Make sure you read the instructions thoroughly to find out how long you should wait. If you are not sure when your period is due, the best idea is to wait for at least 10 days after having had unprotected sex before testing (although it is worth remembering that it can take up to nineteen days or more to show a positive result). If you get a negative result but your period still doesn't arrive, you should test again at three-day intervals, until your period starts or you get a positive result. The sooner you find out you are pregnant, the sooner you can start thinking about what to do next.

The pregnancy test was negative, but my period still hasn't arrived. Could I still be pregnant?

If you have tested too soon (see above), then yes, you might still be pregnant. However if you are sure you haven't tested too soon, then it may well be stress that has delayed your period. Worrying about pregnancy (or anything else) can drive your stress hormones up, and this can in turn interfere with your menstrual cycle. If you have lost or gained a lot of weight recently, have undertaken lots of vigorous exercise or you have irregular periods generally, these could also be to blame. Girls who have only recently started their periods often experience very irregular cycles too, so if you've only been menstruating for a couple of years or less, try not to panic! If your period is more than a week or two late when you're normally regular however, you should probably think about seeing your doctor.

I'm pregnant! What can I do?

If you were planning to get pregnant, then finding out you're expecting a baby can be a wonderful surprise. However, if you weren't, it is more likely to be a big shock. The most important thing to remember is that you are not alone, and you do have more than one option. The first thing you should do is go to your doctor or your local sexual health or family planning clinic. They will be able to discuss your options with you and help you to decide what to do next. Whether you decide to keep the baby, put it up for adoption or have an abortion, it's essential that you do what's right for you and don't feel pressurised into making a decision. **Ask your YPA (young person's advisor) for advice regarding your nearest Brook Advisory Service or refer to the useful information section on page 68.**

QUESTIONS ABOUT CONTRACEPTION



What is contraception?

Contraception is a method of preventing pregnancy. It is also known as 'birth control', although this is a more general term that includes complete abstinence from sex (the ultimate form of contraception!). Pregnancy happens when a man's sperm meets a woman's egg and fertilisation (also known as conception) occurs. Contraceptives stop this from happening, either by preventing the sperm from meeting with the egg, or by making conditions in the body unsuitable for fertilisation to occur.

What different types of contraception are there?

There are three main forms of contraceptives available: Barrier Methods, Hormonal Methods and Spermicides.

Barrier methods physically stop sperm from entering a woman's uterus and fertilising her egg. Barrier methods include condoms (which are available for both men and women), the diaphragm, the cap and the Intrauterine Device (IUD or 'coil').

Hormonal methods change the levels of hormones in a woman's body, making conception very difficult. Hormonal methods come in the forms of pills, patches, implants, rings, injections or the Intrauterine System (IUS).

Spermicides are designed to kill sperm in the vagina. Spermicides come in the form of foams, gels or pessaries which are inserted straight into the vagina, are used on a condom or are contained in a special sponge that covers the cervix.

What is the best method of contraception to use?

If you are considering having sex with someone, it is important that you think about Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) as well as pregnancy. If you don't know your partner's sexual history (or you are unsure about your own!), condoms are the best method to use as they protect against both pregnancy and STIs. If you are going to be having sex on a regular basis with your partner, it might also be advisable to think about using another form of birth control, just to be doubly sure that you are protected. This could be a hormonal method, or you could try a spermicide, (although it is important to note that spermicides used on their own or with a sponge are not a very effective method of contraception.) The IUD or IUS is another good option, although it is not always suitable for everyone (especially younger women) and will need to be fitted by a trained practitioner.

Visiting your doctor or health adviser before you have sex is always a good idea, as it will enable you to choose the type of contraception that is best suited to you. It is important to find a reliable and safe method that both you AND your partner feel comfortable with, as the happier you both are to use it, the more effective it will be!

Where can you get the birth control pill?

As a general rule, you can't just walk into a chemists or pharmacy and buy a packet of pills over the counter. In the UK, the United States and most other countries, you need a prescription to obtain the birth control pill. This is because there are several different versions of the contraceptive pill and it is important for a woman to get the version that suits her best. You don't have to go and see your own doctor to get the prescription; you could see the healthcare advisor at your local young person's or family planning clinic. Once you have your prescription you can get your pills from your pharmacist or clinic. **Please ask your YPA (young person's advisor) for details of sexual health services in your area.**

How long do you need to take the birth control pill before it becomes effective?

The length of time it takes for the birth control to become completely effective as a sole contraceptive varies depending on the type of pill you use and when you start the packet of pills. You will usually need to use an alternative form of contraception (such as a condom) for at least seven days after starting, but your healthcare provider should be able to tell you exactly when the particular version of the pill you have been prescribed becomes fully effective against pregnancy. It will normally also say on the advice leaflet that comes with your pills.

It is also worth remembering that taking other medications such as antibiotics can reduce the effectiveness of the contraceptive pill, and your doctor may recommend that you use an additional form of protection during this time. Similarly, stomach upsets such as sickness and diarrhoea can affect the absorption of the pill, so again, using an additional method such as a condom can help make sure pregnancy doesn't occur. Using condoms as well as the birth control pill can protect both you and your partner from STIs as well as providing extra protection against pregnancy.

Does the pill have any side effects?

Some women do experience some side effects as a result of using the birth control pill. However, these side effects can vary from woman to woman. The most common ones are mood swings, weight gain, breast tenderness, nausea and headaches. Serious side effects are rare.

When you visit your health care provider to obtain a prescription for the contraceptive pill they should ask you a few questions about your medical history. This helps them to make sure that they prescribe the type of pill that is best suited to you and hopefully reduce the possibility of any adverse side effects.

If you do experience any problems, it is worth going back to see your healthcare provider as they may be able to change your pill for a different one.

If a girl has missed a pill what are the chances of pregnancy?

If a woman forgets to take a pill the risks of pregnancy will depend on the type of pill she is on. Progestogen-only (or 'mini') pills that have to be taken at the same time every day are more likely to fail if one is missed. However, even the combined progestogen and oestrogen pill can allow pregnancy to occur if you forget to take it for a day or more. If you have missed a pill and are unsure what to do, you should talk to your doctor or healthcare provider to check. It may be necessary to use an additional form of contraception such as a condom for a while.

What is emergency contraception, how does it work and where can you get it?

There are two types of emergency contraception. Both are very effective in preventing pregnancy, but it is important for a woman to visit her healthcare provider or clinic as soon as possible after having sex to obtain them.

The emergency contraceptive or 'morning after' pill is an oral contraceptive pill that can be obtained on prescription from your doctor or local sexual health clinic. In the UK (and a few other countries), it can also be bought over the counter in most large pharmacies for around £25. There are a few different types of morning-after-pills available, but most modern forms consist of a single tablet that is swallowed with water. For this method to work, it must be taken within 3 days (72 hours) of having sex, although the sooner the pill is taken, the more likely it is to be effective.

The IUD (Intrauterine Device) can also be used as an emergency method of contraception. The IUD must be fitted within five days of having sex for it to be effective, although this may not be a method that is suitable for everyone, and not all doctors are trained to fit them. **Please ask your YPA (young person's advisor) for details of sexual health services in your area or refer to the useful information section on page 68.**

Is there a birth control pill for men?

At the moment there is no birth control pill for men to take. Some companies are trying to develop a pill for men but it is still in the research and testing phase.

How long does it take for the Depo-Provera contraceptive injection to become effective?

Depo-Provera is an injectable contraceptive manufactured by Pharmacia and Upjohn. If the injection is given within the first five days of a girl's period it becomes effective immediately. If it is given after this, an additional method of contraception such as a condom should be used for 7 days. The injection needs to be repeated every 12 weeks.

What are the side effects of injectable hormonal contraceptives?

The side effects of any form of contraception can vary from woman to woman. When you visit your healthcare provider or clinic to arrange contraception they should ask you a few questions about your medical history. This helps them to make sure that they prescribe the method of contraception that is best suited to you and hopefully reduce the possibility of any adverse side effects. Serious side effects are rare, but you may experience side effects such as disturbance in your usual monthly cycle, mood changes, possible weight gain and fluid retention.

Also, it is important to remember that injectable hormonal contraceptives cannot be stopped or changed as quickly as some other methods.

What is an IUS coil?

IUS stands for Intrauterine System. It is also known as a Mirena® coil. It is similar to the IUD (or 'coil') in that it is inserted into the uterus to prevent pregnancy. However, unlike the IUD, it also contains a slow release hormone called Progestin which thins the lining of the uterus and thickens the mucus of the cervix to further decrease the risk of pregnancy (a Mirena® coil is over 99% effective if fitted properly). It is also a better option for women who suffer from heavy periods, as it can make them lighter or even stop them altogether. However it can have similar side effects to the contraceptive pill.

For a list of sexual health clinics in your area please speak to your YPA or refer to the useful information section of this booklet on page 68.

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES



What are sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)?

Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are diseases that are mainly passed from one person to another during sex. There are at least 25 different sexually transmitted diseases with a range of different symptoms. These diseases may be spread through vaginal, anal and oral sex.

Most sexually transmitted diseases will only affect you if you have sexual contact with someone who has an STD. However there are some infections, for example scabies, which are referred to as STDs because they are most commonly transmitted sexually, but which can also be passed on in other ways.

What are sexually transmitted infections (STIs)?

Sexually transmitted infection (STI) is another name for sexually transmitted disease (STD). The name STI is often preferred because there are a few STDs, such as chlamydia, that can infect a person without causing any actual disease (i.e. unpleasant symptoms). Someone without symptoms may not think of themselves as having a disease, but they may still have an infection that needs treating.

How can you tell if you have a sexually transmitted disease?

You may become aware that you have an STD because of symptoms, or it may be that a sexual partner tells you they have an STD which they might have passed on to you. Some sexually transmitted diseases can be transmitted by an infected person even if they don't have any symptoms. Certain STDs can also be transmitted from a pregnant woman to her unborn child.

If you think you might have been exposed to an STD then you should go to see a doctor. Many sexually transmitted diseases can be easily cured, but if left untreated, they may cause unpleasant symptoms and could lead to long-term damage such as infertility. It is important that anyone diagnosed with an STD informs everyone they have had sex with within the past year (or everyone following the partner they believe may have infected them).

What are common STD symptoms?

STD symptoms vary, but the most common are soreness, unusual lumps or sores, itching, pain when urinating, and/or an unusual discharge from the genitals.

Which are the most common sexually transmitted diseases?

Bacterial Vaginosis

Bacterial Vaginosis (BV) is caused by an imbalance in the normal healthy bacteria found in the vagina. Although it is relatively harmless and may pass unnoticed, it can sometimes produce an abundance of unpleasant fishy smelling discharge.

BV is not strictly an STD as it is not transmitted via sexual intercourse. However, it can be exacerbated by sex and is more frequently found in sexually active women than those who have never had intercourse.

Whilst there is no clear explanation as to why BV occurs, there have been suggestions that the alkaline nature of semen could be one cause, as it may upset the acidic nature of the vaginal bacteria. Another cause can be the use of an intrauterine contraceptive device (coil).

A woman cannot pass BV to a man, but it is important she receives treatment as BV can occasionally travel up into the uterus and fallopian tubes and cause a more serious infection. Treatment for BV consists of applying a cream to the vagina or taking antibiotics.

Chlamydia

Chlamydia is one of the most commonly reported bacterial sexually transmitted diseases. It is caused by the chlamydia trachomatis bacterium. It infects the urethra, rectum and eyes in both sexes, and the cervix in women. If left untreated, long-term infection can lead to fertility problems in women. Chlamydia is transmitted through genital contact and/or sexual intercourse with someone already infected. Symptoms of chlamydia usually show between 1 and 3 weeks after exposure but may not emerge until much later.

Crabs or Pubic Lice

Crabs or pubic lice are small crab-shaped parasites that burrow into the skin to feed on blood. They live on coarse body hair, predominantly pubic hair, but can also be found in armpit hair, facial hair and even on eyelashes. The lice are yellow-grey in colour and use their crab-like claws to grip hair strands. They can sometimes be spotted moving on the skin.

Crabs are easily passed on during sex, but can also be passed on through sharing clothes, towels or bedding with someone who has them. Crabs cannot be transmitted via toilet seats or swimming pools.

Symptoms of crabs are usually noticed around 5 days to 7 weeks after infection and include:

- itchy skin;
- inflammation of the affected area;
- sometimes visible lice and eggs;
- spots of blood as lice feed from blood vessels in the skin.

Although there is no effective way to prevent becoming infected during sex, a person who has crabs can reduce the risk to others by washing bedding, towels and clothes on a hot wash to kill off the parasites.

Treatment for public lice is easy, consisting of special shampoos, lotions and creams that kill the lice and their eggs. It is not necessary to shave pubic hair as this is unlikely to remove all lice.

Genital warts

Genital warts are caused by some sub-types of human papilloma virus (HPV). They can appear on the skin anywhere in the genital area as small whitish or flesh-coloured bumps, or larger, fleshy, cauliflower-like lumps. They are unlikely to cause pain but may itch and can be difficult to spot. Often there are no other symptoms of genital warts, but if a woman has a wart on her cervix she may experience slight bleeding or unusual coloured vaginal discharge.

Gonorrhoea

Gonorrhoea (once known as the clap) is a sexually transmitted infection that can infect the urethra, cervix, rectum, anus and throat. Symptoms of gonorrhoea usually appear between 1 and 14 days after exposure, but it is possible to have no symptoms. Men are more likely to notice symptoms than women. Symptoms can include:

- a burning sensation when urinating;
- a white/yellow discharge from the penis;
- a change in vaginal discharge;
- irritation or discharge from the anus (if the rectum is infected).

Hepatitis

Hepatitis refers to viral infections that cause inflammation of the liver. Several different types of hepatitis virus exist (labelled A to G), with hepatitis A, B and C being the most common. Hepatitis can occur following excessive and prolonged consumption of alcohol or the use of certain medicines and drugs, but it is most commonly caused by a virus.

Herpes

Herpes is caused by two strains of the herpes simplex virus, type 1 (HSV-1) and type 2 (HSV-2). HSV-2 is more common and usually manifests itself in the genital and anal area, whereas HSV-1 is more likely to affect the mouth and lips in the form of cold sores. On a global scale, HSV-2 is a very common STD. Symptoms of herpes usually appear 2 to 7 days after first exposure to the virus and last 2 to 4 weeks. Both men and women may have multiple symptoms, including:

- itching or tingling sensations in the genital or anal area;
- small fluid-filled blisters that burst leaving small painful sores;
- pain when passing urine over the open sores (especially in women);
- headaches;
- backache;
- flu-like symptoms, including swollen glands or fever.

Once the first outbreak of blisters has gone, the herpes virus hides away in nerve fibres near the infection site, where it remains dormant, causing no symptoms. Symptoms may come back later (particularly during times of stress and illness) but usually in less severe and shorter episodes.

Molluscum contagiosum

Molluscum contagiosum (MC, also known as water warts) is a common viral infection, which results in a skin disease. Small papules usually appear on exposed skin such as the torso, thighs, genitalia and anus, around 2 to 8 weeks after initial infection with the virus. The pearl-shaped papules are usually between 1 to 5 millimetres in diameter, are filled with a gungy, white, contagious, fluid, and often appear in clusters.

MC can be transmitted through direct skin-to-skin contact and also indirectly through sharing towels, baths or clothing with someone infected. It is not strictly an STD as it often occurs in children, especially those prone to skin conditions such as eczema. Children are more likely to assist transmission by scratching the infected sites, although it should be noted that the chance of passing on the virus is small.

MC is grouped with STDs because of the risk of transmission through close body contact during sex, which is why it is often screened for in sexual health clinics. The risk of becoming infected with MC can be reduced by:

- Using condoms during sex, although this only offers partial protection as MC can be passed on by anal/genital lesions not covered by the condom.
- Covering affected areas of skin (where possible) with clothing or sterile dressings.
- Not sharing baths, clothing and towels.

The recommended treatment is often to leave MC to clear up by itself (which usually takes around 6 to 18 months) as medical removal can leave scarring. If requested, the lesions can however be removed by various medical treatments such as cryotherapy (freezing), diathermy (burning), or curettage (cutting or scraping).

In an HIV-positive person, a large outbreak of molluscum contagiosum may indicate that the immune system is critically weak and it is advisable to seek medical attention.

Scabies

Scabies is an intensely itchy, contagious skin infestation of the parasitic mite *Sarcoptes scabiei*. The adult female mite is around 0.4 mm (one sixtieth of an inch) long and barely visible to the human eye, with the male being half that size. Female mites burrow into the outer layer of the skin (stratum corneum) to lay eggs.

Symptoms begin 2 to 6 weeks after infection and include:

- Burrows that appear as silvery or brown wavy lines up to 15 millimetres (half an inch) in length. The burrows can appear anywhere, but usually occur on the webbing between fingers and toes, on the genitals, around the anus, or on the buttocks, elbows or wrists.
- An intensely itchy rash of inflamed pimple-like lumps (papules/lesions) as an allergic reaction to the mites, their eggs and faeces.
- Widespread itching, particularly at night or after baths when the body is warmer, as a reaction to the mites.

Again, scabies is not strictly a sexually transmitted disease, as the scabies mite can be passed on through other forms of prolonged direct skin contact. Scabies has been known to spread rapidly in crowded conditions where there is frequent contact between people, such as in care homes or child care facilities. It is also possible, but much less likely, to acquire the infestation through sharing clothes, towels or bedding with someone infected. Sexual activity does however carry a particularly high risk of transmission.

There is no effective way to prevent infection apart from avoiding direct skin contact with an infected person. If a person knows they are infected then they can prevent the infestation spreading by washing clothes and bedding on a hot wash to kill the mites (at 50 degrees Celsius / 120 Fahrenheit or above). Treatment comes in the form of lotions that can be bought from pharmacies without prescription and applied to the body to kill the parasites. It is recommended that all people in close contact, such as sexual partners or members of the household, should be treated at the same time, even if they are not yet showing any symptoms of infestation.

Syphilis

Syphilis is a bacterial infection caused by *Treponema pallidum*, which used to be known as the pox. It is usually sexually transmitted, but can also be passed from an infected woman to her unborn child. Syphilis progresses through several stages, of which the primary and secondary stages are very infectious. Syphilis symptoms can be difficult to recognise and may take 3 months to appear after sexual contact with an infected person. They include:

- one or more painless ulcers on the penis, vagina, vulva, cervix, anus or mouth;
- small lumps in the groin due to swollen glands;
- a non-itchy rash;
- fever or flu-like symptoms.

Left untreated the infection progresses to a latent stage. This may be followed by tertiary syphilis, which can seriously affect organs such as the heart, and can sometimes lead to death.

Thrush

Thrush, also known as candidiasis, is a yeast infection caused by the *Candida* species of fungus. Thrush is not technically a sexually transmitted infection, as *Candida* is a common yeast that is found on the skin and genitals of most people, even those who have not had sex. *Candida* is usually suppressed by the immune system and the natural bacteria found in the body, but there are many things that can upset the balance and allow *Candida* to grow. Thrush occurs a lot less frequently in men.

The symptoms of a thrush infection are:

- In women - irritation, itching, thick white discharge, redness, soreness and swelling of the vagina and vulva.
- In men - irritation, discharge from the penis, difficulty pulling back the foreskin usually caused by the swelling of the head of the penis (balanitis).

There are many causes of thrush, but the most common are:

- In women, wearing nylon or lycra clothes that are too tight (the lack of air circulation can cause Candida to proliferate).
- Certain antibiotics or contraceptive pills that alter the pH balance of the vagina.
- A change in the hormonal balance in pregnant women, causing a change in the level of normal bacteria.
- Spermicides (found on some condoms) or perfumed toiletries that irritate the vagina or penis.
- Douching (washing out the vagina) or using tampons.
- Sexual contact (either genital or oral) with someone who carries the candida yeast.

Treatment for thrush involves applying an anti-fungal cream that contains clotrimazole. If an infection is recurring then fluconazole may be prescribed to be taken orally, unless the patient is pregnant. It may also be suggested to wash the genitals with water to avoid irritation and to wear loose fitting cotton underwear and clothes.

Trichomoniasis

Trichomoniasis (also known as Trich) is caused by the single-celled organism trichomonas vaginalis, which is transmitted through sex. It can infect the vagina and the male and female urethra. Often this STD presents no symptoms, though women are more likely to have symptoms than men. If symptoms do appear, they can include:

- discharge in both men and women (sometimes copious and unpleasant smelling in women);
- discomfort or pain whilst having sex;
- pain when urinating and inflammation of the urethra.

Women may also experience an inflammation of the vulva and they may develop cystitis (an infection of the urinary system).

Transmission is usually through vaginal, anal or oral sex with an infected person. The most effective prevention method is to practise safer sex by using condoms.

Treatment for both men and women is a drug called metronidazole which can be taken orally or applied as a gel. It is important for any sexual partners to also be treated as trichomoniasis can be carried and spread without symptoms. If a woman is pregnant then she should seek medical advice before pursuing treatment.

The Learn 2 Live Team can provide a more detailed booklet on sexually transmitted diseases. If you would like a copy, or would like information on where to access local sexual health services, please ask your YPA (young person's advisor). The best way to avoid sexually transmitted diseases is to use a condom. Please refer to pages 40-58 for a list of local services where you can obtain free condoms. If you are worried that you may have contracted a sexually transmitted disease please see your GP immediately or attend your local GU Clinic (see the useful information section on page 68).

AIDS AND HIV



What is HIV?

HIV stands for: Human Immunodeficiency Virus

HIV is a virus. Viruses such as HIV cannot grow or reproduce on their own, they need to infect the cells of a living organism in order to replicate (make new copies of themselves). The human immune system usually finds and kills viruses fairly quickly, but HIV attacks the immune system itself – the very thing that would normally get rid of a virus.

With around 2.7 million people becoming infected with HIV in 2008, there are now an estimated 33 million people around the world who are living with HIV, including millions who have developed AIDS.

What is the connection between HIV and AIDS?

HIV causes **AIDS** by damaging the immune system cells until the immune system can no longer fight off other infections that it would usually be able to prevent.

It takes around ten years on average for someone with HIV to develop AIDS. However, this average is based on the person with HIV having a reasonable diet, and someone who is malnourished may well progress from HIV to AIDS more rapidly.

How is HIV treated?

Antiretroviral drugs keep the levels of HIV in the body at a low level, so that the immune system is able to recover and work effectively. Antiretroviral drugs enable many HIV positive people to live long and healthy lives.

Starting antiretroviral treatment for HIV infection involves commitment – drugs have to be taken every day, and for the rest of a person's life. Adhering to HIV treatment is important, particularly because not doing so increases the risk of drug resistance. Side effects to the HIV drugs can make adherence difficult, and are sometimes very severe. There are ways of reducing the impact of these side effects, but sometimes it is necessary to change to an alternative HIV treatment regime.

There are more than 20 antiretroviral drugs approved for the treatment of HIV infection in the US and Europe, as well as many new HIV drugs currently undergoing trials. Although treatment for HIV has become more widely available in recent years, access to antiretroviral treatment is limited in some parts of the world due to a lack of funding.

How is HIV passed on?

HIV is found in the blood and the sexual fluids of an infected person, and in the breast milk of an infected woman. HIV transmission occurs when a sufficient quantity of these fluids get into someone else's bloodstream.

There are various ways a person can become infected with HIV:

- **Unprotected sexual intercourse with an infected person:** Sexual intercourse without a condom carries the risk of HIV infection.
- **Contact with an infected person's blood:** If sufficient blood from somebody who has HIV enters someone else's body, then HIV can be passed on in the blood.

- **Use of infected blood products:** Many people in the past have been infected with HIV by the use of blood transfusions and blood products which were contaminated with the virus. In much of the world this is no longer a significant risk, as blood donations are routinely tested for HIV.
- **Injecting drugs:** HIV can be passed on when injecting equipment that has been used by an infected person is then used by someone else. In many parts of the world, often because it is illegal to possess them, injecting equipment or works are shared.
- **From mother to child:** HIV can be transmitted from an infected woman to her baby during pregnancy, delivery and breastfeeding.

Certain groups of people, such as injecting drug users, sex workers, prisoners, and men who have sex with men have been particularly affected by HIV. However, HIV can infect anybody, and everyone needs to know how they can and can't become infected with HIV.

Does HIV have symptoms?

Some people experience a flu-like illness, develop a rash, or get swollen glands for a brief period soon after they become infected with HIV. However, although these are HIV symptoms they are also common symptoms of other less serious illnesses, and do not necessarily mean that a person has HIV.

Often people who are infected with HIV don't have any symptoms at all. It is important to remember that a person who has HIV can pass on the virus immediately after becoming infected, even if they feel healthy. It's not possible to tell just by looking if someone has been infected with HIV.

The only way to know for certain if someone is infected with HIV is for them to be tested.

Testing for HIV

It is important for a person to get an HIV test if they think they may have been at risk of HIV infection.

There are various types of HIV test, but the most commonly used - the antibody or ELISA test - detects HIV antibodies in a person's blood. It is necessary to wait at least 3 months after the last possible exposure before having an HIV antibody test, to be certain of an accurate result.

The prospect of receiving a positive test result (meaning that a person is infected with HIV) may be daunting, but learning that you are HIV positive is the first step to getting support and staying healthy. HIV testing is also very important for stopping the spread of HIV, as somebody who is aware of their HIV status can take steps to ensure they do not pass on the virus.

How can HIV be prevented?

If a person has sexual intercourse with someone who has HIV they can become infected. 'Safer sex' refers to things that a person can do to minimise their risk of HIV infection during sexual intercourse; most importantly, using condoms consistently and correctly.

A person can be certain that they are protected against HIV infection by choosing not to have sex at all, or by only doing things that do not involve any blood or sexual fluid from one person getting into another person's body. This kind of sexual activity is the only thing that can be considered 'safe sex'.

Preventing transmission of HIV through blood

A person can protect him or herself against HIV infection by ensuring that HIV infected blood does not enter their body.

Injecting drug users who share injecting equipment or works are at risk of HIV infection. Needle exchange programmes can help to prevent HIV transmission among drug users by providing clean needles and disposing of used ones.

Health care workers can be exposed to HIV infected blood while at work. The most effective way to limit their risk of HIV infection is to use universal precautions with every patient, for example washing hands and wearing protective barriers (gloves, aprons, goggles). In the event that a healthcare worker is exposed to potentially HIV infected blood at work, PEP (Post exposure prophylaxis) is recommended as an HIV prevention measure.

Preventing mother to child transmission of HIV

Mother to child transmission of HIV can be prevented by using antiretroviral drugs, which reduce the chances of a child becoming infected with HIV from around 25% to less than 2%. Once a child is born, safer infant feeding practices can also greatly reduce the risk of HIV being passed on from mother to child.

For these precautions to be taken, an HIV positive mother must firstly be aware of her status. This is why HIV testing in pregnancy is a crucial prevention measure.

WHAT IS AIDS?

AIDS stands for: **Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome**

AIDS is a medical condition. A person is diagnosed with AIDS when their immune system is too weak to fight off infections.

Since AIDS was first identified in the early 1980s, an unprecedented number of people have been affected by the global AIDS epidemic. Today, there are an estimated 33.4 million people living with HIV and AIDS and each year around two million people die from AIDS related illnesses.

What causes AIDS?

AIDS is caused by HIV.

HIV is a virus that gradually attacks immune system cells. As HIV progressively damages these cells, the body becomes more vulnerable to infections, which it will have difficulty in fighting off. It is at the point of very advanced HIV infection that a person is said to have AIDS. It can be years before HIV has damaged the immune system enough for AIDS to develop.

What are the symptoms of AIDS?

A person is diagnosed with AIDS when they have developed an AIDS related condition or symptom, called an opportunistic infection, or an AIDS related cancer. The infections are called 'opportunistic' because they take advantage of the opportunity offered by a weakened immune system.

It is possible for someone to be diagnosed with AIDS even if they have not developed an opportunistic infection. AIDS can be diagnosed when the number of immune system cells (CD4 cells) in the blood of an HIV positive person drops below a certain level.

Is there a cure for AIDS?

Worryingly, many people think there is a 'cure' for AIDS - which makes them feel safer, and perhaps take risks that they otherwise wouldn't. However, there is still no cure for AIDS. The only way to stay safe is to be aware of how HIV is transmitted and how to prevent HIV infection.

How is AIDS treated?

Antiretroviral treatment can prolong the time between HIV infection and the onset of AIDS. Modern combination therapy is highly effective and someone with HIV who is taking treatment could live for the rest of their life without developing AIDS.

An AIDS diagnosis does not necessarily equate to a death sentence. Many people can still benefit from starting antiretroviral therapy even once they have developed an AIDS defining illness. Better treatment and prevention for opportunistic infections have also helped to improve the quality and length of life for those diagnosed with AIDS.

It is also important that treatment is provided for AIDS related pain, which is experienced by almost all people in the very advanced stages of HIV infection.

The best way to prevent infection with HIV/ AIDS during sex is to use a condom. Please refer to pages 40-58 for a list of free services in your area.

USING CONDOMS



Why do I need to use a condom?

Condoms are the only form of protection that can both help to stop the transmission of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) such as HIV, and prevent pregnancy.

Getting ready, choosing the right condom

A number of different types of condom are now available. What is generally called a condom is the 'male' condom, a sheath or covering which fits over a man's penis, and which is closed at one end.

There is also now a female condom, or vaginal sheath, which is used by a woman and which fits inside her vagina.

What are condoms made of?

Condoms are usually made of latex or polyurethane. If possible you should use a latex condom, as they are slightly more reliable, and in most countries they are most readily available.

Latex condoms can only be used with water based lubricants, not oil based lubricants such as Vaseline or cold cream as they break down the latex. A small number of people have an allergic reaction to latex and can use polyurethane condoms instead.

Polyurethane condoms are made of a type of plastic. They are thinner than latex condoms, and so they increase sensitivity and are more agreeable in feel and appearance to some users. They are more expensive than latex condoms and slightly less flexible so more lubrication may be needed. However both oil and water based lubricants can be used with them.

It's not clear whether latex or polyurethane condoms are stronger – there are studies suggesting that either is less likely to break. With both types however, the likelihood of breakages is very small if used correctly.

The lubrication on condoms also varies. Some condoms are not lubricated at all, some are lubricated with a silicone substance, and some condoms have a water-based lubricant. The lubrication on condoms aims to make the condom easier to put on and more comfortable to use. It can also help prevent condom breakage.

Spermicides and Nonoxynol 9

Condoms and lubricants sometimes contain a spermicide called Nonoxynol 9. Adding Nonoxynol 9 to condoms was thought in the past to help to prevent pregnancy and the transmission of HIV and other STDs, but it is now known to be ineffective.

Some people have an allergic reaction to Nonoxynol 9 that can result in little sores, which can actually make the transmission of HIV more likely. Because of this, you should only use condoms and lubricants containing Nonoxynol 9 if you are HIV negative and know that your partner is too. However, using a condom (even if it contains Nonoxynol 9) is much safer than having unprotected sex.

What about flavoured condoms?

Condoms come in a variety of shapes. Most have a reservoir tip although some do have a plain tip. Condoms may be regular shaped (with straight sides), form fit (indented below the head of the penis), or they may be flared (wider over the head of the penis).

Ribbed condoms are textured with ribs or bumps, which can increase sensation for both partners. Condoms also come in a variety of colours.

It's up to you which shape you choose. All of the differences in shape are designed to suit different personal preferences and enhance pleasure. It is important to communicate with your partner to be sure that you are using condoms that satisfy both of you.

Some condoms are flavoured to make oral sex more enjoyable. They are also safe to use for penetrative sex as long as they have been tested and approved.

What about the condom size?

Condoms are made in different lengths and widths. Different manufacturers produce varying sizes.

There is no standard length for condoms, though those made from natural rubber will in addition always stretch if necessary to fit the length of the man's erect penis.

The width of a condom can also vary. Some condoms have a slightly smaller width to give a 'closer' fit, whereas others will be slightly larger. Condom manufacturers have realised that different lengths and widths are needed and are increasingly broadening their range of sizes.

So when do you use a condom?

You need to use a new condom every time you have sexual intercourse. Never use the same condom twice.

Put the condom on after the penis is erect and before any contact is made between the penis and any part of the partner's body. If you go from anal intercourse to vaginal intercourse, you should consider changing the condom.

Where can I get condoms?

There are no age limitations on buying condoms. Buying a condom no matter how old you are shows that you are taking responsibility for your actions. Family planning and sexual health clinics provide condoms free of charge. Condoms are available to buy from supermarkets, convenience stores and petrol/gas stations. Vending machines selling condoms are found in toilets at many locations. You can also order them online from different manufacturers and distributors.

Condoms are also available free from some sexual health clinics/ services. Please refer to pages 40-58 for a list of services in your area.

How can I check a condom is safe to use?

Condoms that have been properly tested and approved carry the British Standard Kite Mark or the EEC Standard Mark (CE). In the USA, condoms should be FDA approved, and elsewhere in the world, they should be ISO approved.

Condoms have an expiration (Exp) or manufacture (MFG) date on the box or individual package that tells you when it is safe to use the condom until. It's important to check this when you use a condom. You should also make sure the package and the condom appear to be in good condition.

Condoms can deteriorate if not stored properly as they are affected by both heat and light. So it's best not to use a condom that has been stored in your back pocket, your wallet, or the glove compartment of your car. If a condom feels sticky or very dry you shouldn't use it as the packaging has probably been damaged.

How do you use a condom?

Open the condom package at one corner being careful not to tear the condom with your fingernails, your teeth, or through being too rough. Make sure the package and condom appear to be in good condition, and check that the expiry date has not passed.

Place the rolled condom over the tip of the hard penis, and if the condom does not have a reservoir top, pinch the tip of the condom enough to leave a half inch space for semen to collect. If the man is not circumcised, then pull back the foreskin before rolling on the condom.

Pinch the air out of the condom tip with one hand and unroll the condom over the penis with the other hand. Roll the condom all the way down to the base of the penis, and smooth out any air bubbles. (Air bubbles can cause a condom to break.)

If you want to use some extra lubrication, put it on the outside of the condom. Always use a water-based lubricant (such as KY Jelly or Liquid Silk) with latex condoms, as an oil-based lubricant will cause the latex to break.

The man wearing the condom doesn't always have to be the one putting it on - it can be quite a nice thing for his partner to do.

What do you do if the condom won't unroll?

The condom should unroll smoothly and easily from the rim on the outside. If you have to struggle or if it takes more than a few seconds, it probably means that you are trying to put the condom on upside down. To take off the condom, don't try to roll it back up. Hold it near the rim and slide it off. Then start again with a new condom.

When do you take off the condom?

Pull out before the penis softens, and hold the condom against the base of the penis while you pull out, so that the semen doesn't spill. Condoms should be disposed of properly, for example by wrapping it in a tissue and throwing it away. It's not good to flush condoms down the toilet - they're bad for the environment.

What do you do if a condom breaks?

If a condom breaks during sexual intercourse, then pull out quickly and replace the condom. Whilst you are having sex, check the condom from time to time, to make sure it hasn't split or slipped off. If the condom has broken and you feel that semen has come out of the condom during sex, you should consider getting emergency contraception such as the morning after pill.

What condoms should you use for anal intercourse?

With anal intercourse more strain is placed on the condom. You can use stronger condoms (which are thicker) but standard condoms are just as effective as long as they are used correctly with plenty of lubricant. Condoms with a lubricant containing Nonoxynol 9 should **NOT** be used for anal sex as Nonoxynol 9 damages the lining of the rectum increasing the risk of HIV and other STD transmission.

Is using a condom effective?

If used properly, a condom is very effective at reducing the risk of being infected with HIV during sexual intercourse. Using a condom also provides protection against other sexually transmitted diseases, and protection against pregnancy. In the laboratory, latex condoms are very effective at blocking transmission of HIV because the pores in latex condoms are too small to allow the virus to pass through. However, outside of the laboratory condoms are less effective because people do not always use condoms properly.

How do you dispose of a used condom?

All condoms should be disposed of by wrapping in tissue or toilet paper and throwing them in the bin. Condoms should not be flushed down the toilet as they may cause blockages in the sewage system and pollution.

Latex condoms are made mainly from latex with added stabilizers, preservatives and vulcanizing (hardening) agents. Latex is a natural substance made from rubber trees, but because of the added ingredients most latex condoms are not biodegradable. Polyurethane condoms are made from plastic and are not biodegradable. Biodegradable latex condoms are available from some manufacturers.

How can I persuade my partner that we should use a condom?

It can be difficult to talk about using condoms. But you shouldn't let embarrassment become a health risk. The person you are thinking about having sex with may not agree at first when you say that you want to use a condom when you have sex. These are some excuses and some answers that you could try...

EXCUSE	ANSWER
Don't you trust me?	Trust isn't the point, people can have infections without realising it
It does not feel as good with a condom	I'll feel more relaxed, If I am more relaxed, I can make it feel better for you.
I don't stay hard when I put on a condom	I'll help you put it on, that will help you keep it hard.
I am afraid to ask him to use a condom. He'll think I don't trust him.	If you can't ask him, you probably don't trust him.
I can't feel a thing when I wear a condom	Maybe that way you'll last even longer and that will make up for it
I don't have a condom with me	I do
It's up to him... it's his decision	It's your health. It should be your decision too!
I'm on the pill, you don't need a condom	I'd like to use it anyway. It will help to protect us from infections we may not realise we have.
It just isn't as sensitive and I can't feel a thing	Maybe that way you will last even longer and that will make up for it
Putting it on interrupts everything	Not if I help put it on
I guess you don't really love me	I do, but I am not risking my future to prove it
I will pull out in time	Women can get pregnant and get STDs from pre-ejaculate
But I love you	Then you'll help us to protect ourselves.
Just this once	Once is all it takes

Reasons to use condoms

There are many reasons to use condoms when having sex.

1. Condoms are the only contraceptive that help prevent both pregnancy and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases (including HIV) when used properly and consistently.
2. Condoms are one of the most reliable methods of birth control when used properly and consistently.
3. Condoms have none of the medical side-effects that some other birth control methods may have.
4. Condoms are available in various shapes, colours, flavours, textures and sizes. These can all increase the fun of having sex with condoms.
5. Condoms are widely available in pharmacies, supermarkets and convenience stores. You don't need to visit a doctor or have a prescription.
6. Condoms make sex less messy.
7. Condoms are user friendly. With a little practice, they can also add confidence to the enjoyment of sex.
8. Condoms are only needed when you are having sex, unlike some other contraceptives.

Confidence tips

Here are also some tips that can help you to feel more confident and relaxed about using condoms.

- Keep condoms handy at all times. If things start getting steamy - you'll be ready. It's not a good idea to find yourself having to rush out at the crucial moment to buy condoms - at the height of the passion you may not want to.
- When you buy condoms, don't get embarrassed. If anything, be proud. It shows that you are responsible and confident and when the time comes it will all be worthwhile. It can be more fun to go shopping for condoms with your partner or friend. Nowadays, it is also easy to buy condoms discreetly on the internet.
- Talk with your partner about using a condom before having sex. It removes anxiety and embarrassment. Knowing where you both stand before the passion starts will make you a lot more confident that you both agree and are happy about using a condom.
- If you are new to condoms, the best way to learn how to use them is to practice putting them on by yourself or your partner. It does not take long to become a master.
- If you feel that condoms interrupt your passion then try introducing condoms into your lovemaking. It can be really sexy if your partner helps you put it on or you do it together.

About YPF



Young People Friendly (YPF) is a local sexual health brand covering Redbridge, Barking and Dagenham and Havering.

YPF was created to make sexual health services easier for young people to find and use. It also aims to make services friendlier towards young people. A service can be YPF accredited. That means the place is checked and staff have been trained to make sure the service is:

- youth friendly & accessible
- professional & non-judgemental
- free & confidential

YPF is completely confidential and you can walk in to any site displaying the YPF logo in the window. They won't tell anybody that you have used the service even if you are under 16.

You don't have to be having sex to access YPF – you might just be curious and want to try it out for yourself. It is better to know where to get free condoms and information before you really need it or it is too late!

Local Services:

Vicarage Field Health Centre
Vicarage Drive, Barking, Essex
IG1 7NR

Phone: 0208 276 7020

Services: Emergency Contraception, Free Condoms, Chlamydia Test, Contraception, Sex and relationship info, Someone to talk to, pregnancy Testing, Abortion referral, LARC

Opening Hours: Thurs 9.30am-12noon

Thomas Pharmacy
19 Ripple Road
IG11 7PG

Phone: 020 8594 2148

Services: Emergency Contraception, Chlamydia Test, Sex and relationship info

Opening Hours: Mon-Fri 9am-6.30pm, Sat 9am-5.30pm, Sun (Closed)

The Child & Family Centre
Axe Street
IG11 7LX

Phone: 020 8522 9604

Services: Free Condoms, Sex and relationship info

Opening Hours: Mon-Fri 9am-5pm

The Children and Family Centre
Axe Street
IG11 7LX

Phone: 020 8522 9604

Services: Emergency Contraception, Free Condoms, Chlamydia Test, STI Testing, Contraception, Sex and relationship info, Someone to talk to

Opening Hours: Weekdays 9–5pm

Gascoigne Children's Centre

124-128 St Ann's
IG11 7AD

Phone: 0208 724 1147
Services: Free Condoms, Chlamydia Test

Opening Hours: Monday - Friday 9 to 5pm

Abbey Children's Centre
North Street, Barking
IG11 8JA

Phone: 020 8724 1262
Services: Free Condoms, Chlamydia Test

Opening Hours: Monday - Friday 8–6pm

Abbey Children's Centre
North Street, Barking
IG11 8JA

Phone: 020 8724 1262
Services: Free Condoms, Sex and relationship info

Opening Hours: Mon-Fri 8am-6pm

Lords Pharmacy
35 Station Parade
IG11 8EB

Phone: 0208 594 2332
Services: Emergency Contraception, Free Condoms, Chlamydia Test,
Contraception, Sex and relationship info, Someone to talk to,
Pregnancy Testing

Opening Hours: Mon-Fri 9am -6pm

Barking and Dagenham Foyer
50 Wakering Road
IG11 8GN

Phone: 020 8477 8800

Services: Emergency Contraception, Free Condoms, Chlamydia Test, STI Testing, Contraception, Sex and relationship info, Someone to talk to, Pregnancy Testing, Abortion referral, LARC

Opening Hours: Mon 11am – 2pm, Wed 9.30am – 12.30pm, Thurs 4pm – 5.45pm

Catch 22 - Baseline
Gascoigne Estate
IG11 9BJ

Phone: 0783 434 1555

Services: Free Condoms, Chlamydia Test

Opening Hours: Mon - Thurs 4–8.30pm; Fri 4–10pm

Subwize
Wakering Road, Barking, Essex
IG11 8GN

Services: Free Condoms, Sex and relationship info

Opening Hours: Please text 0776 540 2133 Mon-Fri 9am-5pm and Sat 2.30pm-4pm for details and times of their drop-in session locations around the borough.

Newlands Pharmacy
359 Ripple Road
IG11 9PN

Phone: 0208 594 1470

Services: Emergency Contraception, Free Condoms, Chlamydia Test, Contraception, Sex and relationship info, Someone to talk to, Pregnancy Testing

Opening Hours: Mon-Fri 9am -6pm

Sydenham Centre
Upney Lane, Barking, Essex
IG11 9LX

Phone: 0208 924 6400

Website: <http://www.bhrhospitals.nhs.uk/sexualhealth/sh1.php>

Services: Emergency Contraception, Free Condoms, Chlamydia Test, STI Testing, Contraception, Sex and relationship info, Someone to talk to, Pregnancy Testing, Abortion referral, LARC

Opening Hours: Mon 9am-1pm, Walk-in 1pm-5pm, Young People's clinic 5pm-7pm Tues Walk-in 1pm-5pm Wed Walk-in 1pm-5pm Appointments 5pm-7pm Fri Appointments 9am-1pm

Loxford Polyclinic
417 Ilford Lane Ilford Essex
IG1 2SN

Phone: 0208 822 3749

Services: Emergency Contraception, Free Condoms, Chlamydia Test, Contraception, Sex and relationship info, Someone to talk to, Pregnancy Testing, Abortion referral, LARC

Opening Hours: Brook clinic Thurs 5.15pm-7.30pm and Sat 2pm-4pm. Family planning available throughout the week.

Britannia Pharmacy
11 Faircross Parade
IG11 8UN

Phone: 020 8594 2686

Services: Emergency Contraception, Chlamydia Test, Sex and relationship info

Opening Hours: Mon-Wed and Fri-Sat 9am-6pm, Thurs 9am-1pm, Sun (Closed)

Britannia Pharmacy
11 Longbridge Road
IG11 8UN

Phone: 0208 534 2686

Services: Emergency Contraception, Free Condoms, Chlamydia Test, Contraception, Sex and relationship info, Someone to talk to, Pregnancy Testing

Opening Hours: Mon-Fri 9am -6pm

Britannia Pharmacy
19 Upney Lane
IG11 8UW

Phone: 0208 594 0364

Services: Emergency Contraception, Free Condoms, Chlamydia Test, Contraception, Sex and relationship info, Someone to talk to, Pregnancy Testing

Opening Hours: Mon-Fri 9am -6pm

Britannia Pharmacy
19 Faircross Parade
IG11 8UN

Phone: 020 8594 0364

Services: Emergency Contraception, Chlamydia Test, Sex and relationship info

Opening Hours: Mon-Wed and Fri 9am-7pm, Thurs 9am-6pm, Sat 9am-1pm Sun (Closed)

Britannia Pharmacy
Thames View Estate, Bastable Avenue
IG11 0NZ

Phone: 0208 594 3369

Services: Emergency Contraception, Free Condoms, Chlamydia Test, Contraception, Sex and relationship info, Someone to talk to, Pregnancy Testing

Opening Hours: Mon-Fri 9am -6pm

Thames View Health Centre
Bastable Avenue
IG11 0LG

Phone: 020 8507 3056

Services: Free Condoms, Chlamydia Test

Opening Hours: Monday - Friday 9–1pm and 3–8pm Except Thursday 9–1pm

Thames View Health Centre Dr Kalkat's Surgery
Bastable Avenue
IG11 0LG

Phone: 020 8507 3056

Services: Free Condoms, Sex and relationship info

Opening Hours: Mon-Fri 9am-1pm and 3pm-8pm except Thurs 9am-1pm

Britannia Pharmacy
223 Ilford Lane
IG1 2RZ

Phone: 0208 478 1756

Services: Emergency Contraception, Free Condoms, Chlamydia Test, Sex and relationship info

Opening Hours: Mon, Tues, Wed, Fri, 9am-8pm, Thurs & Sat 9am-7pm

Woodlands Pharmacy
119 Hampton Road
IG1 1JR

Phone: 020 8478 0261

Services: Emergency Contraception, Chlamydia Test

Opening Hours: Mon-Fri 9am-7pm except Thurs 9am-1pm & Sat 9am-5.30pm

Britannia Pharmacy
453 Porters Avenue
RM9 4ND

Phone: 0208 592 1080

Services: Emergency Contraception, Free Condoms, Chlamydia Test, Contraception, Sex and relationship info, Someone to talk to, Pregnancy Testing

Opening Hours: Mon-Fri 9am -6pm

P & S Chemists
111 Ilford Lane
IG1 2RJ

Phone: 020 8478 6108

Services: Emergency Contraception, Chlamydia Test

Opening Hours: Mon-Wed & Fri 9am-7pm, Thurs 9am-6pm, Sat
10am-2pm

Britannia Pharmacy
53 Green Lane
IG1 1XG

Phone: 020 8478 0484

Services: Emergency Contraception, Chlamydia Test

Opening Hours: Mon, Tues, Wed, Fri 9am-1pm & 2pm-7pm, Thurs &
Sat 9am-2pm

Boots the Chemists
177-185 High Road
IG1 1DG

Phone: 020 8553 2116

Services: Emergency Contraception, Chlamydia Test

Opening Hours: Mon-Sat 9am-6pm, except Wed 9am-8pm & Sun
11am-5pm

Connexions
1 Cranbrook Road, Essex
IG1 4DU

Phone: 0208 514 9567

Services: Free Condoms, Sex and relationship info

Opening Hours: Mon, Tues, Thurs, Fri 9am-5pm. Wed 9am-7pm

Superdrug
50 Cranbrook Road
IG1 4NF

Phone: 020 8553 5380

Services: Emergency Contraception, Chlamydia Test

Opening Hours: Mon-Sat 9am-6pm

2 miles

Alvin Rose Chemist
606 Longbridge Road
RM8 2AJ

Phone: 020 8590 1480

Services: Emergency Contraception, Chlamydia Test, Sex and relationship info

Opening Hours: Mon-Fri 9am-7pm, Sat 9am-5pm, Sun (Closed)

Alvin Rose Pharmacy
606 Longbridge Road
RM8 2AJ

Phone: 0208 590 1480

Services: Emergency Contraception, Free Condoms, Chlamydia Test, Contraception, Sex and relationship info, Someone to talk to, Pregnancy Testing

Opening Hours: Mon-Fri 9am -6pm

Britannia Pharmacy
414-416 Green Lane
IG3 9JX

Phone: 0208 590 6477

Services: Emergency Contraception, Free Condoms, Chlamydia Test, Sex and relationship info

Opening Hours: Mon-Sat 9am-8pm, Sun and Bank Hols 10am-5.30pm

Rohpharm Ltd
149 Cranbrook Road
IG1 4PU

Phone: 020 8514 3254

Services: Emergency Contraception, Chlamydia Test

Opening Hours: Mon-Fri 9.15am-1pm & 2.30pm-6.45pm, Sat
9.15am-1pm & 2.30pm-6pm

Castle Green Children's Centre
Gale Street
RM9 4UN

Phone: 0208 724 1530

Services: Free Condoms, Chlamydia Test

Opening Hours: Monday - Friday 9-5pm

Hedgemans Ltd
438 Hedgemans Road
RM9 6BU

Phone: 020 8592 1063

Services: Emergency Contraception, Chlamydia Test, Sex and
relationship info

Opening Hours: Mon-Fri 9am-7pm, Sat 9am-5.30pm

Hedgemans Pharmacy
438 Hedgemans Road
RM9 6BU

Phone: 0208 592 1063

Services: Emergency Contraception, Free Condoms, Chlamydia Test,
Contraception, Sex and relationship info, Someone to talk to,
Pregnancy Testing

Opening Hours: Mon-Fri 9am -6pm

Pharmaram
600 High Road
IG3 8BS

Phone: 020 8599 4436

Services: Emergency Contraception, Chlamydia Test

Opening Hours: Mon-Sat 9am-7pm

Pelton Chemist
90 Belgrave Road
IG1 3AL

Phone: 020 8554 5348

Services: Emergency Contraception, Chlamydia Test

Opening Hours: Mon-Fri 9am-5pm, except Thurs & Sat 9am-1pm

Catch 22 - Positive Steps
Thamesview Estate
IG11 0NY

Phone: 0754 542 7443

Services: Free Condoms, Chlamydia Test

Opening Hours: Tues and Thurs 6–8.30; Fri 6–10pm

Wellchem
641 High Road
IG3 8RA

Phone: 020 8590 1624

Services: Emergency Contraception, Chlamydia Test

Opening Hours: Mon-Fri 9am-6pm, Sat 9am-5.30pm

Eden Pharmacy
79-85 Goodmayes Road
IG3 9UU

Phone: 020 8597 3477

Services: Emergency Contraception, Chlamydia Test

Opening Hours: Mon-Wed & Fri 9am-8pm, Thurs & Sat 9am to 6pm

David Lewis Pharmacy
16 Porters Avenue

RM8 2AQ

Phone: 0208 592 1557

Services: Emergency Contraception, Free Condoms, Chlamydia Test, Contraception, Sex and relationship info, Someone to talk to, Pregnancy Testing

Opening Hours: Mon-Fri 9am -6pm

Zadams Pharmacy
841 High Road
IG3 8TG

Phone: 0208 599 3150

Services: Emergency Contraception, Free Condoms, Chlamydia Test, Sex and relationship info

Opening Hours: Mon, Wed, Fri 8.30am-7pm, Thurs & Sat 8.30am-6pm

Lloyds Pharmacy
2 Brooks Parade, Green Lane, Ilford, Essex
IG3 9RT

Phone: 0208 599 2495

Services: Emergency Contraception, Free Condoms, Chlamydia Test, Sex and relationship info

Opening Hours: Mon-Sat 9am-9pm, Sun and Bank Hols 10am-5pm

Nuchem Pharmacy
778 Green Lane
RM8 1YT

Phone: 020 8590 4921

Services: Emergency Contraception, Chlamydia Test, Sex and relationship info

Opening Hours: Mon-Fri 9am-6.30pm, Sat 9am-6pm, Sun (Closed)

Sandbern Pharmacy
703-305 Green Lane

RM8 1UU

Phone: 0208 590 4407

Services: Emergency Contraception, Free Condoms, Chlamydia Test, Contraception, Sex and relationship info, Someone to talk to, Pregnancy Testing

Opening Hours: Mon-Fri 9am -6pm

The Vibe Youth Centre
Becontree Avenue
RM8 2UT

Phone: 020 8270 6036/6033

Services: Free Condoms, Sex and relationship info

Opening Hours: Mon-Fri 9am-8pm Sat 11.30am-4.30pm

Britannia Pharmacy
265 Aldborough Road South
IG3 8GB

Phone: 0208 590 2353

Services: Emergency Contraception, Free Condoms, Chlamydia Test, Sex and relationship info

Opening Hours: Mon, Tues, Wed, Fri, 9am-7pm, Thurs & Sat 9am-6pm, Sun 9am-5.30pm

Kry-Ba Pharmacy
21 Goresbrook Road
RM9 6UX

Phone: 020 8592 4904

Services: Emergency Contraception, Chlamydia Test, Sex and relationship info

Opening Hours: Mon, Wed, Fri 9am-6.30pm, Tues 9am-7pm, Thurs 9am-6pm, Sat 9am-2pm

Waller Pharmacy
279 Heathway

RM9 5AQ

Phone: 0208 592 2934

Services: Emergency Contraception, Free Condoms, Chlamydia Test, Contraception, Sex and relationship info, Someone to talk to, Pregnancy Testing

Opening Hours: Mon-Fri 9am -6pm

Talati Pharmacy
262 Heathway
RM10 8QS

Phone: 0208 592 3321

Services: Emergency Contraception, Free Condoms, Chlamydia Test, Contraception, Sex and relationship info, Someone to talk to, Pregnancy Testing

Opening Hours: Mon-Fri 9am -6pm

YWCA
321-329 Heathway
RM9 5AF

Phone: 020 8593 3931

Services: Free Condoms, Sex and relationship info

Opening Hours: Mon 9.30am-8pm, Tues 9.30am-7pm, Wed-Fri 9.30am-6pm

Britannia Pharmacy
21-23 Horns Road, Ilford, Essex
IG2 6BN

Phone: 020 8554 1313

Services: Emergency Contraception, Free Condoms, Chlamydia Test, Sex and relationship info

Opening Hours: Mon-Fri 9am-6pm, Sat 9am-5pm

Borno Chemists Ltd
69 Perrymans Farm Road

IG2 7LT

Phone: 020 8554 3428

Services: Emergency Contraception, Chlamydia Test

Opening Hours: Mon-Wed and Fri 9am-7pm, Thurs 9am-4pm

Sheldons
367 Eastern Avenue
IG2 6NE

Phone: 020 8550 3569

Services: Emergency Contraception, Chlamydia Test

Opening Hours: Mon, Tues, Thurs & Fri 9am-7pm, Wed 9am-5pm,
Sat 9am-1pm

Ford Road Children's Centre
Ford Road
RM10 9JS

Phone: 020 8724 1384

Services: Free Condoms, Chlamydia Test

Opening Hours: Monday - Friday 8-6pm

Munroe's Pharmacy
24 Sevenways Parade
IG2 6JX

Phone: 020 8550 1050

Services: Emergency Contraception, Chlamydia Test

Opening Hours: Mon 9am-10pm, Fri 9am-7.30pm, Sat 9am-10pm

Allans Chemist
1207 High Road
RM6 4AL

Phone: 020 8598 8815

Services: Emergency Contraception, Chlamydia Test

Opening Hours: Mon-Sat 9am-6pm

Cordeve Ltd
70 Chadwell Heath Lane
RM6 4NP

Phone: 020 8590 6804

Services: Emergency Contraception, Chlamydia Test

Opening Hours: Mon, Tues, Wed, Fri 9am-7pm and Thurs & Sat 9am-5pm

Oxlow Pharmacy
217 Oxlow Lane
RM10 7YA

Phone: 0208 595 8527

Services: Emergency Contraception, Free Condoms, Chlamydia Test, Contraception, Sex and relationship info, Someone to talk to, Pregnancy Testing

Opening Hours: Mon-Fri 9am -6pm

Roding Pharmacy
214 Redbridge Lane East
IG4 5BQ

Phone: 020 8551 3741

Services: Emergency Contraception, Chlamydia Test

Opening Hours: Mon-Fri 8.30am-7pm, Sat 8.30am-6pm

Mastaa-Care Ltd
26 Whalebone Lane South
RM8 1BJ

Phone: 020 8592 2497

Services: Emergency Contraception, Chlamydia Test, Sex and relationship info

Opening Hours: Mon-Wed, Fri 9am-7pm, Thurs & Sat 9am-5.30pm,

Sun (Closed)

Britannia Pharmacy
5 Althorne Way
RM10 7AY

Phone: 0208 593 6213

Services: Emergency Contraception, Free Condoms, Chlamydia Test,
Contraception, Sex and relationship info, Someone to talk to,
Pregnancy Testing

Opening Hours: Mon-Fri 9am -6pm

William Bellamy Children's Centre
Frizlands Lane
RM10 7HX

Phone: 020 8724 1924

Services: Free Condoms, Sex and relationship info

Opening Hours: Mon-Fri 8-6pm

Lloyds Pharmacy- Chadwell Heath
165 High Road
RM6 6NL

Phone: 020 8590 2214

Services: Emergency Contraception, Chlamydia Test, Sex and
relationship info

Opening Hours: Mon-Wed & Fri 9am-7pm Thurs 9am-5.30pm, Sat
9am-1pm

Wanstead Pharmacy
75-77 High St
E11 2AE

Phone: 0208 989 0597

Services: Emergency Contraception, Free Condoms, Chlamydia Test,
Sex and relationship info

Opening Hours: Mon-Sat 8.30am-6.30pm

Borno Chemist
15 Broadway Market, Fencepiece Road
IG6 2JW

Phone: 0208 500 6714

Services: Emergency Contraception, Free Condoms, Chlamydia Test, Sex and relationship info

Opening Hours: Mon, Tues, Wed, Fri 9am-7pm. Thurs 9am-5.30pm

Fencepiece Road Surgery
83 Fencepiece Road
IG6 2NB

Phone: 0208 500 3526

Services: Emergency Contraception, Free Condoms, Chlamydia Test, STI Testing, Contraception, Sex and relationship info, Someone to talk to, Pregnancy Testing, Abortion referral

Opening Hours: EHC by appointment, Sexual Health Drop-in YPF
Mon, Wed, Fri 6.30am-7pm, Tues & Thurs, 7.30am-7pm, Sat 9am-12pm

Barking College
Rush Green, Romford
RM7 0XU

Phone: 01708 796728

Services: Emergency Contraception, Free Condoms, Chlamydia Test, Contraception, Sex and relationship info, Someone to talk to, Pregnancy Testing, Abortion referral, LARC

Opening Hours: Tues 12noon-1.45pm Only for Barking Students and term time only

South Hornchurch Clinic
South End Road, Rainham, Essex
RM13 7XR

Phone: 01708 796500

Services: Emergency Contraception, Free Condoms, Chlamydia Test, Contraception, Sex and relationship info, Someone to talk to, Pregnancy Testing, Abortion referral, LARC

Opening Hours: Wed 5pm-7.30pm, Fri 9am-11.30am

Allens Pharmacy
19 Electric Parade
E18 2LY

Phone: 0208 989 3353

Services: Emergency Contraception, Free Condoms, Chlamydia Test, Sex and relationship info

Opening Hours: Mon-Fri 9am-7pm, Sat 9am-5.30pm

Queens Hospital
Rom Valley Way, Romford, Essex
RM7 0AG

Phone: 0208 924 6400

Website: <http://www.bhrhospitals.nhs.uk/sexualhealth/sh1.php>

Services: Emergency Contraception, Free Condoms, Chlamydia Test, STI Testing, Contraception, Sex and relationship info, Someone to talk to, Pregnancy Testing, Abortion referral, LARC

Healthwise @ Youth Zone
9 Hedley Close, High Street, Romford
RM1 1AH

Phone: 01708 768512

Services: Emergency Contraception, Free Condoms, Chlamydia Test, Contraception, Sex and relationship info, Someone to talk to, Pregnancy Testing, Abortion referral, LARC

Opening Hours: Mon 4pm-6.45pm, Wed 3.30pm-5.15pm, Fri 4pm-5.45pm

AM I GAY?



Sexuality can be confusing

Many people feel attracted to people of the same sex, and wonder whether this means that they are gay. For some people these feelings can be very intense and alienating. Some people who ask themselves the question "am I gay?" are indeed gay, and go on to have gay sexual relationships. But other people find that these feelings change over time.

Some people are bisexual, meaning they are attracted to both men and women, and have relationships with both. Some people are not attracted to anyone and wonder if this is a sign that they are gay. Often it is only time that will resolve these uncertainties.

When do people know that they are gay?

There is no simple answer to this question, as it varies from person to person. Deciding you are gay often happens gradually, it may not be something you can initially put a name to, and it can feel very confusing.

During research carried out with young gay men in the UK, the men interviewed described a set of feelings which they gradually realised made them 'different' in some way, feelings they thought maybe every teenage boy has.

“I thought, well, this is just the phase bit. Sooner or later I'm going to start finding women attractive. I never did. As I became more attracted to men, and I still wasn't getting attracted to women, I thought, shit, you're gay. And it was really quite a shock when it hit me.”*Luke*

With time, someone who is gay will realise that not only are they sexually attracted to members of the same sex, but that this attraction is not transitional. This realisation could come at any time during their lives. Many people become aware of gay feelings during their teenage years, as this is when they begin to learn more about their sexuality and identity. However, the difficulties associated with accepting these feelings and coming out mean that many gay people don't identify themselves as gay until much later on in life.

“After college I spent nearly 15 years trying to deny to myself who I was...a gay man. Finally, at age 38 I began to accept the fact that I was gay.”

Is being gay a phase young people go through?

For some people yes, and for others no.

Some people do not have their first homosexual feelings or experience until they are well into adulthood. In a survey on sexual feelings carried out in Britain, nearly the same number of women reported that their first homosexual experience had happened in their twenties as did in their thirties, forties or fifties.

There is evidence that for some people homosexual experiences are part of a transitional or experimental phase in their youth. This is hardly surprising given that adolescence is a period of change in which many people find who they are and what they want for themselves in adult life. This kind of behaviour is perfectly normal.

Are you born gay? What causes people to be gay?

There is no simple answer to the question, 'Are some people born lesbian or gay?' There are some theories that stress biological differences between heterosexual and homosexual adults, suggesting that people are born with their sexuality already determined.

Can you stop being gay?

There is now growing general support for the belief that sexuality is pre-determined, though may change over time. However, many people are interested in whether sexuality can be altered solely by a person's desire to change. Organisations that help homosexuals attempt to change their sexuality can be generally divided between those that use psychological 'reparative' methods and those that use religious 'healing' methods.

Some people believe homosexuality is an illness and believe it can and should be cured. Many of these 'cures' revolve around psychological therapies (often called reparative therapy) which endeavour to re-orient a homosexual sexuality to heterosexual. Although there is little scientific data to evaluate, what is available seems to indicate that reparative therapy is ineffective. The American Psychological Association (APA), the world's largest association of psychologists has stated that:

“Homosexuality is not a mental disorder and the APA opposes all portrayals of lesbian, gay and bisexual people as mentally ill and in need of treatment due to their sexual orientation.”

Some strongly religious groups believe that homosexuality is sinful and is in direct breach of the bible and other religious texts. As with reparative therapy there has been little to no scientific evaluation of the healing and prayer techniques used. What evidence is available suggests that the success of these techniques is restricted to three areas:

- Convincing bisexuals to limit their sexual activities to members of the opposite sex.
- Convincing homosexuals to become celibate.
- Convincing gay men and lesbians to attempt to maintain heterosexual relationships, whilst retaining their homosexual orientation.

Tellingly, two founders of a ministry established to 'heal' homosexuals later described their programme as 'ineffective ... not one person was healed'.

The subject of 'curing' homosexuality became a politically charged debate in America, with Christian political organisations promoting the theory that homosexuality can be changed through force of will alone. They claim that 'thousands are leaving their homosexual identity for sexual celibacy, and even marriage'.

Alternatively, gay and lesbian rights organisations would argue that these views misunderstand what it means to be gay, and amount to discrimination against gay and lesbian people. Furthermore, the American Psychological Association has carried out a systematic review, which not only concludes that psychological interventions are not effective at changing sexual orientation, but they can also cause significant harm.

Choosing the right words

Choosing which term to use and how to use it can be troubling. If a person is describing themselves they can be anxious about the reaction they might get. If a person is talking about someone else, or the issue in general, they can feel anxious about causing offence or saying the wrong thing.

'I think that everyone is OK with the term 'gay' nowadays. It says something about lifestyle and identity as well as sexual behaviour which homosexual doesn't seem to do. I describe myself as 'straight' so I would use the word 'gay' in the classroom. Anyway it's what the kids would say. But they do need to be clear about what all the terms mean otherwise telling off for being homophobic doesn't make any sense to them. They say; 'it's just a word sir.' *Teacher*

Some men and women generally describe themselves as either 'gay' or 'straight'. Using these words gets away from the negative overtones of terminology like 'homosexual' or 'heterosexual' which for these people can feel too "medical". However, words like 'homosexual' and 'heterosexual' can have advantages in other contexts. Communication is a complex affair in which not only what words are used matters but also who is saying them, about whom and in what context.

For example, in school the term 'gay' is used a lot as an insult, and is not a word with positive overtones. A person called 'gay' by homophobic bullies in school might find it abusive because of the way it is said but the same person might happily call themselves 'gay' when they are with friends.

How do you define homosexuality?

Although it would appear to be simple, on closer examination defining homosexuality is more complex. Young people writing to magazine problem pages seem to define homosexuality using three criteria:

- having sexual feelings towards other people of the same sex
- sexual behaviour with people of the same sex
- and describing oneself as homosexual (identity)

It can be helpful to think of these elements of a person's sexuality in a visual way. It is possible to conceive of sexual feelings, identity and behaviour as three circles which overlap to varying degrees depending on the individual.

Coming out - what does it mean to 'come out'?

Identifying yourself as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) and disclosing this to other people is often referred to as 'coming out'.

Many people find that coming out is a positive experience. However, coming to terms with confusion about identity can have both positive and negative effects on many aspects of a person's life, including social relationships, school or work, and self-esteem. Coming out can be a difficult time; many LGBT people fear negative reactions, rejection and upsetting people they are close to.

Despite the obstacles faced by LGBT people, every day more people around the world make the decision to come out, and many organisations are working to provide support and campaign for the rights of people who are able to come out and live their lives openly as LGBT.

What is coming out like?

A lot of people come out during their teenage years, as this is when we begin to learn more about our sexuality and identity.^{3 4} However, coming out is something that can take place at any point in life. Coming to terms with sexual feelings can take a long time, and many people don't come out until later in life. For some, it may not be until they are older that they become aware of lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender feelings.⁵

Coming out is not a single action, it is a process of coming to terms with being LGBT and disclosing this to others. Many factors affect the coming out process, for example gender, ethnicity and age, meaning that everyone's coming out experience is unique to them. However, there are some common stages, which many LGBT people find they go through when they come out:

Sensitisation

'I felt as if I had nothing in common with people. There was no conversation - I don't like sport, I don't like any of this stuff.' *Tom*

"Experiencing life like anyone else as I grew up, I saw movies, read books, and heard stories about love. The typical boy meets girl, falls in love at first sight, grow up together, and marry, have kids, then die together all made sense to everyone else. But not me." *Unknown*

In the first stage of coming out generally a person begins to feel 'different' to other people of the same sex. Sometimes they recognise that they are not very interested in people of the opposite sex but more often they feel they are not really interested in things which are supposed to be appropriate for their sex. Most people report just feeling unusual when they compare themselves to other people of their sex. Commonly this happens before or in early adolescence when friendships and relationships between the sexes begin to change.

Confusion about identity

'I didn't even know what a lesbian was. It was a sort of tradition that girls in the lower end of the school had crushes on older girls. They were everything you wanted to be and admired. I did wonder once if my crush was just a bit stronger than it ought have been but I was brought up to believe I would meet Mr Right and settle down to 2.4 kids so I just expected it to go away when we started to go out with boys.' *Katie*

In this stage of coming out, feelings are becoming more concrete. A person may well have partners of both sexes and find their moods and feelings shifting as they feel more or less certain about their identity. Coming out as LGBT involves dealing with changing feelings and also with changing relationships. As a person's perception of themselves alters, they are likely to feel confused about their identity. Experiencing homosexual feelings can be very difficult to come to terms with, particularly if a person lacks knowledge about homosexuality or is aware of stigma attached to being gay or lesbian.

In most places, understanding of transgender identities is even more limited, making it very difficult for people to acknowledge and come to terms with feelings that do not match the gender roles traditionally associated with their birth sex.

Different people cope with the emotional upheaval of identity confusion in various ways. Some people who think they are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender will try to deny it to themselves and even seek help to eradicate their feelings. A person might try to avoid thoughts and feelings which may confirm they are homosexual, or ignore inclinations which they don't feel are acceptable for their biological sex. This can make it hard for LGBT people to seek information and support.

Managing relationships with peers and family can also be very difficult for a person who is dealing with confusion about their identity. It is common for someone coming to terms with homosexual feelings to avoid situations in which they encounter opportunities for heterosexual relationships. This strategy means that they don't have to deal with their lack of sexual interest in members of the opposite sex, or have it exposed. Others persevere with heterosexual relationships to try and 'convert' themselves and/or conceal their homosexuality from others.

'You'd keep her for a while, just to keep your mates happy. And then after a bit you just dropped her, saying, 'Ah, didn't really like her, broke down. So you constantly went through the heterosexual bit until you found you were strong enough to go out on your own and tell people.' *Rod*

It is not unusual for someone at this stage in the coming out process to redefine homosexual feelings and behaviour in such a way as to convince themselves that they are not really homosexual. They may describe an experience as a 'one-off' or a 'phase', or put it down to extreme emotional or physical circumstances such as the break-up of a relationship or drunkenness at a party. Bisexuality in particular is often rejected as a phase, as many people find it difficult to understand sexual orientation which does not fit into the categories of 'gay' or 'straight'.

In some extreme cases people may try to avoid confronting their feelings by expressing strong homophobia or turning to drink and drugs in order to find temporary relief from them.

Assuming a lesbian or gay identity

Coming out to my friends was probably one of the best experiences of my life. I could be me, and they would know the reason. - *Mark*

Living with confusion about identity is emotionally exhausting and potentially destructive. For some people this period is followed quite quickly by a stage in which they come to accept their identity and are able to express it in a positive way. Mixing with other LGBT people - in social settings or through support groups - can help a person feel able to accept who they are. For some people, particularly in larger towns and cities, LGBT support groups provide a safe environment for coming out. Elsewhere local and national LGBT telephone helplines provide a listening ear for people who want support. Please ask your YPA for advice and support.

Commitment

'I think when I fell in love it all became so much more concrete for me. I was suddenly very certain of what I wanted and why I wanted it. I mean, I still found myself thinking every now and then, 'why am I gay?', but I came more and more to think, 'I am gay because I love another man'. And I'm proud of that. I am proud of him and I'm proud of me and I don't care who knows it.' *Martin*

The final stage in the process of coming out involves becoming openly lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender and recognising that it is an important aspect of, 'who I am', and, 'how I want to live my life'. People develop a sense of contentment with being LGBT, and see it as a valid way of life. The experience of being in a relationship or falling in love often helps people to feel more confident, fulfilled and able to combat the social stigma that they may suffer.

Some transgender people choose to undergo medical treatment so that their bodies reflect their gender identity. However many choose not to pursue medical options, instead expressing their gender identity through how they dress and present themselves, and how they ask others to refer to them.

"I made the personal decision not to go through sex-reassignment surgery. The only person who can decide what's right for you is you." -

In this final stage of coming out, many people begin to feel proud of their sexuality or gender identity. The expression of this pride in being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender is a powerful force in challenging stigma and prejudiced attitudes, and provides positive role models to others less sure about coming out.

Young people and coming out

LGBT youth are coming out younger than ever before. Studies have shown that the average age gay and lesbian young people begin the process of coming out is now 16, compared to the 1980's when it was between 19 and 23. This means that many more young people are coming out when they are still at school, which can seriously impact upon school-life and work. One study found that half of students who experience homophobic bullying have skipped school because of it. Schools that openly acknowledge and include LGBT students, and explicitly oppose homophobic bullying, create a positive environment in which all students feel safe and able to learn.

Coming out as LGBT for many young people can also mean risking rejection and even the loss of support from family. As young people are less likely to have the resources to support themselves if they are cut off from family, this can lead to considerable hardship, for example homelessness, mental health problems and substance abuse.

Young LGBT people need more than just practical support when coming out; acceptance and understanding are crucial. Many young LGBT people are undermined when they try to talk about their sexuality and gender identity, by parents, teachers, and even doctors dismissing their feelings as a phase. Many young people experiment as they are learning more about their sexuality. However, for young LGBT people, coming out is not a phase but an important part of their life. When this is not recognised by close friends and family, young LGBT people often find coming out much harder.

How do I come out to my family and friends?

Making sure you're ready

Making the decision to tell others that you are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender can relieve a great deal of stress and unhappiness and build self-esteem, as well as help improve relationships. However, there are also risks associated with coming out, and it is important to think carefully about how you could cope with the potential consequences before telling others that you are LGBT.

Friends and family may not react in an understanding way, and relationships can be changed significantly. Having time to fully come to terms with being LGBT before coming out to others can mean you are more prepared to deal with any misunderstanding or prejudice you may face. For many LGBT people around the world, coming out can mean putting their personal safety at risk. The loss of a job or family support can cause great financial hardship and it is important to be prepared for how you can support yourself if this were to happen. The laws and general attitudes towards LGBT people in a country will influence a person's decision about whether they are able to come out, and who they choose to come out to.

Choosing the right time

There is no best way to come out to friends and family. Different approaches are right for different people, depending on their situation and relationship with the person they want to tell. Some people, for example, find it easier to write everything down in a letter, so that they can explain fully what they want to say. This can also give others the time and space to react and come to terms with initial feelings of shock. However, open and frank conversation is a vital part of coming out, and helps to move a relationship forward toward a point of mutual understanding and acceptance. These conversations need time and commitment, so it is best to choose a moment when neither of you will feel rushed or distracted. Being tired or emotional can also make talking more difficult, and lead to people saying things they may otherwise not have said.

Coming out does not mean that you have to tell everybody. Many LGBT people chose to come out first to people who they think are more likely to react positively. This not only helps them get an idea of how people may react, but often means that they will have someone to support them when they come out to others.

"I told the person whom I am closest with. She was a little taken by surprise but took it well and supports me. Life is far too short to be hiding away and putting on acts so others will accept you. Hopefully I can get more courage and find better ways to express this feeling to others I love" - *John*

How will people react?

LGBT people often say that they have been surprised by the positive reactions they have received when coming out. It is common for people to be honoured that you feel close enough to share this important part of yourself with them. This acceptance can be a valuable source of strength and helps many LGBT people to have the confidence to express their sexual or gender identity more openly.

However, many LGBT people also have to cope with negative reactions when they come out, which can be very painful, particularly when it is someone who you care about. It is important to be prepared for someone to be shocked: they may feel uncomfortable and not know how to react. This doesn't mean that they will not, with time, accept the news. Try to encourage them to ask questions, as this can help them to understand.

Some people may never be able to accept your sexuality or true gender identity. This is not something that you can change, and it can be very hard to feel rejected by someone you are close to. It is important not to let negative reactions stop you from coming out to others, as everyone will react differently. Reminding yourself why you have decided to come out can help you stand by that decision.

"There will be people who hate you because you have discovered who you truly are but know that you have the confidence to finally stop pretending. Some people will love you for who you are, these people have confidence. They know who they are and you know who you are." – *Unknown*

If you have any concerns regarding your sexual identity there are services that can offer support. There are also places where you can meet with other LGBT young people and discover new social networks. Please ask your YPA (young person's advisor) for details or look in the useful information section on page 68.

Further information around subjects contained in this booklet can be obtained through your young person's advisor or by accessing:

www.avert.org or www.youngpeoplefriendly.co.uk.

USEFUL INFORMATION

Brook Advisory Service Ilford

Loxford Polyclinic
417 Ilford Lane
Ilford Essex
IG1 2SN

Tel: 020 8822 3700

Opening Times

Monday: 5:00pm - 7:30pm

Tuesday: Closed

Wednesday: Closed

Thursday: 5:15pm - 7:30pm

Friday: Closed

Saturday: 2:00pm - 4:00pm

Sunday: Closed

Additional information

All sessions are walk-in. All services are free.

When Brook is closed please phone Ask Brook on 0808 802 1234 Monday to Friday 9am to 7pm or NHS Direct 0845 4647.

Service	Yes/No	Details
Contraception / Emergency	✓	
Pregnancy Testing	✓	
Screening for infections	✓	
Smear tests / Hepatitis B Injections	✗	
Termination referrals	✓	
Counselling	✓	Free, drop-in and appointments on Thursdays and Saturdays
Disabled access	✓	
Interpreting service	✓	

Sexual Health (Genito-Urinary) Clinic for Young people

Staywise Clinic,
The Sydenham Centre,
Barking Hospital, Upney Lane
Barking. IG11 9LX
01708 503838

About the Clinic

The clinic is for young people aged 18 years old or under.

It takes place every Monday from 3.30 to 6.30 pm (with the exception of Bank Holidays). It is a Walk In and Wait clinic, but appointments are available if you prefer. To arrange an appointment call reception on: 01708 503838.

Young people are also welcome to attend our usual Walk In and Wait clinics on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays that all start at 1pm.

Services the clinic provides includes:

Tests / screening for sexually transmitted infections (STIs)

- Information about STIs
- Advice about sexual health
- Advice on safer sex and how to use condoms
- Free condoms and Femidoms
- Pregnancy testing
- Referral to the Teenage Pregnancy Midwives
- Referral for pregnancy terminations (Marie Stopes)
- Emergency contraception ('morning after' pill)
- Advice about sexuality and relationships

Marie Stopes International

- Contraception
- Unplanned pregnancy counselling
- Abortion information and advice
- Help for women needing abortions
- Abortion pill and other treatment options
- Vasectomy information and vasectomy procedure
- Female sterilisation
- Health screening for men and women
- Company health screening
- STI testing

**Call 0845 300 8090 24 hour service
Terrence Higgins Trust**

How we can help

THT offers a very wide range of support services, including:

- emotional support and information by phone
- help with accessing HIV testing and post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) treatment
- advice about your rights in benefits, employment, immigration and housing
- treatment advice
- contact with support groups
- help with accessing grants, respite and complementary therapies
- education for the community about HIV and sexually transmitted infections
- legal advice for those living with HIV
- written information and leaflets
- counselling

20 East Street, Barking, Essex IG11 8EU Tel: 0208 591 2561

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Forum (Barking and Dagenham)

Danni Tate, Chair

Tel: 020 8252 9739 Mobile: 07944 655 733

Email: lgbtforum@btconnect.com