

*Bitchin'*

**Women**

*Lovin',*

**Women**

**Healthy • Sex • Life**

# INTRODUCTION

By knowing about the risks for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) including HIV, you can make choices to keep your sex life hot and healthy.

**ALTHOUGH STATISTICS DON'T REVEAL THE NUMBER OF HIV POSITIVE LESBIANS OR WOMEN WHO HAVE SEX WITH WOMEN, WE KNOW THAT MANY OF US EXIST.**

HIV, the Human Immunodeficiency Virus needs direct access to our bloodstream for infection. It invades our immune system using the white 'fighter' blood cells (CD4 cells) that protect our bodies. High concentrations of white blood cells can be found in our throat, cervix (vagina), anus (ass) and around cuts and sores. Once the virus attaches itself to these cells it reproduces itself. Over time, our immune systems weaken, we are open to infections and get sick more often (and for longer periods of time). This leads to an Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) diagnosis.

# HIV SYMPTOMS



**HIV SYMPTOMS FOR WOMEN CAN INCLUDE CHRONIC YEAST INFECTIONS, FATIGUE, NAUSEA, AMENORRHEA (NO PERIOD), HYPERMENORRHEA (EXTRA PERIODS), AND MORE ABNORMAL PAP SMEARS. HOWEVER, THE ONLY WAY TO KNOW IF YOU HAVE HIV IS THROUGH AN “HIV TEST” (A BLOOD TEST). SEE THE BACK PANEL FOR LOCATIONS WHERE YOU CAN GET AN “ANONYMOUS” (NO ONE KNOWS YOUR NAME OR HEALTH NUMBER) HIV TEST.**

# KNOW YOUR RISKS!

- Our risk for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) – including HIV/AIDS – has everything to do with what we do, not who we are
- There have been reported cases of HIV transmission between women

# KNOW YOUR CHOICES!

- Avoid sharing sex toys (including vibrators) or else use latex condoms
- Use a latex barrier like a dental dam or un-lubricated condom (cut lengthwise) for oral sex



# Women *Lovin'* Women

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# SEX TOYS

**THERE HAVE BEEN  
DOCUMENTED  
CASES OF HIV  
TRANSMISSION  
BETWEEN WOMEN  
FROM SHARING  
SEX TOYS**

## Risks:

Friction from sex toys can cause tearing inside your vagina and anus. Sharing sex toys can allow HIV infected vaginal fluid (pussy juice) on the toy to have access to the vulnerable tissue in your pussy and ass.

## Choices:

- Avoid sharing sex toys or use condoms and change after each use
- Have a set of toys to be used on you and another set to be used on your partner
- Try using different coloured condoms on each end of a double-headed dildo to keep track of who gets what end
- Use a lot of water-based lube to reduce friction

## Risks:

Cuts and sores on your fingers or hands can allow access to your bloodstream. Also, the friction from penetration can cause vaginal and anal tearing in your partner.

## Choices:

- Use latex gloves with plenty of water-based lube for fingering and fisting
- Use lots of lube on hands and on vagina or ass



# FINGERING N' FISTING

**(INSERTING  
FINGERS OR  
ENTIRE HAND  
IN PARTNER'S  
PUSSY OR ASS)**



# GETTING PREGNANT

## Risks:

Besides having sex with a man, some of us may choose to get pregnant through self-insemination (injecting semen into our vaginas) from a donor. Inseminating semen without testing for HIV increases our risk of infection.

## Choices:

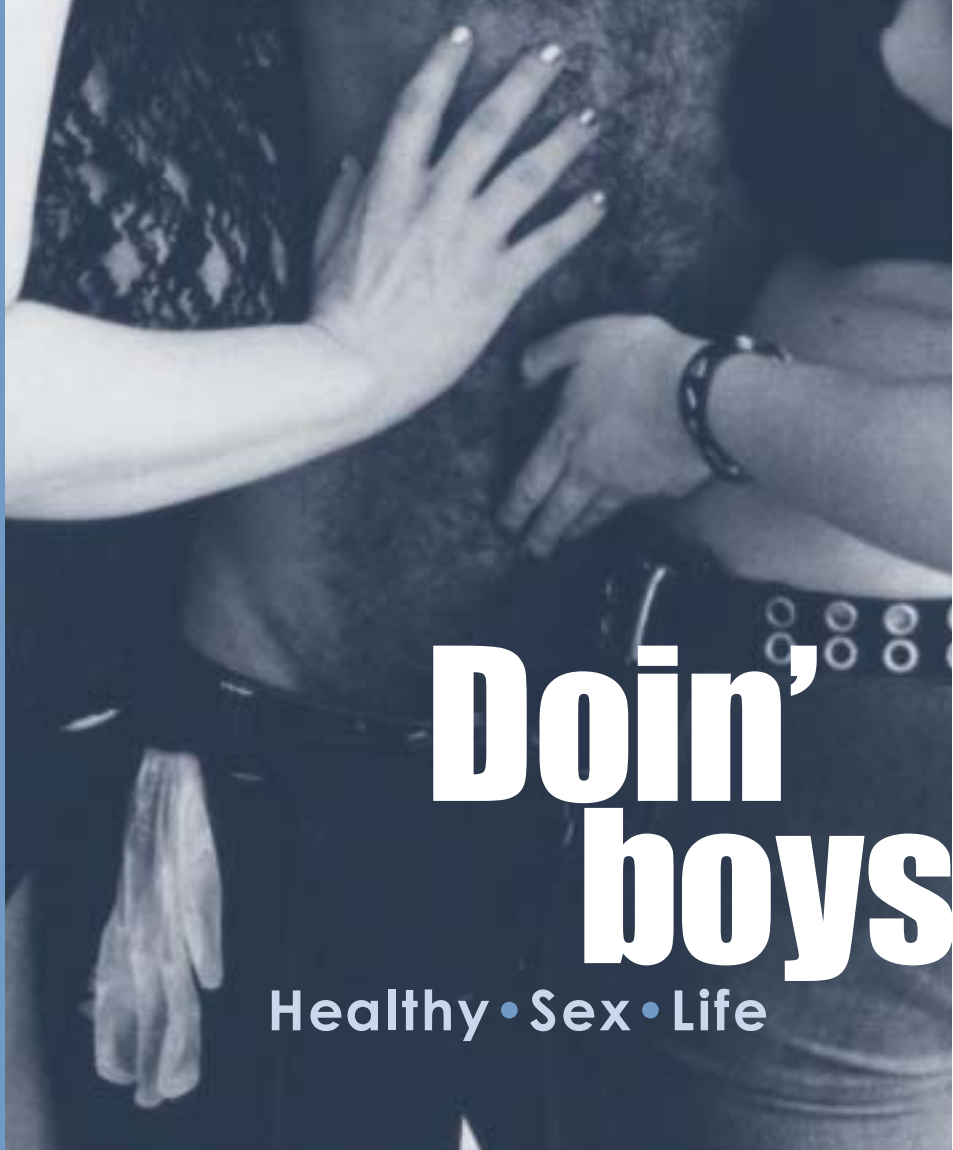
- Use a licensed sperm bank
- Ensure the donor has two HIV antibody tests six months apart, with the first test six months after his last possible exposure to HIV
- HIV antibodies are found in breast milk. It is advised for HIV-positive women not to breast feed

# KNOW YOUR RISKS!

- Most women get HIV from unprotected vaginal or anal sex with men
- You can also get - or pass on - other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) from unprotected vaginal or anal sex

# KNOW YOUR CHOICES!

- Use water-based lube and latex condoms for vaginal and anal sex
- Use a lot of lube to avoid vaginal and anal tearing



# Doin' boys

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# UNPROTECTED VAGINAL OR ANAL SEX WITH A MAN

## Risks:

The friction from penetration can cause cuts and scrapes inside your vagina (pussy) and anus (ass) allowing HIV infected semen (cum) access to your bloodstream.

## Choices:

- Use a lubricated latex condom for vaginal and anal sex (avoid condoms with nonoxinal 9, which causes vaginal and irritation, increasing HIV risk)
- Use a lot of lubrication to reduce possible tearing of your vaginal lining and anal (ass) tissue
- You can use 'female' polyurethane condoms: these can be inserted before sex. These are available as the "Reality" brand

# ORAL SEX

**(SUCKING PUSSY  
OR GIVING HEAD  
TO A MAN)**

## Risks:

Oral sex is considered low risk for HIV – not many people get HIV from oral sex. But, sucking pussy or giving head with cuts or sores in your mouth or with bleeding gums increases our HIV risk. Sometimes, we don't notice or we forget about cuts caused by eating hard foods, dental work or from biting our tongues.

## Choices:

- Avoid oral sex after dental work
- Wait at least 30 minutes after brushing/flossing your teeth
- Avoid swallowing vaginal fluids (pussy juice) or ejaculate (semen) as a lot of white blood cells are found in the soft tissue at the back of your throat
- Cover your partner's vagina with a dental dam; cut off the tip of a condom and cut it up the side; or cut the fingers off a latex glove. You can also use plastic wrap (non-microwavable because it doesn't have holes)
- Use a condom if you're giving oral sex to a man—try flavoured condoms

# DRUG USE

## Risks:

Sharing needles is a very easy way to get or pass on HIV. Because a needles' syringe is vacuous (without air), HIV infected blood can live in it and get injected into your bloodstream. If you smoke crack cocaine, your lips can crack or burn from the pipe, creating an opportunity for HIV infection if you share pipes.

## Choices:

- Avoid sharing needles and pipes
- Clean needles by filling the syringe with water and shaking for at least 30 seconds. Repeat with bleach and then do it again with water. Note that cleaning with bleach does not kill Hepatitis C
- Wrap tissue or a rubber band around the end for your pipe
- Keep your lips moist with lip balms
- Plan ahead. Make decisions about the kind of sex you will have before getting drunk or high
- Avoid getting drunk and high with people you don't know. Passing out puts you at risk for sexual assault

# SM/SADOMASOCHISM

(AN UMBRELLA TERM THAT COVERS DIFFERENT KINDS OF PLAY INCLUDING DOMINANCE AND SUBMISSION, BONDAGE, CORPORAL PUNISHMENT AND ROLE PLAYING)

## Risks:

Most SM activities are low risk for HIV if there is no exchange of vaginal fluids or blood. You can be at risk for HIV and other STIs if body fluids are exchanged. SM is a complex erotic activity that may or may not involve sexual acts or the breaking of skin. Find out more about the ways to have safe, sane and consensual SM.

## Choices:

- Use latex barriers for fingering and fisting
- Avoid sharing sex toys and tools
- People who love their SM safe, hot and sexual can pick up the Safer SM brochure at ACT or check out [www.safersm.org](http://www.safersm.org)

# HEPATITIS

**HEPATITIS IS A VIRUS THAT CAUSES INFLAMMATION (SWELLING) OF THE LIVER.**

## **Hepatitis A (Hep A):**

HEP A CAN TAKE ONE MONTH TO EXPERIENCE SYMPTOMS AND CAN TAKE UP TO TWO MONTHS TO CURE ON ITS OWN. SYMPTOMS: LIGHT COLOURED FECES (SHIT), DARK URINE (PEE), FEELING TIRED, FEVER, HEADACHES, STOMACH CRAMPS, AND JAUNDICE (SKIN AND EYES DEVELOP A YELLOWISH COLOUR)

## Risks:

It is spread through rimming (licking ass), from unwashed hands after a bowel movement and, also, contaminated water.

## Choices:

- Wash hands after bowel movements
- Use a dental dam or non-microwavable plastic wrap for rimming
- Use latex gloves for fingering your partners' anus (ass) or partners' anuses
- Avoid going from anus to vagina
- Get a Hep A vaccination

# HEPATITIS B (HEP B):

MANY PEOPLE DO NOT EXPERIENCE ANY SYMPTOMS AND MAY BE UNAWARE THAT THEY HAVE HEP B. SYMPTOMS ARE LIKE HEP A AND LAST ONE TO THREE MONTHS AFTER INFECTION. SOME PEOPLE CLEAR THE INFECTION AND BECOME IMMUNE, WHILE OTHERS GO ON TO BE CARRIERS AND ABLE TO GIVE IT TO OTHERS. TEN PER CENT OF ADULTS WITH SEVERE HEP B DEVELOP CHRONIC (ONGOING) LIVER INFLAMMATION THAT MAY LEAD TO LONG-TERM DIFFICULTIES INCLUDING CIRRHOSIS AND OR LIVER CANCER.

## Risk:

Hep B is transmitted through unprotected oral, vaginal and anal sexual contact, as well as sharing syringes containing infected blood. A mother can also pass it on to her child during pregnancy and delivery.

## Choices:

- Practice safer oral, vaginal and anal sex (see the previous section)
- Avoid sharing needles
- Clean needles and syringes
- Avoid sharing razors, toothbrushes, nail files and nail clippers
- Get a Hep B vaccination

## HEPATITIS C (HEP C):

MANY PEOPLE DON'T SHOW SYMPTOMS OF HEP C AND MAY BE UNAWARE THEY HAVE IT. SYMPTOMS ARE SIMILAR TO HEP A. HOWEVER, 80% OF ADULTS WITH HEP C DEVELOP CHRONIC LIVER INFLAMMATION THAT MAY LEAD TO CIRRHOSIS AND/OR LIVER CANCER. TREATMENT CURES ABOUT 50% OF INFECTIONS.

### Risks:

Hep C is transmitted by blood, through sharing needles, infected re-usable tattoo needles and non-sterilized body piercing tools. A mother is five per cent likely to pass Hep C to her baby at birth. This risk increases to 25-30% if the pregnant woman is also infected with HIV.

### Choices:

- Avoid sharing your toothbrush, razor, nail-trimmer or file
- Avoid sharing needles/ syringes for injecting drugs
- Make sure piercing/tattoo equipment are properly sterilized

# KNOW YOUR RISKS!

- Sharing needles/syringes is an easy way to get or pass on HIV and Hepatitis C
- Getting high or drunk with people you don't know increases your risk for sexual assault which can put you at risk for HIV infection

# KNOW YOUR CHOICES!

- Don't share your works
- Cleaning needles/syringes with bleach and water can kill HIV but will not get rid of Hep C
- Plan ahead before getting drunk or high

# Getting High N' Hot

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# HUMAN PAPILLOMA VIRUS

**(HPV)/ WARTS/CONDYLOMA**

**HPV is one of the most common sexually transmitted infections (STIs). A recent study reported that 13 % of lesbians and women who have sex with women were infected with HPV.**

HPV invades the skin and can go without symptoms for months or years. Eventually, small warts that resemble lumps, flat plaques or cauliflower show up on or in your vagina, anus or mouth. Depending on your skin, the warts can appear pink, red, grey or brown and are often mistaken for ingrown hairs or beauty marks. Although, not usually painful, the warts may cause irritation or itchiness. Treatments don't completely cure HPV but removing the warts reduces the risk of transmission. HPV infection increases our risk for cervical cancer.

# HUMAN PAPILLOMA VIRUS

## Risk:

HPV can be transmitted through hand-to-pussy, pussy-to-pussy and mouth to pussy. It can also be transmitted through contact with fluid from the warts.

## Strategies:

- Avoid sharing sex toys or use condoms and change after use between you or your partner(s)
- Have regular PAP test for early detection, especially for warts that don't show on the outside of your vagina
- Use barriers for oral sex
- Avoid humping (pussy to pussy rubbing) or have a barrier between you and your partner(s) to avoid contact
- Use latex gloves for fisting or fingering



# HERPES

## HERPES SIMPLEX 1 & 2

HERPES APPEAR AS ITCHY, BURNING, RED BUMPS AND WATER BLISTERS ON YOUR BREAST, THIGH, ANUS (ASS), MOUTH AND VAGINA. OFTEN IT IS MISDIAGNOSED AS A YEAST INFECTION, URINARY TRACT INFECTION, OR CERVICITIS (SWELLING OF THE CERVIX). GENITAL HERPES SORES CAN DEVELOP INSIDE THE VAGINA OR CERVIX AND GO UNNOTICED.

# HERPES

## HERPES SIMPLEX 1 & 2

### Risks:

Both Herpes Simplex 1 & 2 are spread by direct skin contact. Hot and wet settings are ideal for transmission. Herpes 1 is usually found around the mouth (cold sores) and often transmitted to our vaginas through oral sex. Genital (vaginal) herpes or Herpes Simplex 2 is transmitted by tribadism (rubbing pussies together, humping), unprotected vaginal, anal and oral sex.

### Choices:

- Have oral sex with a latex barrier or non-microwavable plastic wrap
- Avoid oral sex if there are cold sores on the mouth
- Use latex gloves with lube for fingering and fisting
- Avoid sex 'humping' during an outbreak
- Wash your hands after contact with the sores

A close-up, blue-tinted photograph of a person's hands applying a condom to their penis. The person has a tattoo on their left forearm that says "Camille". The background is dark and out of focus.

# CHLAMYDIA 'N' GONNORHEA

BACTERIAL INFECTIONS, BOTH CHLAMYDIA AND GONNORRHEA CAN CAUSE VAGINAL BLEEDING AFTER PENETRATION, PAINFUL URINATION (PEEING), DISCOLOURED DISCHARGE, OR STOMACH PAIN FIVE TO TEN DAYS AFTER INFECTION. HOWEVER, NOT EVERYONE EXPERIENCES SYMPTOMS. IF LEFT UNTREATED, THESE INFECTIONS CAN LEAD TO PELVIC INFLAMMATORY DISEASE (PID), WHICH CAN CAUSE INFERTILITY (INABILITY TO HAVE CHILDREN), AND TUBAL PREGNANCIES. PID SYMPTOMS INCLUDE LONGER AND HEAVIER PERIODS, PAIN IN LOWER ABDOMEN, VOMITING AND FEVER.

# CHLAMYDIA 'N' GONNORHEA

## Risks:

Chlamydia and gonorrhoea are spread through fingering or fisting your partner's pussy or ass, and putting your fingers in your own pussy, ass or mouth. It's also spread from oral sex or rimming (licking ass).

## Choices:

- Get to know the scent and colour of your healthy vaginal discharge
- Use latex gloves for fingering and fisting
- Use latex barrier for oral sex
- Avoid sharing sex toys or use condom and change after each use
- Have regular PAP tests for early discovery

For more information about sexual health for women who have sex with women:  
Contact the AIDS Committee of Toronto's Women's Community Development  
Program at 416.340.8484 ext 274.

### **For anonymous HIV & STI Testing**

Hassle Free (Women's) Clinic	416.922.0566
Regional Women's Health Centre	416.351.3700
Queen West Community Health Centre	416.703.8482

### **Needle Exchange**


Parkdale Community Health Centre	416.537.2455
The Works	416.392.0520
Queen West Community Health Centre	416.703.8482

### **Crack Kits**

Streethhealth	416.921.8668
Queen West Community Health Centre	416.703.8482

### **Coming Out Support**

Central Toronto Youth Services (SOY)	416.924.2100
David Kelly Lesbian & Gay Community Counselling Program	416.595.9618
Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Youth Line	1.800.268.9688



**THE AIDS COMMITTEE OF TORONTO (ACT) IS A COMMUNITY-BASED,  
CHARITABLE ORGANIZATION THAT PROVIDES SUPPORT, HIV PREVENTION  
AND EDUCATION SERVICES FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH AND AT RISK FOR  
HIV/AIDS.**

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For additional information please  
contact ACT at 416.340.2437 or visit  
[www.actoronto.org](http://www.actoronto.org)

**ACT**  
AIDS Committee of Toronto