



SAFER SEX

GUIDE



A WORD ON LANGUAGE:

People use different words to talk about their bodies and their genitals. Using language that feels right to name our bodies can be affirming and empowering.

This guide uses medical words, such as vagina, anus and penis, to describe genitals. Some people may use other words, such as private parts, dick, ass and front hole.

CATIE acknowledges and respects that people use words that they are most comfortable with. Use what feels right and respectful to you and your partners.



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This guide will help you take charge of your sexual health by giving you tips to prevent sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and explaining how you can make sex safer. There are many types of STIs, and this guide explores some common ones.

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KEEP READING TO LEARN MORE!

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* This guide contains sexually explicit information. It is meant for mature audiences.

SAFER SEX IS...

- » about knowing your options.
- » for everyone – no matter your age, race, ability, gender identity, sexual orientation, number of partners, relationship status or whether you've been diagnosed with an STI before.
- » being comfortable with what you're doing and being able to talk to your partners about what you do and don't want.
- » sex that considers your plans around pregnancy.
- » about choosing options that lower the chance of passing or getting STIs and keep you and your partners healthy.
- » taking steps to get tested for STIs if you are sexually active and getting treatment if you are diagnosed with an STI.
- » fun, stimulating, exciting and erotic.

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TALKING ABOUT SEX AND CONSENT

Talking to your partners about sex can be a way of making sure that consent is asked for or given for anything that happens during sex. Consent is for everyone. It means feeling safe and comfortable with what is going on. Consent is not a one-time thing—it is an ongoing process. It also means you have the right to change your mind or stop any activity that does not feel safe at any point. Consent is an important and necessary part of sex. Talk to your partners about what feels safe for you and them.

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS (STIs)

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Most STIs are caused by germs (bacteria or viruses) that are passed from one person to another during sex or intimate contact. There are also STIs caused by parasites, such as pubic lice and scabies, but these will not be discussed in this guide.

STIs caused by bacteria can be cured with a short course of antibiotics. If diagnosed and treated soon after infection, a bacterial STI is generally less likely to cause damage to the body.

STIs caused by viruses cannot be cured with antibiotics, but the symptoms can be managed with medication. If you have a viral STI it is important to talk to a health professional about how best to manage and treat the infection.



THE CHANCES OF GETTING OR PASSING STIs

For an STI to be passed during sex, one of the partners has to have the infection. It is not always possible to know whether someone has an infection just by looking at them. Some symptoms, such as blisters, warts or sores, can be obvious, but that's not always the case. Many people with STIs don't even know they have an infection because they have no symptoms. Even if they do know, they might not be comfortable talking about the infection.

The chances of getting or passing an STI can change depending on:

- the type of STI
- the type of sex you're having
- whether or not steps are taken to lower the chances of getting or passing an STI

The following charts will help you to better understand the chances of getting or passing an STI, depending on the type of sex you're having. Having the right information about risk can help you decide what you're comfortable with. Many STIs are passed in similar ways, but some are more commonly passed than others under certain conditions. Keep in mind that comfort levels can change over time and under different circumstances, but when you have the facts it's easier to have the sex you want and take care of your sexual health at the same time. The charts are based on sex where no risk-reduction tools are used (for example, using a condom or consistently taking antiretroviral medication to maintain low levels of HIV in the blood). The information is based on the latest research, but they are general estimates only and may not cover every situation.

THE CATEGORIES WE'VE USED:

COMMONLY PASSED

The infection is commonly passed this way.

CAN BE PASSED

The infection can be passed this way with the right conditions.

NOT COMMONLY PASSED

This is not a common way to pass the infection but it may be possible under certain circumstances.

NOT PASSED

There is no possibility for passing the infection.



KISSING

(with tongue)

COMMONLY
PASSED

CAN BE
PASSED

NOT COMMONLY
PASSED

NOT
PASSED

HERPES (HSV)

GONORRHEA
SYPHILIS
HPV

CHLAMYDIA
HEP B
HIV

TO REDUCE YOUR RISK...

- Avoid kissing if you or your partners have sores on the lips or mouth, or if one of you has an active oral infection (such as a herpes outbreak).

FINGERING & HAND JOBS

(fingerjob, fingerfucking, mutual masturbation)

COMMONLY
PASSED

CAN BE
PASSED

NOT COMMONLY
PASSED

NOT
PASSED

SYPHILIS
HERPES (HSV)
HEP B
HPV

GONORRHEA
CHLAMYDIA
HIV







GETTING CUNNILINGUS

(oral sex, licking pussy, eating out, going down)

COMMONLY PASSED	CAN BE PASSED	NOT COMMONLY PASSED	NOT PASSED
HERPES (HSV) HPV SYPHILIS		CHLAMYDIA GONORRHEA HEP B	HIV

TO REDUCE YOUR RISK...

- Cover your vulva with a barrier such as an oral dam or cut condom.

GIVING CUNNILINGUS

(oral sex, licking pussy, eating out, going down)

COMMONLY PASSED	CAN BE PASSED	NOT COMMONLY PASSED	NOT PASSED
HERPES (HSV) HPV SYPHILIS		CHLAMYDIA GONORRHEA HIV* HEP B	

TO REDUCE YOUR RISK...

- Cover your partner's vulva with a barrier such as an oral dam or cut condom.

* LEARN MORE ABOUT HOW TO LOWER OR ELIMINATE THE CHANCE OF HIV PASSING DURING SEX ON PAGE 43.

GETTING FELLATIO

(oral sex, blow job, getting head, headjob, blowing, going down)

COMMONLY
PASSED

CAN BE
PASSED

NOT COMMONLY
PASSED

NOT
PASSED

CHLAMYDIA
GONORRHEA
HPV
HERPES (HSV)
SYPHILIS

HEP B

HIV

TO REDUCE YOUR RISK...

- Use a condom on your penis.

GIVING FELLATIO

(oral sex, blow job, giving head, headjob, blowing, going down)

COMMONLY
PASSED

CAN BE
PASSED

NOT COMMONLY
PASSED

NOT
PASSED

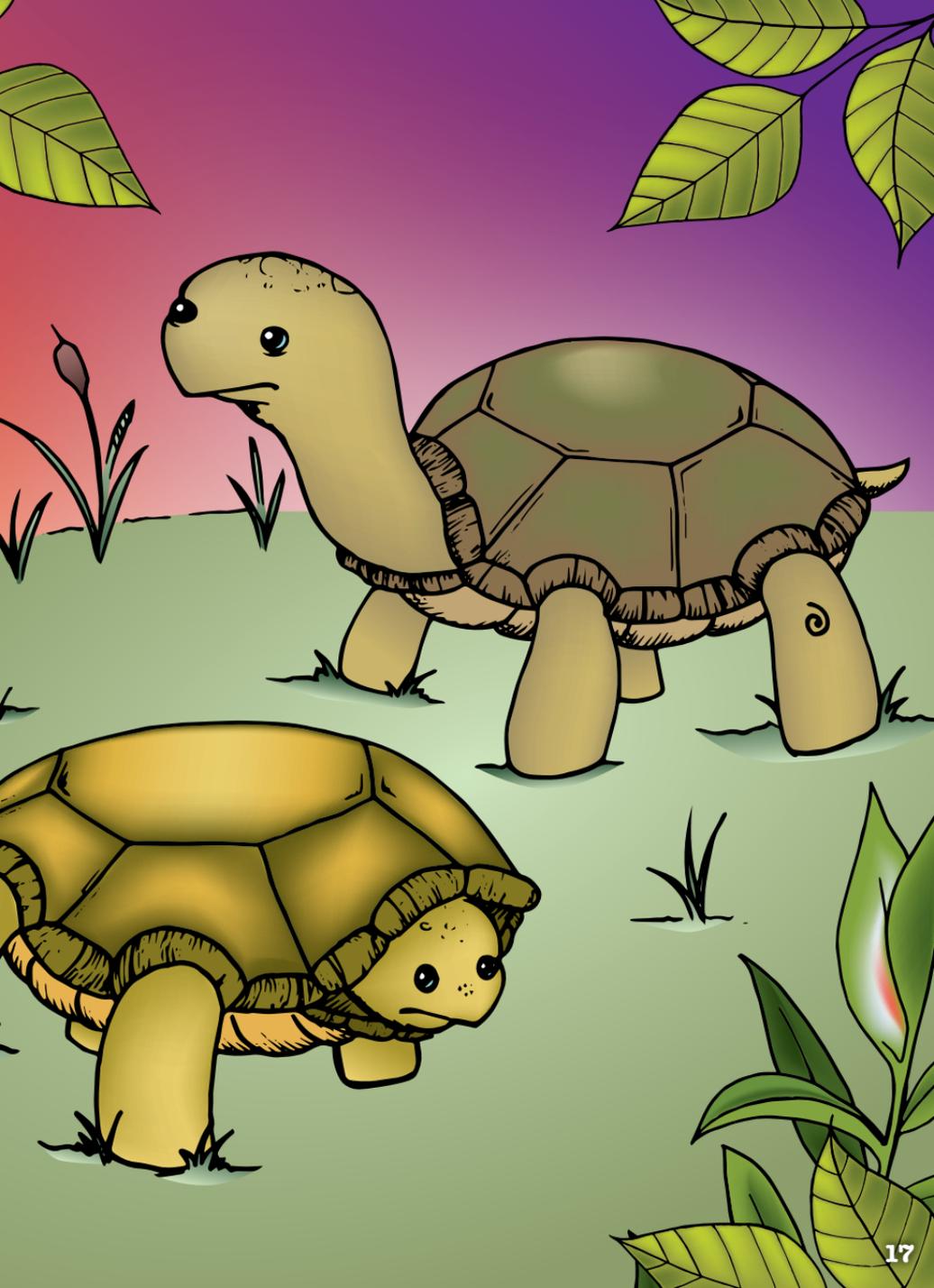
CHLAMYDIA
GONORRHEA
HPV
HERPES (HSV)
SYPHILIS

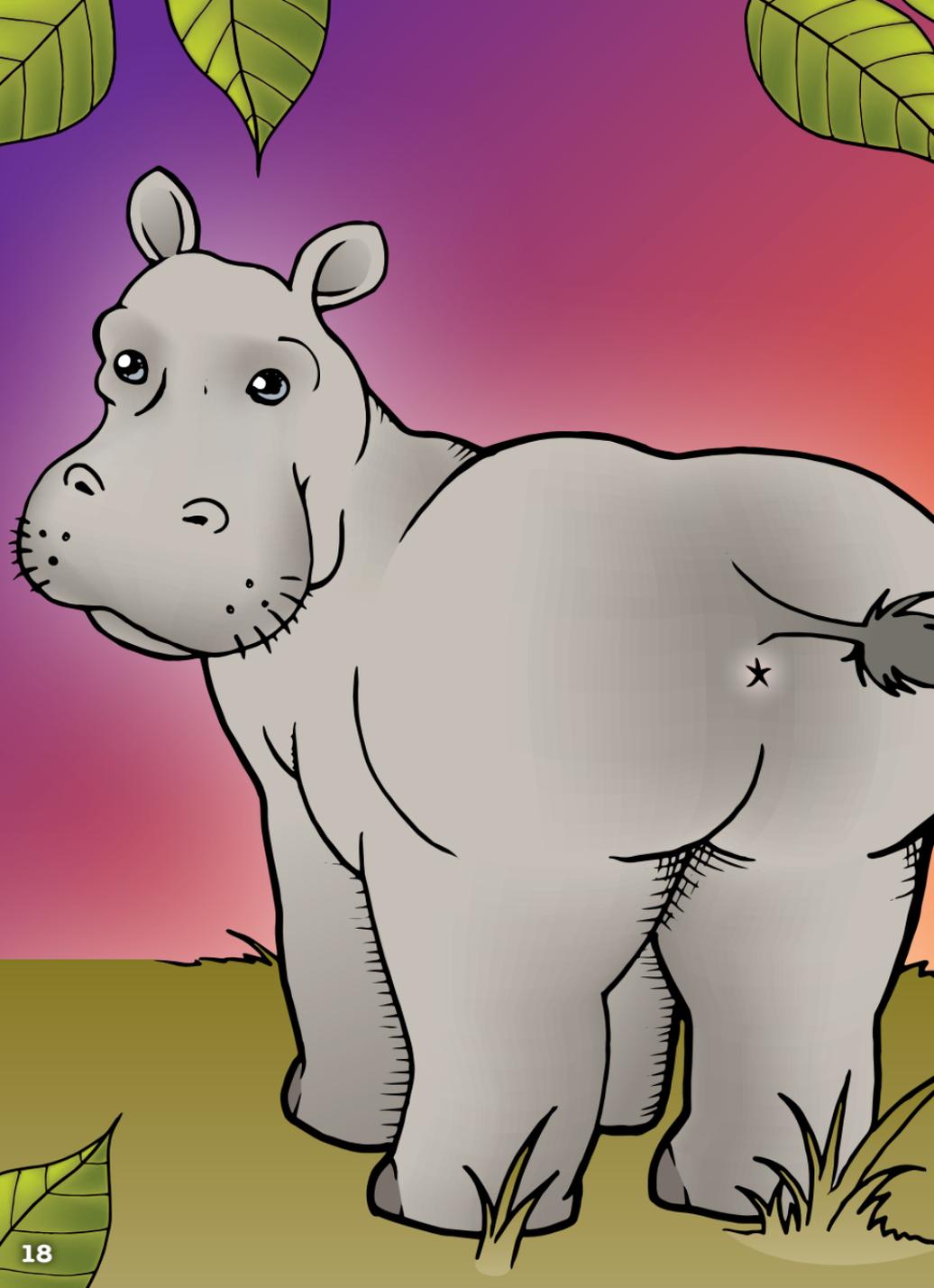
HEP B
HIV*

TO REDUCE YOUR RISK...

- Use a condom on your partner's penis.

* LEARN MORE ABOUT HOW TO LOWER OR ELIMINATE THE CHANCE OF HIV PASSING DURING SEX ON PAGE 43.





GIVING & GETTING ANILINGUS

(rimming, eating ass, eating out)

COMMONLY
PASSED

CAN BE
PASSED

NOT COMMONLY
PASSED

NOT
PASSED

HEP A*
HEP B
HERPES (HSV)
HPV
SYPHILIS

CHLAMYDIA
GONORRHEA

HIV

TO REDUCE YOUR RISK...

- Cover the anus with a barrier such as an oral dam or cut condom.

* A PERSON CAN GET HEPATITIS A FROM *GIVING* ANILINGUS, BUT NOT FROM *RECEIVING* IT.

PENIS-VAGINA INTERCOURSE

(fucking) insertive & receptive

**COMMONLY
PASSED**

**CAN BE
PASSED**

**NOT COMMONLY
PASSED**

**NOT
PASSED**

CHLAMYDIA
GONORRHEA
HEP B
HERPES (HSV)
HIV*
HPV
SYPHILIS

HEP C

PENIS-ANUS INTERCOURSE

(butt fucking, anal sex)

insertive & receptive or bottoming & topping

**COMMONLY
PASSED**

**CAN BE
PASSED**

**NOT COMMONLY
PASSED**

**NOT
PASSED**

CHLAMYDIA
GONORRHEA
HEP B
HERPES (HSV)
HIV*
HPV
SYPHILIS

HEP C

TO REDUCE YOUR RISK...

- Use a condom.

* LEARN MORE ABOUT HOW TO LOWER OR ELIMINATE THE CHANCE OF HIV PASSING DURING SEX ON PAGE 43.





SHARING SEX TOYS

(dildos, vibrators and other toys)

COMMONLY
PASSED

CAN BE
PASSED

NOT COMMONLY
PASSED

NOT
PASSED

CHLAMYDIA
GONORRHEA
HEP B
HEP C
HERPES (HSV)
HIV*
HPV
SYPHILIS

TO REDUCE YOUR RISK...

- Wash sex toys thoroughly with soap or disinfectant before and after each use.
- Use a new condom on inserted toys (such as dildos) for each partner. Make sure you change the condoms between partners.
- Place a condom or oral dam between a vibrator and the skin.

* LEARN MORE ABOUT HOW TO LOWER OR ELIMINATE THE CHANCE OF HIV PASSING DURING SEX ON PAGE 43.

OTHER ACTIVITIES AND THE CHANCES OF GETTING/PASSING STIs

Scatophilia (shit play, scat): HIV is not passed this way, but there are other infections that can be passed, such as Hep A and intestinal parasites. If there are breaks on the skin (like cuts, scrapes or sores), avoid play on or near them, as this increases the chances of passing infections.

Urolagnia (urinating, golden showers, watersports): HIV is not passed this way, but other infections can be passed if urine enters the vagina, mouth or anus. If there are breaks on the skin, avoid play near the breaks, as this increases the chances of passing infections.

Fisting is when part or all of the hand is put into the vagina or anus. HIV is not commonly passed this way, however, other STIs may be more commonly passed. If blood is present, the chance of passing on HIV or Hep C is higher. To reduce the chances of passing infections, wear a latex glove (a new one for each partner) and use lubricant (fresh, separate portions for each partner).



Bondage, Domination, Sadism and Masochism (BDSM) and sex where blood might be present:

The risk-reduction tools discussed in this guide, such as using condoms and oral dams on sex toys, can also be used during BDSM play.

Extra care should be taken for activities that involve drawing blood or causing breaks in the skin, as HIV and Hep C can be passed this way.

Avoid getting bodily fluids in your own or in your partner's mouth, vagina, anus, penis and open cuts or sores.

If your play involves using objects that cannot be sterilized (like whips) and these lead to breaks in the skin, avoid using them on more than one person.

Avoid sharing equipment for any play that involves piercing, cutting or branding.





BACTERIAL STI BASICS

Chlamydia often has no symptoms. When symptoms do occur, they usually take two to three weeks to appear, but they can also take up to six weeks. Symptoms include unusual discharge from the vagina, urethra (pee hole) or anus and painful urination (a burning feeling when you pee). Chlamydia can also infect the throat, causing it to be sore. It can be effectively treated and cured with a short course of antibiotics. Undiagnosed or untreated chlamydia can damage the reproductive organs.

Gonorrhea often has no symptoms. When symptoms do occur, they often appear two to seven days after infection and can include discharge from the vagina, urethra or anus and painful urination. Gonorrhea can also infect the throat, causing it to be sore. It can be effectively treated and cured with antibiotics but some strains of gonorrhea have become resistant to some antibiotics. Undiagnosed or untreated gonorrhea can damage the reproductive organs.

Syphilis involves several stages but often has no symptoms. If symptoms do occur, they can take anywhere from three to 90 days to appear. In the first stage, one or more painless sores may develop on the genitals, anus or mouth. The sores and fluids in them are very infectious. In the second stage of infection, some people may get a rash. Syphilis can be effectively treated and cured with antibiotics. Undiagnosed or untreated syphilis can cause damage to the brain, heart and other organs in the long term.





VIRAL STI BASICS

Hepatitis A (Hep A) affects the liver and interferes with usual liver functions. When symptoms (such as fatigue and loss of appetite) occur, they can take two to six weeks to appear. Most adults with Hep A have some symptoms. Hep A can be passed sexually when there is oral contact with infected feces (poo), for example, during rimming or anilingus. Most people recover from Hep A and their bodies are able to fight off the infection without treatment. There is a vaccine to prevent Hep A infection.

Hepatitis B (Hep B) affects the liver and interferes with usual liver functions. Hep B often has no symptoms. If symptoms (such as fatigue and loss of appetite) do occur, they can take two to three months to appear. Hep B can be passed sexually through blood, semen (cum) and vaginal fluids carrying the virus. If left untreated, it can cause liver damage. Most adults recover from Hep B and their bodies are able to fight off the infection without treatment. However, most babies and some children are not able to fight off Hep B and will develop a chronic infection. There is a vaccine to prevent Hep B infection and treatment keeps the virus under control.

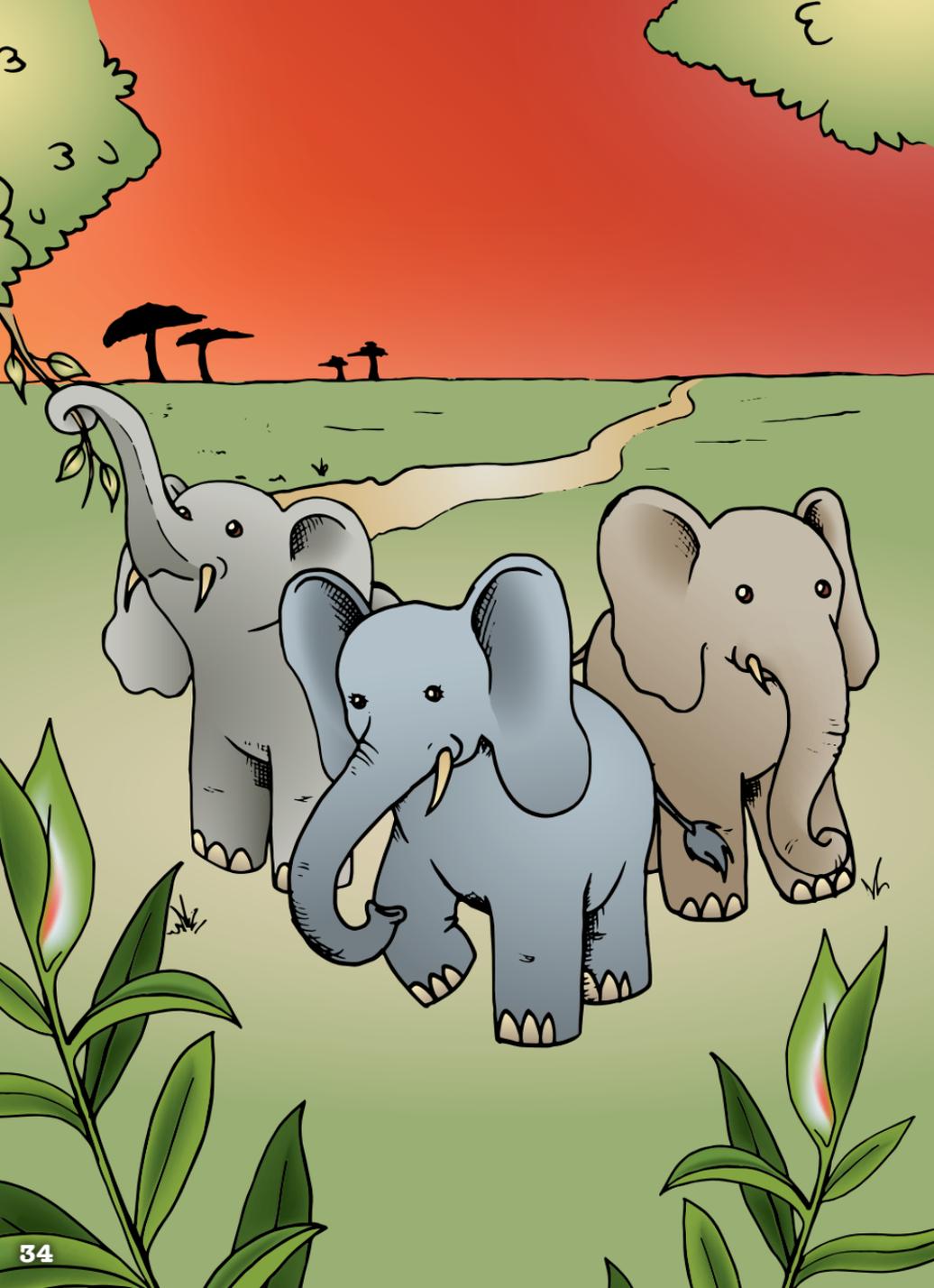
Hepatitis C (Hep C) attacks the liver. Many people who have Hep C show no symptoms in the beginning and may have the virus for 20 to 30 years before any symptoms show up. Hep C is passed blood to blood through breaks in the skin or in the lining of the nose, mouth or genitals. In Canada, Hep C is most commonly passed through sharing equipment to inject drugs. Hep C can also be passed if people share equipment for smoking or snorting drugs.

It is not common for Hep C to be passed through sex. The risk increases with certain factors such as condomless anal sex, HIV, sexually transmitted infections, sex where blood is present, group sex and party and play. Read about using drugs while having sex on page 44.

There is no vaccine to prevent Hep C but there is treatment that cures more than 95% of people with Hep C. It is possible to get Hep C again after being cured if the virus gets into the blood.

Herpes simplex virus (HSV): There are two types of herpes simplex virus: HSV-1 and HSV-2. Herpes is one of the most common STIs. Most people don't have symptoms, but if a person does have symptoms they include a tingling or burning feeling in the skin or an outbreak of sores/blisters in the genital area or on the mouth and lips (cold sores). When symptoms do occur, they can take anywhere from two to 21 days to appear. HSV-1 is most often found around the mouth and lips (causing cold sores), but it can also be passed to the genitals through oral sex (mouth to penis, vagina or anus) and genital-to-genital contact. HSV-2 most often shows up on the genitals and is usually passed through genital-to-genital contact. People can pass HSV even if they do not have outbreaks. There is no vaccine to prevent herpes and no cure for herpes but medication can help reduce the number and severity of outbreaks.





Human papillomavirus (HPV) is a common viral infection that usually has no symptoms. If symptoms do occur, they can take months or years to appear. Some strains of HPV cause genital warts and some strains of HPV can eventually lead to cancers of the cervix, vagina, vulva, anus, penis or throat. Most cases of HPV clear on their own within two years. Genital warts can be treated by freezing or putting medication on the skin, but the warts may come back. There are vaccines to prevent HPV and they are best taken before a person becomes sexually active. Vaccines can also offer protection to people who are already sexually active because they may not have been exposed to all the strains of the virus covered by the vaccines.

Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is a virus that weakens the body's immune system (the body's built-in defence against disease). Some people develop flu-like symptoms when they first get HIV, but many people have no symptoms. It is possible to live for many years without symptoms. HIV can be passed through sex or sharing equipment for injecting drugs. Having an STI may increase the chances of passing HIV to sex partners. Having an STI may also make it more likely to get HIV. It is important to make testing for HIV and STIs a regular part of your health care.

There is no cure for HIV, but there is highly effective treatment that can reduce the amount of virus in the body and help people live long, healthy lives. Successful treatment also prevents passing HIV through sex. Without HIV treatment, the immune system becomes too weak to fight off serious illness.



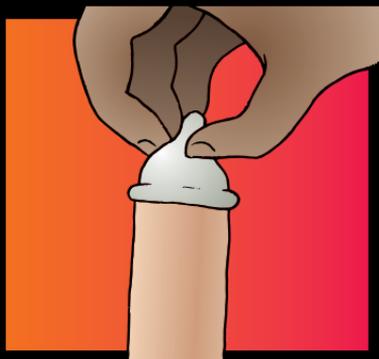
USING CONDOMS

Using condoms correctly and consistently can significantly reduce your chances of passing or getting HIV and other STIs. There are two types of condoms available. The external condom (sometimes known as the male condom) is a sheath made from polyurethane, latex or polyisoprene that covers the penis during sex. The internal condom (sometimes known as the insertive or female condom) is a pouch made of polyurethane or a synthetic latex material called nitrile that can be inserted into the vagina or anus. (There are also lambskin condoms, which prevent pregnancy, but do not reduce the risk of getting or passing HIV or STIs.) Make sure that you use a new condom each time you have sex. If you are having sex with more than one person at a time, use a new condom with each partner. Use a condom on inserted sex toys (such as dildos) and an oral dam between the skin and vibrators.

Using a lubricant (lube) not only helps make sex feel good, it also reduces friction, making it less likely for a condom to break during sex. Using lube also helps to reduce cuts and tears during sex, making it harder for HIV and other STIs to enter the body.

Be sure to use a water-based or silicone-based lube when using a condom. Oil-based lubricants, such as baby oil or coconut oil, can cause the condom to break or get damaged, even if you can't see it.

HOW TO USE AN EXTERNAL CONDOM



1 2
3 4

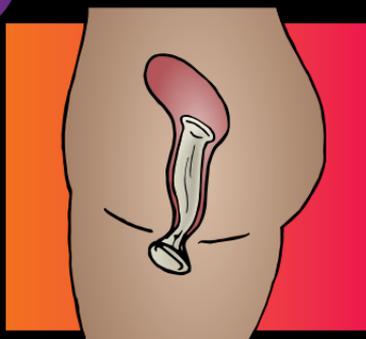


DON'T FORGET THE LUBE!

HOW TO USE AN INTERNAL CONDOM



1 2
3 4

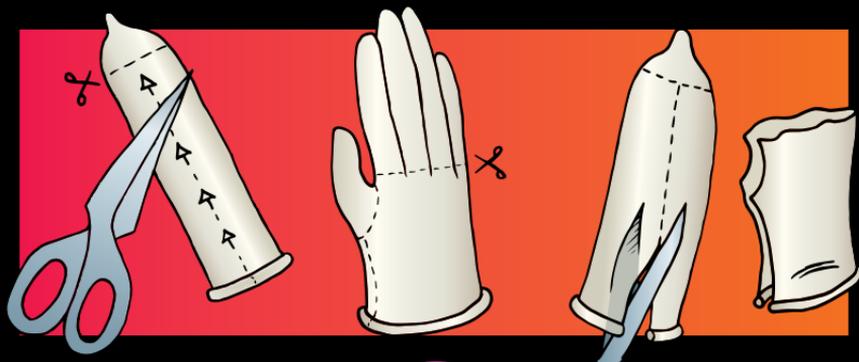


To remove, squeeze & twist.

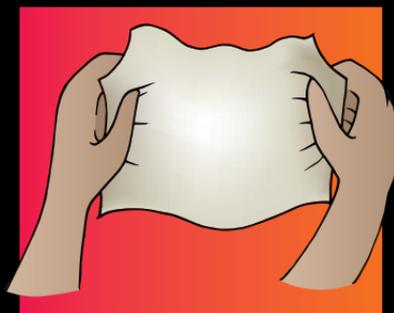


HOW TO MAKE AN ORAL DAM USING A CONDOM OR A GLOVE

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1
2 3



DON'T FORGET THE LUBE!



GETTING TESTED

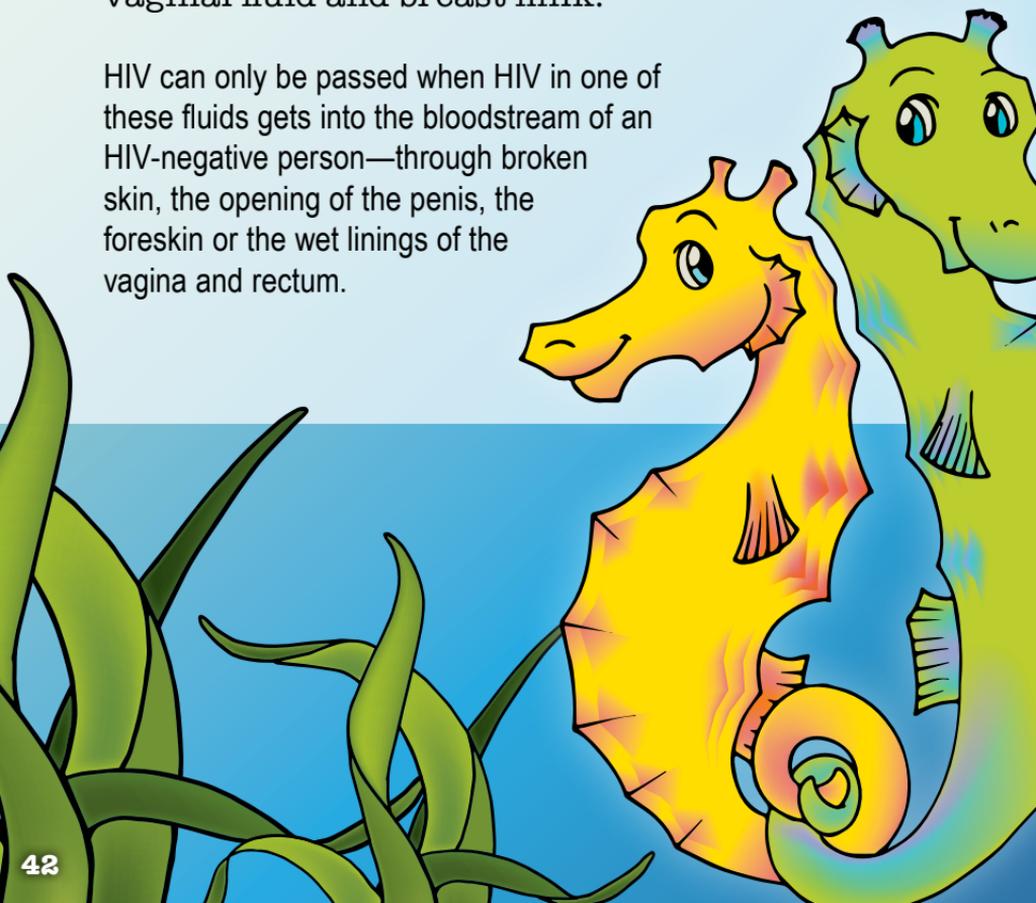
Many STIs have no symptoms, so **getting tested is the only way to know for sure if you have an STI.** This may involve a blood or urine test or a swab of the throat, vagina, rectum or urethra (pee hole). The type of testing depends on the type of STI. We often think that STIs only infect the genitals, but some can also infect the anus and the throat. It's important to talk to your healthcare provider about the kinds of sex you're having so all the right spots can be tested.

How often you should be tested depends on how often you're having sex and the kinds of sex you're having. Talk to your healthcare provider about when to test.

PREVENTING HIV INFECTION

HIV is harder to transmit during sex than many people think. Only five body fluids can contain enough HIV to infect someone: blood, semen (including pre-cum), rectal fluid, vaginal fluid and breast milk.

HIV can only be passed when HIV in one of these fluids gets into the bloodstream of an HIV-negative person—through broken skin, the opening of the penis, the foreskin or the wet linings of the vagina and rectum.



Here are steps you can take to reduce the chances of passing or getting HIV through sex:



Use a new condom with each partner for anal and vaginal sex. Condoms reduce the chances of passing or getting HIV and other STIs.



Use lube. It helps make sex feel good and prevents friction, cuts and tears during sex.



Choose activities with a lower chance of passing HIV, such as oral sex, mutual masturbation and hand jobs.



Get tested for STIs regularly. Having an STI increases your risk of getting and passing HIV and other STIs.



If you are HIV positive, take your HIV treatment. People who are HIV positive, engaged in care, consistently take their HIV treatment and attain low levels of HIV in their blood (also known as undetectable viral load) **do not pass on HIV** to their sexual partners.



Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) involves the use of specific HIV drugs by HIV-negative people as part of their HIV prevention strategy. For HIV-negative people who take PrEP as prescribed and have regular ongoing medical care, it is rare to become HIV positive through sex. Talk to your care provider to find out more about PrEP and whether it is right for you.

KEEP IN MIND THAT HIV TREATMENT AND PREP DO NOT REDUCE THE CHANCES OF PASSING OR GETTING OTHER STIS.

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USING DRUGS WHILE HAVING SEX

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Some people use recreational drugs during sex. Drugs can heighten sexual pleasure but they can also lead to lowered inhibitions, making it easier to make choices you wouldn't usually make.

There are steps you can take to reduce the chances of passing HIV or Hep C if you're using drugs:



If you snort drugs, use your own straw or bumper. Rolled-up sticky notes make single-use, disposable straws.



If you smoke drugs, such as crystal meth, avoid sharing your pipe. If you do share a pipe, use your own mouthpiece.



If you inject drugs, avoid sharing any equipment, including syringes, filters, cookers, acidifiers, alcohol swabs, tourniquets and water. Try to use new equipment each time. Many communities offer services that provide new drug use equipment. These services have different names, such as needle and syringe programs or harm reduction programs. Ask a trusted health worker for more information about services in your area.





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RESOURCES

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CATIE is Canada's source for HIV and hepatitis C information. www.catie.ca

Public Health Agency of Canada provides information on sexual health and sexually transmitted infections. www.publichealth.gc.ca/sti

Sex and U is committed to providing credible and up-to-date information and education on sexual health. www.sexandu.ca

Action Canada for Sexual Health & Rights is a progressive, pro-choice organization advancing and upholding sexual and reproductive health and rights in Canada and globally. www.sexualhealthandrights.ca



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Canada's source for
HIV and hepatitis C
information

La source canadienne
de renseignements sur
le VIH et l'hépatite C



Disclaimer: Information provided by CATIE and SIECCAN is not medical advice. Decisions about medical treatments should always be made in consultation with a medical practitioner knowledgeable about HIV and hepatitis C. CATIE and SIECCAN endeavour to provide the most up-to-date and accurate information at the time of publication. However, information changes and users are encouraged to ensure they have the most current information. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of CATIE, SIECCAN, other partners or the Public Health Agency of Canada. Production of this document has been made possible through a financial contribution from the Public Health Agency of Canada.

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