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Safer Sex

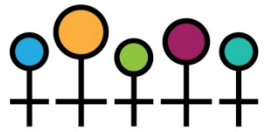
Last updated: January 15, 2020

Together, we can change the course of the HIV epidemic...one woman at a time.

#onewomanatatime

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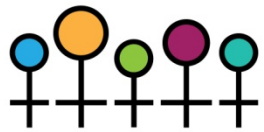
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What is Safer Sex?

Safer sex (n.): Sex that **reduces the chances of spreading or getting** sexually transmitted diseases or infections (STDs or STIs)

- Involves certain actions (e.g., using a condom, taking HIV drugs) that prevent person-to-person ***sharing of bodily fluids*** that are able to spread STIs
- Choosing to have safer sex shows that you care about the ***pleasure and health of you and your sexual partner(s)***



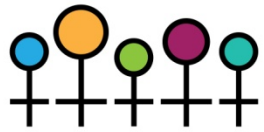


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Safer Sex: Not Just Prevention of New HIV Cases

Safer sex can:

- Be fun, exciting, very pleasurable
 - Can decrease your worry about getting or spreading STDs and thus make sex more relaxed and satisfying
 - May add variety to your sex life
 - Chance to build trust, intimacy with your partner by talking about each other's desires
- Prevent infection with other STIs, which can weaken immune system in people living with HIV
- Reduce possibility of acquiring another strain of HIV, if both people are living with HIV

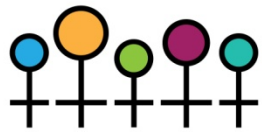


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Practicing Safer Sex

Practicing safer sex involves knowing:

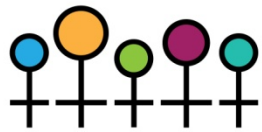
- What sexual activities are risky for each person
- How you can ***make that activity less risky***
- What bodily fluids can spread STIs:
 - Blood (including menstrual blood)
 - Vaginal secretions
 - Semen (cum and pre-cum)



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Practicing Safer Sex

- Using barriers can help reduce risk of spreading or getting STIs
 - Keeps a partner's fluids from getting into/onto another's body
 - Barriers include:
 - Condoms (male and female)
 - Dental dams (thin squares of latex)
 - Latex or nitrile gloves
- Today, there are more HIV protection options for people who don't want to use barriers, or whose partners won't use barriers

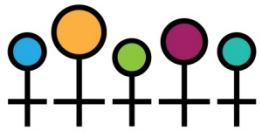


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Practicing Safer Sex

*Treatment as prevention (TasP): the **use of HIV treatment** to lower risk of HIV transmission*

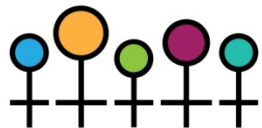
- For people living with HIV:
 - Taking HIV drugs can reduce their viral load
 - An undetectable viral load means they **cannot transmit HIV through sex**
- For people who are HIV-negative:
 - Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP): Taking HIV drugs before being exposed to HIV to prevent yourself from getting it
 - **Women can use it to prevent HIV without their partners' knowledge or cooperation**
 - Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP): Taking HIV drugs for about a month, immediately after possible exposure to HIV (e.g., sex without condoms or other barriers) to prevent infection



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Male Condoms

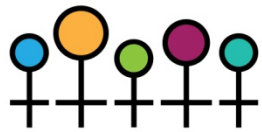
- Mostly made of latex; some made of polyisoprene (type of plastic) or lambskin
 - Only latex and plastic condoms prevent HIV
 - Lambskin condoms ***DO NOT prevent HIV***; DO prevent pregnancy
- Variety of shapes, sizes, colors, textures, tastes
- Inexpensive at pharmacies, grocery stores, sex stores
 - Free at certain health clinics, AIDS-service organizations
- Small, easy to carry with you
 - You can ***always be prepared to protect yourself!***



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Internal (Female) Condoms

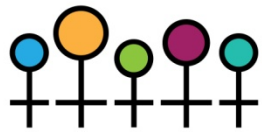
- Made of latex or polyurethane
- Can be ***put inside vagina or anus before beginning sexual activity***
- Usually cost a bit more than male condoms
- Often available at pharmacies, grocery stores, sex stores
- Available for free at certain health clinics and AIDS service organizations



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Lubricant (Lube)

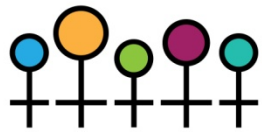
- Makes penetrative sex (vaginal-penile, anal-penile, fisting) ***even safer***
 - Can prevent condom from breaking
 - Helps prevent small cuts or tears in vagina, anus, rectum, and/or on penis during penetration
- Makes condoms ***feel better***
 - Some contain substances that “warm” or enhance sensation
- Good for un-lubricated and already-lubricated condoms
 - Sometimes lubrication on condoms is not enough
- Several types, brands; variety of different feels, tastes



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Cautions with Condoms and Lube

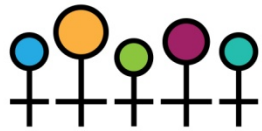
- ***When using latex barriers:***
 - Use only water- or silicone-based lube
 - Silicone-based lube will last longer than water-based lube
 - **No oil-based lubes** (Vaseline, Crisco, shea butter, baby oil)
 - They can weaken latex condoms, make them more likely to break
- Condoms lubricated with spermicide Nonoxynol-9 (N-9) are no longer recommended
 - Shorter shelf life
 - Do not decrease pregnancy more than other lubricated condoms
 - May cause irritation of vagina/rectum and thus increase HIV risk



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Vaginal-Penile Sex

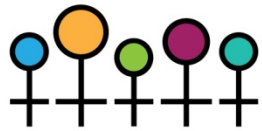
- **Heterosexual intercourse** (penis goes into vagina)
 - High-risk activity when barriers or TasP methods not used
 - Most common way HIV is spread worldwide
 - Men living with HIV are much more likely to transmit to women than women living with HIV are to transmit to men
- **Effective ways to make vaginal-penile sex safer:**
 - Use a condom
 - Consider using lube
 - Consider PrEP
- If not using a condom, avoid getting semen in vagina by having man pull out before **ejaculating**, however:
 - HIV can be in **pre-cum** (fluid from penis before ejaculation)
 - Man pulling out not a guarantee that you will not get STIs



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Anal-Penile Sex

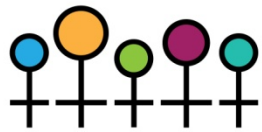
- Penis enters **anus** (butt-hole)
 - High-risk activity when barriers or TasP/PrEP/PEP not used
 - Risk for receptive partner higher than for insertive male partner
 - Still risky for insertive partner
- Effective ways to make anal-penile sex safer: use a condom (male for insertive partner, or female for receptive partner) and lube; consider PrEP
 - Research going on to look at which type of lube best for anal sex
- If not using a condom, avoid getting semen in anus by having partner pull out before ejaculating



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Oral Sex

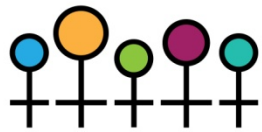
- Contact between mouth and genitals
- Includes giving or receiving licking, sucking, biting of vulva (vagina, clitoris, and labia, or "lips"), penis, or anus
- Number of studies have demonstrated low but definite level of risk associated with both giving and receiving oral-penile sex
- To make oral sex safer:
 - Use an unlubricated latex condom (does not have lube on it)
 - If you perform oral-penile sex without a condom
 - Finish up with your hand, or
 - Spit semen out, rinse with mouthwash, rather than swallowing



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Oral Sex

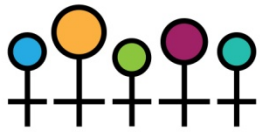
- Rare but documented cases of HIV being spread from female-to-male and female-to-female during oral-vaginal sex
- To make oral sex on a woman safer:
 - Use a **dental dam** (latex square) or a condom that has been cut open
 - Put some water- or silicone-based lube on one side of dental dam or cut-open condom
 - Stretch dam or condom over vulva with lubed side facing away from mouth; makes thin barrier between mouth and vulva
 - Some people use plastic food wrap
 - May prevent transmission of herpes infections
 - **No proof it can prevent transmission of HIV**



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Oral Sex

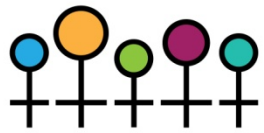
- Oral-anal sex has been shown to spread hepatitis A, hepatitis B, and hepatitis C, as well as other infections
- To make oral-anal sex on a man or woman safer
 - Use a dental dam or a condom that has been cut open
 - Put water- or silicone-based lube on one side of dental dam/cut-open condom
 - Stretch dam or condom over anus with lubed side facing away from mouth; makes thin barrier between mouth and anus
 - Consider PrEP
 - If you do not use a barrier during oral sex, avoid getting pre-cum, semen, menstrual blood, or vaginal fluids in your mouth
 - Avoid oral sex on a woman who is menstruating to prevent contact with blood
 - Bleeding gums, ulcers, or gum disease can make oral sex much riskier
 - Do not floss or brush your teeth just before oral sex; use a breath mint instead



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Sex with Sex Toys

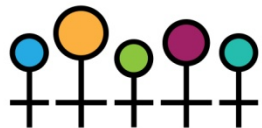
- Possible to transmit STIs by using sex toys (vibrators, dildos, butt plugs, strap-ons)
 - Sex toys need to be kept clean, ***whether used alone or with partners***
 - If not cleaned after each use, can grow bacteria, cause infection
 - Sex toys made of different materials must be cleaned in different ways
 - Read package insert instructions on how to clean your toy properly
- To make sex toy play safer:
 - Use toys with fresh latex condom whenever toy is used by a different person, or in a different location (moves from vagina to anus or vice-versa)
 - Lube with sex toys enhances pleasure, reduces damage to tissues of vagina, mouth, anus, rectum
 - Do not use silicone-based lube with silicone sex toys; will destroy toy
- Sex toys only used by one person reduces chance of passing STIs



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Fisting, Handballing, or Fingering

- Paper cuts and other openings in the skin can make your hands vulnerable to infection
- Wearing latex or nitrile gloves keeps you protected during hand-vagina, hand-penis, or hand-anus sex
- Adding water- or silicone-based lube to the outside of the gloves can increase your partner's pleasure

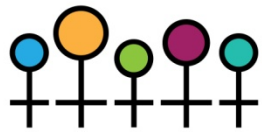


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No-Risk Safer Sex Activities

These activities do not spread STIs because there is ***no physical contact with another's bodily fluids:***

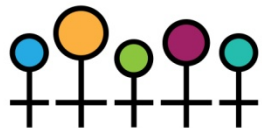
- Abstinence: not having sex
- Masturbation: touching your own genitals
- Phone sex
- Cybersex
- Talking dirty; sharing sexual fantasies
- Intimacy without sex: hugging, touching, massage



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Other Safer Sex Tips

- Limit time and frequency of insertive sex
 - Repeated or rough vaginal, anal, and oral sex play can cause damage to linings of these areas
- Try non-insertive sex – **mutual masturbation** (touching each other's genitals)
- Get medical attention for health problems in genital area
- Have a clear head
 - Under influence of drugs or alcohol, more likely to have unsafe sex
- Plan ahead: Get condoms, dental dams, gloves, lube, etc., before sexual situation



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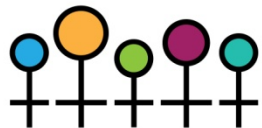
Think About It in New Ways

"We slipped once and forgot to use a condom, so it is too late now"

- **New idea: It is never too late**
 - Yes, even one time can be dangerous, but it is not as dangerous as many more times!
 - If you slipped once, it is time to get back on the wagon
 - Post-exposure prophylaxis, or PEP, may also be an option

"Safer sex is such a drag; it is no fun"

- **New idea: Here is a great chance to spice up your sex life**
 - Why not take one of the workshops offered on "Eroticizing Safer Sex?"
 - How about getting a book, video, or DVD about hot safer sex?

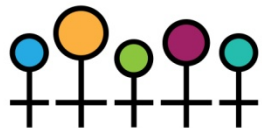


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Think About It in New Ways

"Even though I'm taking HIV drugs and my viral load is undetectable, I am still worried that my partner will get HIV from me"

- **New idea: Undetectable equals Untransmittable!**
 - Feel free to let go of the decades of fear-based messages about HIV risk
 - While HIV drugs do not prevent other STIs or pregnancy, you and your partners can rest easy and enjoy each other knowing that HIV transmission is not an issue



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Think About It in New Ways

"I cannot feel anything through condoms!"

- **New idea: Time to change brands!**

"Condoms are my method of choice but my partner refuses them"

- **New idea: How comfortable are you with someone who is willing to put your health at risk?**

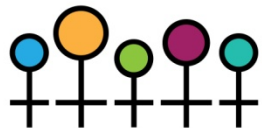
- Serious issue; probably not the only one in your relationship

"I cannot suggest to my partner that we get an HIV test. He or she would take it as an insult"

- **New idea: How about presenting it as an act of love?**

- "I hate the thought that I could be putting you at risk, because I could not stand to hurt you. Why don't we get tested together for peace of mind?"

- Taking PrEP also an option if you are HIV-negative



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Learn More!

- To learn more, and for links to articles featuring more details, please read the full fact sheet:
 - [Safer Sex](#)
- For more fact sheets and to connect to our community of women living with HIV, visit:
 - www.thewellproject.org
 - www.facebook.com/thewellproject
 - www.twitter.com/thewellproject