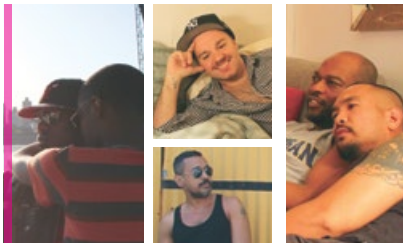


WHAT'S RIGHT FOR YOU

SAFER AND HEALTHIER SEX



GMHC

INTRODUCTION

In 1981, six gay men came together to raise money and awareness to help fight a mysterious disease then referred to as the “gay cancer.” Before HIV/AIDS had a name, they called it what it was: a crisis, and Gay Men’s Health Crisis was born.

The epidemic isn’t over, but today we know a lot more about it. Although HIV/AIDS is preventable and manageable, staying negative is not automatic. HIV still affects gay men more than any other group, and gay men are still more likely than anyone else to get infected with HIV. Safer sex can be complicated, and that means different things to different people. We hope this booklet will help you make the decisions that are right for you.



RISK

There are many reasons why HIV/AIDS is still an issue among gay men. Homophobia, stigma, and discrimination can make life hard, which can make it difficult for gay men to talk with partners and friends. Some men use drugs like alcohol, weed, crystal, and cocaine, among others, to cope with their emotions, or just to have fun and feel good. But most drugs impair judgment, and some can increase the effects and risks of other drugs. You might end up in situations that you're not used to and have sex that's riskier than you would usually have.

These aren't the only things that affect gay men's HIV and STI risks. Since many gay men are currently living with HIV/AIDS, gay men who are HIV-negative have a greater chance of being exposed to the virus. Some men don't know their status and may think they're negative when they're not. Having anal sex without using a condom and lube creates the highest risk for HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). But, negotiating safer sex isn't always easy, especially because it's hard to talk about pleasure, intimacy, fantasy, and having a good time.



RELATIONSHIPS



Sex happens in different situations, and the risk depends on what you do. Sometimes what you do depends on where you are and who you're having sex with. It also can depend on what you think is expected of you. Here are some scenarios you might find yourself in, and some ways to reduce your risk for HIV and STIs.

THE HOOKUP

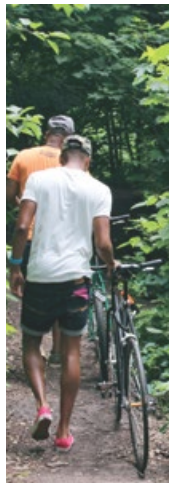
This one time I went to the park to cruise and ended up messing with this guy. We found a spot and started hooking up. Without talking, he tried to put it in raw.



It was hot, but I didn't have a condom and he wasn't gonna take care of it.

I motioned him to stop and sucked him off instead.

We both got off and left.



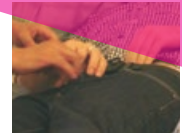
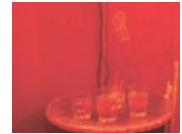
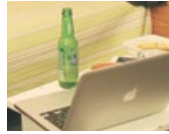
THE DATE



I met this guy online, and we've been hanging out off and on. We meet up for drinks then head back to one of our places.

Usually I only bottom with a boyfriend, but this is different. We're dating but having sex with other people, too.

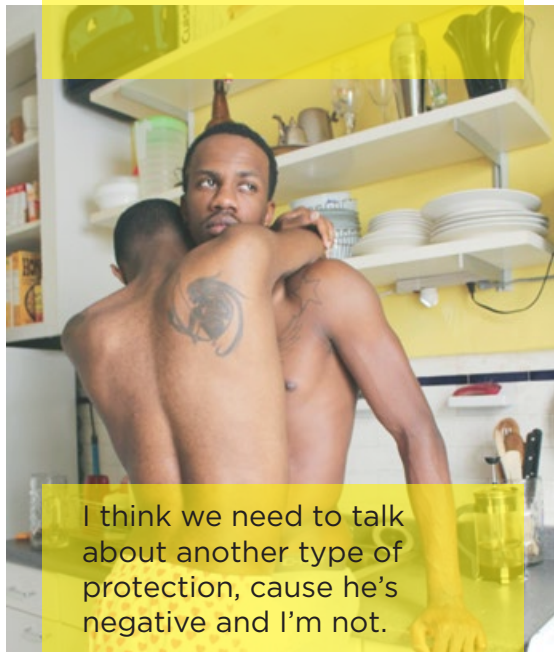
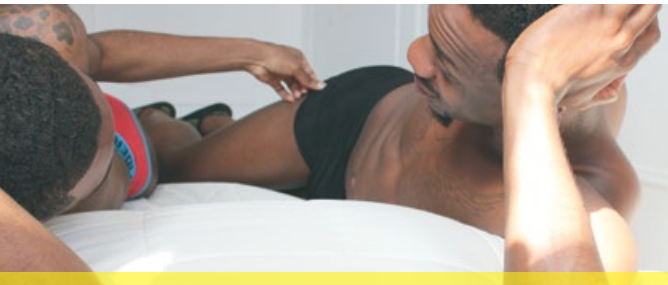
I top with him, this way I feel like I'm in control by using condoms and plenty of lube.



THE BOYFRIEND



My boyfriend doesn't like to use protection, but I have my doubts. He says he wants to feel me, not the condom, and cumming inside is so sexy.



I think we need to talk about another type of protection, cause he's negative and I'm not.

I wanna have a good time without worrying, but I don't want to ruin the mood.

THE HUSBAND

I love my man, and want to go on my life journey with him. We've committed more to each other by living together, and though we both can be difficult, it's also beautiful.

We decided that if we have sex with each other we don't have to use condoms, but if we bring in a third we all play protected.

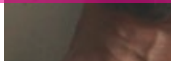
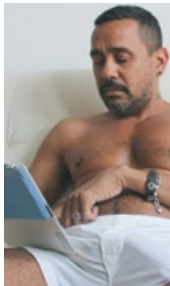
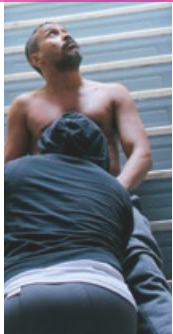


We're good about speaking our truths and talking it out. Our sex life is hot, but bringing in another guy from time to time excites us both.

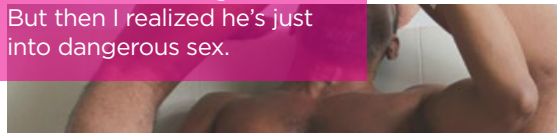


THE DADDY'S BOY

My parents decided to cut my allowance recently—they said I wasted too much money on frivolous things, and refused to pay my department store bill! Luckily, I met this older married man who's totally into spoiling me.



The first time we hooked up, he fucked me without a condom and it sort of weirded me out because I know it's not the safest thing to do. But then I realized he's just into dangerous sex.



Now we have a routine where I jog by his place really early in the morning and blow him while his husband sleeps upstairs. The adrenaline rush is intense without all the risk, and I'm almost done paying off my bill.



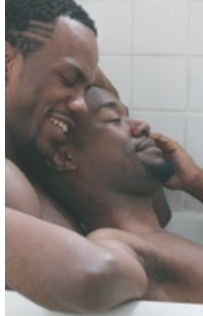
MAKING SAFE WORK FOR YOU

You may not always use a condom because it can feel more intimate and sexy without it. If you're turned on and don't have a condom, it can be frustrating for both you and your partner. Maybe you have sex anyway, or maybe you decide to do something else.

Some things are more or less risky than others. Not all sexual behaviors will put you at high risk for HIV, and some can still put you at risk for other STIs. Here's some info to help you make the best decision for you and your partners.



LEVELS OF RISK



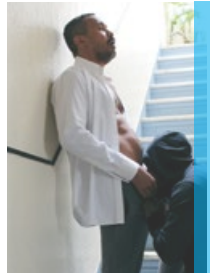
NO RISK

Cuddling
Massage
Kissing
Mutual masturbation
Dildos
Fisting
Body rubbing



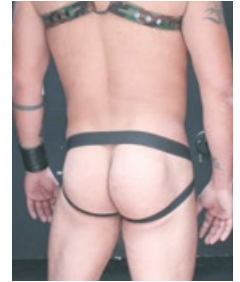
MORE RISK

Oral sex without
a condom
Rimming without
a barrier



HIGH RISK

Anal sex without
a condom



For more info about
risk behaviors, call
the GMHC Hotline:
1-800-243-7692

PEP, PrEP, WHAT? THE BEFORE AND AFTER

Maybe you had anal sex without a condom. Or the condom broke or slipped off. You and your partner might know your HIV statuses, or maybe you don't. A treatment called post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) may help prevent HIV infection AFTER you're exposed to the virus through semen and/or blood. PEP treatment is only available by prescription. You will have to take HIV medications (antiretroviral medications, or ARVs) every day for a month. You can get PEP through a local emergency room or your doctor, and it should be started as soon as possible, but no later than 72 hours after exposure. PEP has possible side effects, including nausea.

A new strategy in HIV prevention is called pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), which is used BEFORE exposure. Like PEP, PrEP involves taking ARVs and is only available by prescription from a doctor. PrEP must be taken daily in order to be most effective, and may have side effects. PrEP shouldn't be used if you're HIV-positive, so it's important to get tested before considering starting PrEP. Some people may benefit from PrEP more than others—like those in relationships where one person is HIV-positive and the other is negative, those who don't have access to condoms, and those who are unable to use condoms with their partners.

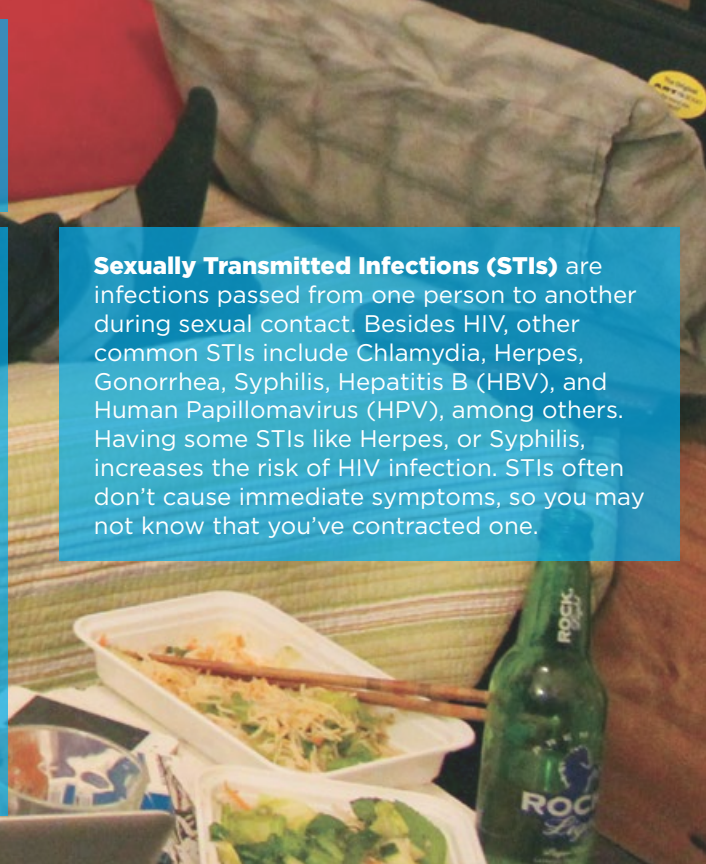
Although there is some evidence that PrEP is an effective way to avoid becoming infected with HIV, the guidelines for use recommend that PrEP be used together with condoms and other forms of risk reduction, in order to keep your risk as low as possible.

IMPORTANT DEFINITIONS

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is a virus that attacks your immune system, your body's main defense against infections, and prevents it from doing its job. HIV is found in semen (cum), pre-ejaculatory fluids (pre-cum), vaginal fluids, blood, and breast milk. You can become infected with HIV through unprotected anal or vaginal sex with an HIV-positive partner, and by sharing needles and works with someone who is HIV-positive. Another way that people become infected with HIV is from mother to child during childbirth or breastfeeding.

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is a disease caused by HIV. AIDS is diagnosed by a medical provider based on assessing the health of a person's immune system, and other associated diseases.

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) are infections passed from one person to another during sexual contact. Besides HIV, other common STIs include Chlamydia, Herpes, Gonorrhea, Syphilis, Hepatitis B (HBV), and Human Papillomavirus (HPV), among others. Having some STIs like Herpes, or Syphilis, increases the risk of HIV infection. STIs often don't cause immediate symptoms, so you may not know that you've contracted one.



INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

GMHC is the world's first provider of HIV/AIDS prevention, care, and advocacy. Building on decades of dedication and expertise, GMHC understands the reality of HIV/AIDS and empowers a healthy life for all. Our mission: GMHC fights to end the AIDS epidemic and uplift the lives of all affected.

1-800-243-7692 gmhc.org

The Centers for Disease Control's (CDC) National AIDS Hotline allows you to speak with a person about local service organizations, counseling, support groups, and treatment.

1-800-232-4636 cdc.gov/hiv

The Body is a website dedicated to providing up-to-date information about HIV, AIDS, treatment, specific medications, side effects, and living well.

thebody.com

The National Domestic Violence Hotline is available for victims and anyone calling on their behalf to provide crisis intervention, safety planning, information, and referrals. Assistance is available in English and in Spanish.

1-800-799-7233 thehotline.org

POZ Magazine publishes articles on health and HIV. It is available in paper and on the web. On the web, POZ has hubs (websites with articles and links across all POZ resources) for specific communities.

Main site: poz.com

AIDS meds: aidsmeds.com/aboutus.shtml

WebMD is an informative website on medical issues. WebMD has STI information, and a list of HIV and AIDS hotlines and resources for support and treatment.

webmd.com/hiv-aids/aids-helplines



GMHC

446 West 33rd Street
New York, NY 10001

The David Geffen Center for HIV Prevention and Health Education

224 West 29th Street, Ground Floor
New York, NY 10001

GMHC Hotline

1-800-243-7692 hotline@gmhc.org

The Hotline is open during
limited days and hours:

Monday and Friday 2 PM - 6 PM

Wednesday 10 AM - 2 PM



GMHC

FIGHT AIDS. LOVE LIFE.



gmhc.org