

GUIDE TO THIS LEAFLET

This booklet contains information, which as a gay man with HIV, you should find useful to keep a check on Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs).

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INTRODUCTION

Like it or not, the reality is that there are Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) in this world, and if you have sex, you face some kind of risk of picking one up.

STIs are more easy to get than HIV. Having an STI can put extra stress on your immune system which can affect your health. Having one may also cause your viral load to increase which could mean that you may be more infectious (in terms of HIV) to your partners and may pass on or get infections more easily.

STIs can also sometimes be more difficult to get rid of and might cause more complications for you when you're HIV positive than they would for someone who is not.

If left untreated, STIs may contribute to the progression of HIV disease and can increase the likelihood of transmission of HIV.

It's worth having regular full check ups for STIs to make sure you haven't got any or that you haven't picked anything up. This is important as you may have picked up an STI without realising it and are showing no noticeable symptoms - the only way you can tell this is to go to a clinic for a check up.

This booklet is intended to provide you with a quick guide to the most common STIs around and as such is not meant to be fully comprehensive.

If you have any concerns about anything to do with your health it is always best to have things checked out by a trained professional, such as a doctor at a GUM clinic, your clinician or your GP. Leaving any infection or illness untreated may cause complications to your health and contribute to an increased progression in your HIV infection. Telephone numbers for most GUM clinics in central London are listed at the back of this booklet.

If you want an informal discussion about what to expect at GUM clinics, examinations and what they offer, phone the clinic and ask to speak to someone who can provide you with this information such as a health advisor.

If you do have any STIs it is recommended that you tell as many of your sexual partners as possible (who may also be affected), so they can get checked out as well, and so keep the spread of it minimised. It is also advisable to have a full check up for all STIs as you could have more than one.

In addition it is advisable with many STIs to stop having sex with your partners until treatment has been completed so you avoid (re)infecting each other.

As a final point, it is also recommended that after you have completed any treatment that you go back for a check up to get the all clear if necessary.

ANAL & PENILE WARTS

are caused by a virus that lives in the body. Once you've got it, you may or may not be able to get rid of it, but there's no easy way of knowing. If your body can't get rid of it, it doesn't necessarily mean you will keep getting them. Warts are a common condition & treatable.

SYMPTOMS: Warts can be seen as small growths on the cock or around and inside the anus. They can develop into cauliflower-like growths if untreated. Occasionally they can appear in your mouth, on your face or other parts of your body and are usually lighter in colour than the surrounding skin. They can sometimes be itchy and any in your arse can bleed.

HOW YOU GET THEM & HOW TO REDUCE THE RISK OF GETTING THEM: If you (or someone else) has warts, you are usually most infectious to other people if the warts are visible. Using a condom when fucking

and covering them during sex with a latex barrier (dental dam or piece of condom) until they have been treated will help stop passing them on or getting them. It is however also possible to get or pass on the wart virus when they are not visible.

TREATMENT: Genital warts can be treated in a variety of ways. A chemical can be painted onto the warts which "burns" them off, a cream is sometimes used or they can be treated by freezing them with liquid nitrogen. They usually require more than one treatment and can be more difficult to treat if you are positive and can also recur after treatment. It is important to get warts looked at as soon as possible. It's also advisable if you have warts to get your sexual partners to have a check up too.

C**HLAMYDIA** is a common infection caused by bacteria and is the commonest cause of Non-Specific Urethritis (see NSU).

SYMPTOMS: It can take up to 3 weeks for the symptoms to show up (if they do at all). Symptoms might include pain or stinging when peeing, or a milky discharge from your cock or arse, which may be inflamed and painful. Chlamydia can also affect your eyes and throat, or cause pain in your balls.

HOW YOU GET IT & HOW TO REDUCE THE RISK OF GETTING IT: Chlamydia can be passed on if you fuck without condoms. You may also get it through oral sex (which is uncommon) and rimming, so you might talk to your partner(s) about STIs and consider using condoms or dental dams. It is important to get your sexual partner(s) to have a check up to avoid re-infection.

TREATMENT: Treatment for chlamydia is normally a course of antibiotics and laying off sex for a week to ten days.

C**RABS (PUBIC LICE)** are small parasites (that look like tiny crabs about the size of a small freckle) that live in the hair on your body - though it is very rare for you to get them on you head

SYMPTOMS: You would normally know about them through the itching in your pubic hair, or may also notice them in your armpits, groin, chest hair, eyebrows and eyelashes. Their eggs can be seen attached to body hairs.

HOW YOU GET THEM & HOW TO REDUCE THE RISK OF GETTING THEM:

Crabs are easily passed on through skin contact or through sharing towels, clothes, and bed linen. It's advisable not to have sex until they've been treated to avoid passing them on.

TREATMENT: Crabs can be easily treated using a lotion which is available without prescription from the chemist. It's important to follow the instructions carefully as some

people have found that allergies or reactions can result from using some lotions. Since crabs and eggs can also be in your clothes and bedding it is necessary to do a hot wash of everything you've been wearing or using at the same time as you use the lotion. If not treated properly re-infection is likely to occur. Your sexual partners and house mates should also check themselves for crabs as they are easily caught/transmitted.

G **IARDIA** is caused by protozoa which multiply in your guts. Like Hepatitis A it is usually caused by poor hygiene, or contaminated water/food, but can be transmitted sexually especially through rimming, scat and other kinds of arse play.

SYMPTOMS: Typical symptoms include diarrhoea, farting, cramps and nausea. However you can be infected and have no symptoms. Giardia infection can be

especially problematic to evaluate when you have HIV.

HOW YOU GET IT & HOW TO REDUCE THE RISK OF GETTING IT:

Any sex which involves contact with shit has the potential for transmission. Fucking, fingering or fisting could lead to transmission if shit gets from someone's cock or hand to someone else's mouth. The most common route of sexual transmission is from rimming, and scat scenes also have a high risk if shit gets in the mouth. If you want to be sure about avoiding infection it is advisable to use a barrier (dental dam or piece of condom) when rimming and in other activities to keep shit away from your mouth. Washing thoroughly (especially under finger nails) after any sex involving arse play can help reduce the likelihood of transmission. It might be a good idea if you or your partner has any kind of gut problems to avoid rimming or scat until it has cleared up. It would be advisable to consider vaccination for Hep A as well.



TREATMENT: Giardia is usually treated with antibiotics. If you have any regular sexual partner(s) they may also need treatment as they are likely to be infected even if they do not have symptoms.

GONORRHOEA is often called 'the clap' and is caused by bacteria that live in moist parts of the body, most commonly in the throat, arse, mouth and the tube inside the cock (urethra). It is very common and easy to spread or catch.

SYMPTOMS: You may have no noticeable symptoms if you are infected with gonorrhoea, especially if you have it in your arse, throat or mouth. However symptoms may include a discharge or pain when shitting or a sore throat. If you get it in your cock you usually (though not always) get symptoms which may include a white or yellow discharge, pain when pissing, or pain in the balls.

HOW YOU GET IT & HOW TO REDUCE THE RISK OF GETTING IT:

Gonorrhoea can be easily passed on if you fuck without condoms, through oral sex and rimming, and by getting the bacteria on your fingers and then touching other parts of the body (like fingering someone's arse and then wanking off). To reduce the chances of getting it, it might be worth talking to your partners about STIs and/or use condoms or dental dams. It is advisable though if you, or your partner(s), have gonorrhoea not to have sex until any treatment has been completely finished. This is because you can still have it and pass it on when any noticeable symptoms have disappeared. You need to be sure to go for your final check-up to get the all clear in case you had a drug resistant strain.

TREATMENT: Gonorrhoea is usually treated using antibiotics. Identifying gonorrhoea early and getting the correct treatment may reduce the likelihood of complications associated with an untreated infection. This is because you can have it and be

symptomless, and so have it without realising it (especially in your throat or arse). Therefore, it may be worth considering having regular check ups. This is especially so since some strains of gonorrhoea are resistant to certain drugs and so have to be treated more aggressively.

HEPATITIS is a general term used to describe inflammation of the liver. It can result from infection by viruses or be caused by many other things such as long term alcohol use and the use of certain drugs. The most common type of hepatitis is that resulting from infection by viruses. Some of these viruses can eventually cause permanent damage to your liver and health. The three fairly common viruses that cause hepatitis are the Hepatitis A, B & C viruses (though these are all different viruses). At present there are vaccinations available for Hep A and Hep B. If you have HIV Hep viruses can cause a temporary increase in your viral load. If you are on HIV

treatments they could potentially increase the risk of you developing drug resistance to any anti-HIV drugs you are on, especially if your viral load is detectable. However, the lower your viral load and the higher your CD4 count the more likely you will respond to the vaccines with little or no impact on your drug resistance. Most doctors recommend (unless you have a very badly damaged immune system) to have the vaccinations.

H **EPATITIS A (HEP A)** Some people never show symptoms of Hepatitis A.

SYMPTOMS: If you do get symptoms they might include diarrhoea, tiredness, aches & pains, dark coloured piss, jaundice, pale shit or weight loss. The incubation period after infection can vary from 2 to 7 weeks followed by an illness which can last up to 3 weeks or more. You may also experience generalised itching especially if you are jaundiced.

HOW YOU GET IT & HOW TO REDUCE THE RISK OF GETTING IT:

The best way to reduce the risk of getting Hep A is to get vaccinated (see treatment). The risk of transmission is associated with poor hygiene and from contaminated food or water. So while hepatitis A is not normally considered a sexually transmitted infection you can get it through rimming and scat. To avoid hepatitis A it is best to use dental dams when rimming. Washing your hands after going to the toilet or being in contact with shit also helps in reducing the likelihood of getting Hep A.

TREATMENT: There is no treatment for Hep A. Doctors recommend that you rest and avoid alcohol while the body overcomes the virus. There is however a vaccine available, from most GUM/HIV clinics & GPs. If you are in good health it is recommended that you have the vaccine to protect you from infection. If you're not immune to Hep A and have been exposed, an injection of gammaglobulin can be given to reduce the

chance of developing Hepatitis or its symptoms.

H EPATITIS B (HEP B) can cause long-term liver disease.

SYMPTOMS: Some people will have no symptoms of hepatitis B. If you do get any they might include tiredness, jaundice, loss of appetite, dark urine, pale shit and stomach pains. You may also experience generalised itching especially if you are jaundiced.

HOW YOU GET IT & HOW TO REDUCE THE RISK OF GETTING IT: The best way to reduce the risk of getting Hep B is to get vaccinated (see treatment). Hep B is passed on the same way as HIV, but is far easier to pass on. There is a vaccination available which can be obtained from GUM/HIV clinics and GPs. Some of us may not develop immunity after vaccination or may lose it's

protection with time. If you haven't been vaccinated or have lost your immunity you might consider talking to your partners and deciding on the kind of sex you want so as to limit the likelihood of getting or giving hepatitis B. You should consider using condoms for anal sex and oral sex, dental dams for rimming and gloves when fisting or fingering.

TREATMENT: There is no cure for hepatitis B if you get it. Doctors recommend that you rest while the body overcomes the virus and don't drink alcohol and avoid lots of paracetamol. For those of us who have chronic hepatitis B infection, there are some treatments available but it may be impossible to get rid of the virus.

H EPATITIS C (HEP C)

Few people ever notice symptoms associated with Hep C. Often the only way to tell you have it is to have a blood test. About half the people who get Hep C can

clear it from their bodies within 6 months. If not chronic hepatitis, cirrhosis or liver cancer may develop in future years.

HOW YOU GET IT & HOW TO REDUCE THE RISK OF GETTING IT:

Hepatitis C is primarily transmitted via blood, and is common amongst injecting drug users. The Hep C virus is much stonger than HIV and remains infectious in blood outside the body for much longer than HIV (possibly up to a month compared to a few hours for HIV). It is difficult to transmit sexually. Sharing toothbrushes and razors is not advisable as they could have blood on them. The only possible sexual route would appear to be if blood is involved. Good preventative methods would therefore include using condoms, dental dams, latex gloves and water-based lube; especially on sex toys.

TREATMENT: Treatment for people who have both HIV and HCV is a very specialised area and you should consult a specialist in this field if you have them both. Standard

treatment for HCV is tending towards dual therapy with alpha interferon and ribivarin. However both these drugs have side effects or potential interactions with some anti-HIV drugs. In addition current treatments do not work for everyone who has Hep C.

H **ERPES** is caused by two types of the herpes simplex virus.

SYMPTOMS: Some people will not have any symptoms. Type I typically causes cold sores around the mouth while Type II causes sores or blisters around the cock and arse. Most people will get a tingling in the area prior to a blister forming which breaks down into a sore which then usually heals up. Herpes can also affect eyes, oesophagus, brain and other parts of the body in those with badly damaged immune systems.

HOW YOU GET IT & HOW TO REDUCE THE RISK OF GETTING IT: Transmission of herpes is most likely to occur when you

come into contact with open herpes sores. To prevent contracting or transmitting herpes your doctors may recommend that you avoid having sex or kissing someone with herpes sores until they have healed or that you use condoms and dental dams to prevent contact with open sores during sex. You can also reduce the chances of transmission by washing your hands after touching sores and not sharing towels.

TREATMENT: Aciclovir (or other anti-virals such as Valaciclovir or Famciclovir) can help in the treatment of herpes. These drugs can be especially beneficial in the initial occurrence, where they will help the sores heal quicker and reduce the likelihood of recurrences. Bathing the sores in salt water can be soothing and may terminate occurrences. Avoiding exposure to direct sunlight and or using a strong sunblock can also help. At present there is no cure for herpes and so after the initial occurrence they can reoccur - usually in the same place. Herpes occurrences are fairly easily triggered

if you get run down, stressed or are ill. The herpes antiviral drugs can also be used as a prophylaxis to help stop occurrences or reduce the symptoms. This is important since, if you are positive, recurrences of herpes may be more frequent, severe and longer lasting.

HIV Some people think that because they have HIV they can't get anything worse. There are however, different strains of HIV around, some of which are resistant to anti-HIV drugs. It's still not clear how easily these strains can be transmitted. However, this could mean that it may be possible for you to get or pass on a strain of HIV which is resistant to treatment. This may then reduce the number of treatment options open to you.

HOW TO REDUCE THE RISK OF GETTING DIFFERENT STRAINS: You can minimise the likelihood of transmission of different strains of HIV (including drug resistant ones)

by using condoms and water based lube when fucking or being fucked. As there is also a small risk HIV can be passed though oral sex (some guys got HIV this way in the first place) it may be possible to get or pass on different strains this way. There are ways that it may be possible to reduce the risk of passing on HIV. These include not getting cum in your mouth, not sucking cock if you have cuts or sores in your mouth and not sucking if you have another STI or a high viral load. If you are still concerned about getting different strains you can use condoms for oral sex.

K APOSI'S SARCOMA (KS)

SYMPTOMS: KS can be seen as flat patches on skin with pink or bruise colour. These may develop into nodules which do not go white when pressed. KS can also occur internally causing numerous other symptoms

related to the sites of the lesions. However, KS usually only shows up if your immune system is very weak, damaged or run down and so rarely affects people with good immune systems.

HOW YOU GET IT & HOW TO REDUCE THE RISK OF GETTING IT: it seems likely that a herpes virus causes KS. The virus is usually known as human herpes virus 8 (HHV-8). It is thought that HHV-8 may be spread through unprotected fucking, or rimming or possibly even kissing. Once again it's important to discuss with your partners what kind of sex you want. You might like to consider using condoms and dental dams to minimise the risk of getting it.

TREATMENT: Several treatments are available for KS and whether to treat will depend upon if lesions are few and external or many and/or internal. Treatment may include advice on camouflaging disfiguring lesions (available at many clinics) or localised radiotherapy, chemotherapy or cryotherapy

(freezing) may be suggested. While KS is an AIDS-defining condition, effective anti-HIV treatment has in some cases led to the disappearance of KS lesions. It may be true that the anti-HIV drugs some people are taking may also help in preventing KS. This is why anti-HIV drugs, particularly triple combinations which include a protease inhibitor are often used as a first line treatment for KS.

M **OLLUSCUM CONTAGIOSUM**
Is caused by a virus that affects the skin.

SYMPTOMS: include soft pearl-like growths about the size of a freckle on the skin, face, genitals around the arse. It can affect anyone, but is more common for those of us with HIV.

HOW YOU GET IT & HOW TO REDUCE THE RISK OF GETTING IT: You can get it through contact with or touching the

growths. This means that any form of sexual contact can result in transmission. If the growths are widespread doctors usually recommend avoiding sexual contact until the infection has cleared. However, using condoms will help reduce the risk if there are hidden growths in the arse. Molluscum on the face can be made worse by shaving with a blade. Electric razors can help reduce this.

TREATMENT: There is little effective treatment for molluscum. However some doctors report good results by scraping them off and using cryotherapy, especially if combined with an effective anti-HIV therapy. Effective anti-HIV treatment may also contribute to the disappearance of molluscum.

N ON-SPECIFIC URETHRITIS (NSU) is caused by bacteria that live in the cock, arse and mouth, and is very common. Most NSU is

caused by chlamydia or similar bugs such as mycoplasma.

SYMPTOMS: NSU usually effects your urethra (tube in your cock), but it is possible to have no symptoms if you have it. If you do have symptoms they might include burning sensation when pissing or a white sticky discharge from your cock or arse.

HOW YOU GET IT & HOW TO REDUCE THE RISK OF GETTING IT: Since most sexual activities will have potential for transmission, using condoms is recommended for fucking and oral sex.

TREATMENT: NSU is usually treated with antibiotics. A follow up appointment is recommended in order to check that the infection has cleared. If left untreated NSU can develop into a more serious infection.

S **CABIES** are mites that burrow & live under the skin.

SYMPTOMS: typically include itching of hands, between fingers, wrists, genitals, abdomen, buttocks and feet. These usually get worse during the night or when it's warm. Unfortunately, it can take up to 10 weeks after exposure to notice you have picked them up.

HOW YOU GET IT & HOW TO REDUCE THE RISK OF GETTING IT: Since scabies is transmitted by skin to skin contact this should be avoided if you or your partners have scabies. While the chances of transmission are minimal, you should also avoid sharing clothes or towels with someone with scabies until they have been treated.

TREATMENT: You can treat scabies with a lotion from a pharmacist. The lotion needs to be applied to the whole body except the face and scalp and left on for 24 hours. It is advisable to also hot wash bedclothes, towels and clothes.

SYPHILIS is caused by bacteria that usually lives in the arse and urethra. It is now fairly uncommon in the UK.

SYMPTOMS: Syphilis does not always have symptoms. If there are symptoms these might include sores in the genital area, cock, throat or arse which are typically not painful. Syphilis infection can lead to a skin rash with nausea, headaches, loss of appetite, fever and hair loss. If left untreated for a long time syphilis can cause serious damage to your heart, brain & nervous system, and can potentially cause death. Often it can only be diagnosed by doing a blood test.

HOW YOU GET IT & HOW TO REDUCE THE RISK OF GETTING IT: Syphilis is transmitted via physical contact with sores or rashes on the skin. The best prevention is to avoid contact with sores or rashes. Since the sores can be "hidden" you may chose to use condoms for fucking if you or your partner has syphilis. However it is strongly

advised not to have sex if you or a partner has active syphilis infection.

TREATMENT: Syphilis is usually treated with penicillin or another antibiotic. Follow up visits to your clinic are needed to ensure infection has cleared and regular check ups are important as syphilis is harder to treat the longer it's left. It is important to note that the blood tests for syphilis may not be accurate for people with HIV and a sample of cerebrospinal fluid may be required for testing (lumbar puncture).

THRUSH is caused by a fungus.

SYMPTOMS: Having HIV means you are more likely to develop symptoms if you get thrush. These might include irritation and inflammation around the head of the cock, redness and soreness around the anus or white patches in the mouth or throat. If you

have HIV, recurrent thrush is not uncommon. As such your doctor may offer you anti-fungal treatment on an ongoing basis. Oral thrush is common in HIV infection.

HOW YOU GET IT & HOW TO REDUCE THE RISK OF GETTING IT: Thrush usually arises independently of sex, however, it can sometimes be sexually transmitted. Condoms can be used to prevent transmission when fucking. There is a lower risk of getting thrush through oral sex and rimming and these are not thought to be a major route of infection.

TREATMENT: Thrush is usually treated with anti-fungal creams, tablets, sprays, or with live natural yoghurt.

CENTRAL LONDON GUM CLINICS

Many of these clinics offer services for gay men or "After Hours" sessions. If these interest you please ask about them when making your inquiry.

POSTAL CODE	CLINIC	PHONE NUMBER
E1	Ambrose King Centre	020 7377 7306
E9	Sexual Health, Homerton	020 8510 7989
E13	Sexual Health Dept., Newham	020 7363 8146
EC1	Bart's Sexual Health Centre	020 7601 8090
EN2	The Town Clinic	020 8370 2550
N15	St Ann's Sexual Health Centre	020 8442 6536
N19	Archway Sexual Health Clinic	020 7530 5800
NW3	Malbrough Clinic	020 7830 2047
NW10	Patrick Clements Clinic	020 8453 2221
SE1	Lloyd Clinic	020 7955 2108
SE1	Lydia Clinic	020 7955 2108
SE5	The Caldecot Centre	020 7346 3453
SE10	Greenwich GUM Dept.	020 8312 6056
SE13	Alexis Clinic (ext. 6388)	020 8333 3030
SM5	GUM Dept., St Helier	020 8296 2543
SW1	Victoria Clinic	020 8746 8700
SW10	John Hunter Clinic	020 8846 6171
SW15	Roehampton Clinic	020 8355 2077
SW17	Courtyard Sexual Health Clinic	020 8725 3353
TW7	Sexual Health - West Middx	020 8565 5718
WC	Mortimer Market Centre	020 7530 5050
W2	Jefferiss Wing, St. Mary's	020 7886 1225
W6	Sexual Health Charing Cross	020 8846 1567
UB1	GUM - Ealing Hospital	020 8967 5555

FURTHER INFORMATION

If you want further information on HIV services or treatments you could call:

Living Well Phone Line

0845 947 0047

Mon - Thurs 6pm -9pm

THT Direct

0845 1221 200

Mon - Fri 10am -10pm

Sat & Sun 12noon - 6pm

OR READ INFORMATION CONTAINED IN: AIDS treatment Update

each month (*free to people directly affected by HIV*) available from NAM (*National AIDS Manual*)

020 7627 3200

www.aidsmap.com

There are lots of other sources of information and support for gay & bisexual men about safe sex, HIV and sexually transmitted infections and living with HIV. Check out **MetroMate** www.metromate.org.uk or **Terrence Higgins Trust (THT)** www.tht.org.uk

If you want one-to-one counselling with a professional counsellor, the THT, PACE & HGLC will all be able to offer or recommend one. London Friend, East London Out Project, Blackliners & The Naz Project can also offer counselling

HGLC & PACE offer counselling for gay couples. And specialist sexual health counsellors can be consulted at THT and PACE as well as in all sexual health clinics.

PACE, GMFA & HGLC run a wide range of very popular evening and weekend discussion groups and workshops for gay and bisexual men. Look out for ads in gay magazines or check out www.metromate.org.uk for details.

You can also check out **Freedoms** website that has details of a wide range of services for gay men at www.freedoms.org.uk

CONTACT DETAILS

Blackliners

for black gay men

020 7738 7468/5274

www.blackliners.org

East London Out Project

56-70 Grove Rd E17

020 8509 3898

Gay Men Fighting AIDS (GMFA)

Unit 43 Eurolink Centre

49 Effra Rd SW2

020 7738 6872

Health Gay Living Centre (HGLC)

40 Borough High St SE1

020 7407 3550

London Friend

020 7837 3337 (7.30pm -10pm)

www.londonfriend.org.uk

Mainliners

for people affected by drug use, HIV and hepatitis

www.mainliners.org.uk

Naz Project

for Asian, Middle Eastern, North African and Latin American men

020 8741 1879

www.naz.org.uk

PACE

(Project for Advocacy Counselling & Education)

34 Hartham RD N7

020 7700 1323

www.pacehealth.org.uk

Terrence Higgins Trust

52-54 Grays Inn Rd WC1

THT Direct **0845 1221 200**

Living Well With HIV phonenumber

0845 947 0047

www.tht.org.uk

Notes

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**Information about
Sexually Transmitted
Infections for Gay
Men with HIV**

A



Z

**3rd
EDITION**