

Sexually transmitted infections and clinics -
a guide for gay men

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The HIV & AIDS charity for life

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A BOOKLET FOR GAY MEN

HIV NEGATIVE, HIV POSITIVE
OR UNSURE

Many of us will get a sexually transmitted infection at some time - even if we have safer sex or sex with only a few men. But you're more likely to get infections the more men you have sex with - or if sex is unprotected.

If you get an infection, this manual has information you should find helpful.

For a free copy of this manual for someone else,
contact: THT Direct on 0845 12 21 200

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PART ONE

SEXUALLY

TRANSMITTED

INFECTIONS

ABOUT INFECTIONS

> What are sexually transmitted infections?

Sexually transmitted infections ('STIs') are also called 'sexually transmitted diseases' ('STDs'). They're infections picked up during sex. They're caused by:

- **Viruses** (e.g. HIV, herpes, hepatitis and warts).
- **Bacteria** (e.g. gonorrhoea, chlamydia and NSU) or
- **Parasites** (e.g. 'crabs' and scabies).

You can get 'crabs' without having sex (from bedding, towels and clothes).

> Will 'safer sex' protect me?

Condoms, used properly, stop HIV and other STIs during fucking. Some men decide to reduce the risks during sucking by using condoms (for more on sucking and condoms see the section on HIV on p47-48).

It's important to know that STIs are much easier to catch or pass on than HIV. Sucking and fucking without condoms are the most common ways they're passed on - but they can be spread by other types of sexual contact.

> Will I know if I have an STI - or if the man I'm having sex with has one?

Often you won't because with many STIs you may not notice obvious symptoms. Or it can take quite a long time for symptoms to show. Symptoms can also be inside someone's body where they can't be seen, such as when herpes or warts are inside someone's arse.

Most people go for a check-up when they feel there's something wrong, but some men like to be checked a couple of times a year even when they have no symptoms. If you have sex with lots of men you might decide to be checked more often than that.

> What can I do if I get an STI?

If spotted early enough, most STIs are easily cured. Those that can't be (like herpes and HIV) can often be controlled with drugs. You can be vaccinated against Hepatitis A and B.

> What happens if I don't get an STI treated?

Symptoms may seem to clear up, but unless treated, infections can lead to serious health problems or damage to your body. If an STI is left untreated you can also give it to people you have sex with. And if you have an STI, you're more likely to pick up or pass on HIV if you have unprotected sex.

> STI tips

LATEX BARRIERS make it less likely infections are passed on - e.g. a condom for fucking or sucking or a latex glove for fingering or fisting.

PISSING after sex and drinking lots of water might make getting some infections in your cock less likely.

You can pass on an infection if you have sex **BEFORE THE TREATMENT'S FINISHED** and before the clinic's given you the all clear.

The infection could still be there **UNLESS YOU FINISH** the whole course of tablets - even if symptoms go away.

Clinics give enough **TABLETS FOR ONE PERSON**. Sharing them means neither of you will have enough to clear the infection up. You'll need **FOLLOW-UP TESTS** at a clinic to check that the treatment's worked.

When you have an infection, **TELLING PEOPLE** you've had sex with lets them know they need to get checked themselves. Clinic staff can talk to you about different ways of doing this (see p64).

Sex toys like dildos used on **MORE THAN ONE PERSON** can spread infections. Cover them with a new condom when used on a different person or wash with warm soapy water.

If you're starting a new relationship, both of you **GETTING CHECKED** for infections is a good idea.

IF YOU GO TO YOUR GP (and not a clinic) about STIs, HIV tests, hepatitis vaccinations etc. you might want to think about the pros and cons of telling your doctor you're gay (see p56-57).

IF YOU'RE HIV POSITIVE

Sometimes having an **UNTREATED STI** can cause more HIV to be made in your body. This could affect your health. It might also make it more likely HIV is passed on during unprotected sex.

If HIV has given you a **WEAKENED IMMUNE SYSTEM**, you may be more likely to get STIs.

Some STIs (like herpes and molluscum) can be more severe in people with HIV. If HIV has weakened your immune system, other STIs might be **HARDER TO TREAT** (like gut infections or warts) and symptoms might be worse.

Of gay men who get syphilis, a lot have HIV too. A syphilis blood test **EVERY 6 MONTHS** is a good idea, especially if you have sex with lots of different men.

HEPATITIS C is more common in men with HIV than in HIV negative men. Page 36 has more information about hepatitis C.

You can still be vaccinated against **HEPATITIS A** and **B** if you have HIV (see p32 and p35 for more details).

TELL TALE SIGNS You can have any of the infections in this manual and not notice any symptoms. If you notice something unusual, trying to diagnose yourself isn't a good idea. All STIs (except scabies, 'crabs' and threadworm) need to be treated by a doctor or clinic. Symptoms aren't the same for everyone, but this chart gives a rough idea of how infections often show themselves. Many of these symptoms are also caused by other common infections.

Cock

- Discharge from cock
- Pain when pissing
- Sore or blister on cock
- Itching in or on cock
- Small growths on cock

	Chlamydia	'Crabs'	Gonorrhoea	Gut infections	Herpes	Hepatitis	HW	Molluscum	NSU	Scabies	Syphilis	Threadworm	Trush	Warts
Discharge from cock	•	•	•						•					
Pain when pissing	•		•		•				•				•	
Sore or blister on cock					•					•				
Itching in or on cock		•			•					•			•	
Small growths on cock							•							•

Arse

- Discharge from arse
- Pain in arse or when shitting
- Sore or blister in or around arse
- Itching in or around arse
- Small growths in or around arse

	Chlamydia	'Crabs'	Gonorrhoea	Gut infections	Herpes	Hepatitis	HW	Molluscum	NSU	Scabies	Syphilis	Threadworm	Trush	Warts
Discharge from arse	•		•		•									
Pain in arse or when shitting	•		•		•									
Sore or blister in or around arse					•					•				
Itching in or around arse		•			•					•		•	•	
Small growths in or around arse							•			•				•

Throat

- Sore throat
- Sore or blister in or around mouth or throat

	Chlamydia	'Crabs'	Gonorrhoea	Gut infections	Herpes	Hepatitis	HW	Molluscum	NSU	Scabies	Syphilis	Threadworm	Trush	Warts
Sore throat			•											
Sore or blister in or around mouth or throat					•						•			

Rest of body

- Pain in balls
- Pain in stomach
- Rash
- Itching on body
- Growths on skin
- Swollen glands
- Diarrhoea
- Losing a lot of weight
- Flu-like illness
- Skin or whites of eyes turn yellow
- Pale shit or dark piss
- Extreme tiredness
- White 'threads' in shit
- White patches in mouth

	Chlamydia	'Crabs'	Gonorrhoea	Gut infections	Herpes	Hepatitis	HW	Molluscum	NSU	Scabies	Syphilis	Threadworm	Trush	Warts
Pain in balls	•													
Pain in stomach				•		•								
Rash		•					•							
Itching on body		•												
Growths on skin								•		•				
Swollen glands							•				•			
Diarrhoea				•		•	•							
Losing a lot of weight				•		•	•							
Flu-like illness				•		•	•							
Skin or whites of eyes turn yellow					•	•								
Pale shit or dark piss					•	•								
Extreme tiredness					•	•					•			
White 'threads' in shit							•					•		
White patches in mouth													•	

Health advisers at clinics can answer any questions you have over the phone or in person.

> How common are STIs?

Infections are getting more common among both gay and straight people. Your chances of getting an STI can depend on:

- How many men you have sex with.
- What type of sex you have.
- Whether you use condoms or not.

10,000 gay men were asked* in a 2000 survey if they'd had an STI in the previous year.

Out of every 100 men:

- 86 said they hadn't.
- 14 said they had.

Of those 14:

- 5 said they'd had gonorrhoea or NSU.
- 4 said they'd had crabs.
- 1 said they'd had scabies.
- 1 said they'd had genital/anal warts.
- 3 reported other STIs (chlamydia, gut infections, herpes, hepatitis, HIV, molluscum, syphilis or thrush).

Men with more sexual partners are much more likely to report picking up any infection. In the survey men who'd had sex with 30 or more men a year were *10 times* more likely to get an infection than men with one partner in a year.

These figures are just a guide - you could get an infection that's seen as rare, yet never get one of the more common ones.

* Time for more - findings from the National Gay Men's Sex Survey 2000.



Bacteria

Bacteria are easy to treat - they are killed by antibiotics. When this happens the infection has completely gone from your body. It will only come back if you get infected again from a different person (or the one who first gave it to you).

GONORRHOEA

"THE CLAP"

> How common is gonorrhoea?

One of the most common infections. 3 out of 100 gay men reported getting this in the last year. But among men with 30 or more partners a year nearly 1 in 10 reported getting gonorrhoea in the last year. Several thousand gay men are treated for this infection annually.

> What causes gonorrhoea?

Gonorrhoea, also called 'the clap', is caused by bacteria that live on moist, warm parts of the body such as the inside of the arse, mouth, throat and urethra (the 'pipe' in your cock that you piss down). It's easy to pick up or pass on.

> What are the symptoms of gonorrhoea?

- There can be no symptoms, especially with gonorrhoea of the throat.
- A sore throat can be a symptom of infection there.
- Gonorrhoea in the cock can cause a white/yellow discharge and pain when pissing.
- You might want to piss but can't - or only a little.
- With gonorrhoea in the arse you may not notice anything unusual. There may be discharge on your shit or pain when shitting.
- Untreated gonorrhoea left a long time can do serious damage (arthritis, heart infection and sterility).

> How is gonorrhoea passed on?

Through unprotected:

- Fucking and being fucked.
- Sucking and being sucked.
- Rimming.
- Gonorrhoea can be spread by getting the bacteria on your fingers, then touching other parts of your body.

> How is gonorrhoea prevented?

- Using a condom will greatly reduce the risk of getting gonorrhoea from fucking or sucking.

> How is gonorrhoea treated?

- Infection is diagnosed by taking a swab from the infected area.
- You'll be given one dose of antibiotics in tablet form. A liquid or injection can sometimes be given.

NSU

"NON-SPECIFIC URETHRITIS"

> How common is NSU?

One of the most common infections, 2 out of 100 gay men reported getting this in the last year. Among men with 30 or more partners a year it was 6 in every 100. Several thousand gay men each year are treated for NSU.

> What causes NSU?

NSU, also called NGU (non-gonococcal urethritis), is when the urethra (the pipe in your dick that piss comes down) gets inflamed. It's usually caused by bacteria that live in the arse, cock and mouth. Often the exact cause of NSU isn't known which is why it's called 'non-specific'.

> What are the symptoms of NSU?

- There may be no symptoms but you might notice a white discharge or burning feeling when pissing.

> How is NSU passed on?

Through unprotected:

- Fucking and being fucked.
- Sucking and being sucked.
- Lots of sex or wanking can trigger inflammation of the urethra, causing NSU.

> How is NSU prevented?

- Using condoms will greatly reduce the risk of getting NSU from fucking and sucking.

> How is NSU treated?

- A swab will be taken from your urethra.
- If NSU is found, antibiotics are given.

CHLAMYDIA

> How common is chlamydia?

Although more common among heterosexuals, around a thousand gay men are treated for chlamydia each year.

> What causes chlamydia?

Chlamydia is caused by bacteria, normally affecting the urethra but sometimes the arse or throat.

> What are the symptoms of chlamydia?

Many people don't notice any symptoms but they can be:

- A discharge from the cock.
- Pain when pissing.
- Pain in the balls.

> How is chlamydia passed on?

Through unprotected:

- Fucking and being fucked.
- Sucking, being sucked and rimming.
- Eyes can be infected after touching an infected part of the body.

> How is chlamydia prevented?

- Using condoms will greatly reduce the risk of getting chlamydia from fucking and sucking.
- After touching someone's cock or arse avoid touching your eyes until you've washed your hands.

> How is chlamydia treated?

- A swab is taken to check for infection.
- Chlamydia is easiest to treat when spotted early.
- A course of antibiotics should clear up the infection.

SYPHILIS

> How common is syphilis?

Syphilis was very uncommon in Britain until recently but the last few years have seen outbreaks among gay men. It's more common among men who have sex with lots of partners, particularly in saunas, sex clubs and cruising areas - and men with HIV have made up a lot of syphilis cases. In the last few years several hundred gay men have been treated for syphilis annually, with many more men going untreated because they don't know they have it.

> What causes syphilis?

Syphilis is caused by bacteria that live in warm, moist parts of the body such as inside the mouth, arse and cock. It's easy to pick up and pass on.

> What are the symptoms of syphilis?

The disease follows three stages, each with its own symptoms.

But symptoms of syphilis don't always show. Many men diagnosed with syphilis never realised they had it until they got tested.

First stage (Primary syphilis)

- A painless red sore can appear either on your cock, balls, in your mouth, throat or arse. It then scabs over and heals.
- The glands nearest to the sore (in the neck or groin) may swell up.

Second stage (Secondary syphilis)

- A skin rash can appear, often on your feet and hands, possibly also fever, headaches, feeling sick, swollen glands or hair loss. You may get warty growths around your arse or ulcers in your mouth or on your cock.

Third stage (Tertiary syphilis)

- Years later serious damage can be caused to your heart, brain and nervous system. Syphilis is usually spotted before this stage and tertiary syphilis is very rare.

> How is syphilis passed on?

- Coming into contact with the sore that comes with stage one.
- Or contact with the skin rash of stage two.

So syphilis can be passed on through unprotected:

- Fucking or being fucked.
- Sucking or being sucked.
- Fingering.
- Fisting.

> How is syphilis prevented?

- Using a condom for fucking and sucking prevents contact with sores on someone's cock, in their arse or mouth. But condoms don't guarantee protection as the syphilis bacteria are very easy to pass on.
- Latex gloves for fisting protects against contact with sores in someone's arse.
- Touching the rash or sores is best avoided.

> How is syphilis treated?

- Clinics usually check everyone's blood for syphilis.
- If there's a sore, fluid in it is tested.
- Treatment involves a course of antibiotics given by injection or in tablet form.
- Blood tests check that syphilis has been cured.



Other infections

(Parasites, fungal and gut infections)

Parasites are small creatures that live on or inside your body. Some, such as ‘crabs’, are big enough to see. Others, like the ones that cause gut infections, can’t be seen. Some, such as thread worm or ‘crabs’, don’t harm you but they can be a nuisance. Other parasites, such as ones causing gut infections, can seriously damage your body if left untreated. Some gut infections are caused by bacteria.

Fungal infections, such as thrush, are caused by a sort of mould that lives on warm, moist skin in the mouth or on the cock.

‘CRABS’

> How common are crabs?

Crabs (also called ‘pubic lice’) are the most common sexually transmitted infection, 4 out of 100 gay men report having them in the last year. There aren’t reliable figures from clinics about how many gay men are treated for crabs because most people treat themselves at home.

> What causes ‘crabs’?

‘Crabs’ are easy to pick up. The lice are small, crab-shaped insects that live on body hair, feeding on blood (but they cannot pass on HIV). They are the size of a pin-head when fully grown.

The lice are found in:

- The hair around your balls, arse and cock.
- Also on underarm hair, hairy legs and chests.
- Sometimes in eyebrows and hair on the face (but not hair on the head).

The lice can live away from the body for about 24 hours, so they could survive that long on clothes, bedding and towels.

> What are the symptoms of ‘crabs’?

You could have ‘crabs’ and not notice them, but:

- The lice usually cause itching, especially at night. This usually starts up to two to three weeks after infection.
- You can sometimes see a rash or often fully-grown lice on the hair (but not if you’ve recently been infected).

> How are 'crabs' passed on?

- By body contact during sex.
- By using the towels, bedding or clothes of someone with 'crabs' (not common but it can happen).
- If a partner has 'crabs', it doesn't necessarily mean they got them by having sex with someone else.

> How are 'crabs' prevented?

There's no way of preventing infection with 'crabs'. But if you have them you can prevent them spreading by:

- Making sure that people who've shared your bed, towels or clothes are also treated.
- Washing on a hot wash any bedding, towels and clothes used by someone with 'crabs'. This kills the lice and their eggs.
- Leather clothing can be dry cleaned or left in a plastic bag for a few days (the crabs will have died by then).

> How are 'crabs' treated?

- Treating 'crabs' is cheap, easy and can be done at home.
- Lotions can be bought from chemists for a few pounds (no prescription needed).
- You can get lotions free at GUM clinics.
- Brand names of lotions include Quellada, Derbac, Prioderm and Lyclear.
- You put the lotion over your whole body, but not on your head or face.
- You leave it on for up to 24 hours.
- Pick off any lice you see left on your body.
- Repeat the treatment a week later.
- If the treatment doesn't work ask a GUM clinic for advice.
- Shaving off pubic hair will not get rid of 'crabs'.



SCABIES

> How common is scabies?

Scabies is one of the more common infections, because it is easily passed on through skin contact. About 1 in 100 gay men reported catching scabies in the last year. Clinics don't have reliable figures for how many gay men are treated for scabies because most men treat themselves at home or their doctor treats them.

> What causes scabies?

Scabies is an infection caused by tiny parasitic mites. They burrow under the skin, causing itching. Your skin will also have an allergic reaction to the mites causing you to itch all over.

> What are the symptoms of scabies?

- The mites can't be seen. Itching can be so mild that you don't realise you have scabies.
- For other people the itching can be intense, usually starting two to six weeks after infection.
- Itching is often worse at night.
- The mites burrowing under the skin can leave red lines or spots, especially between fingers and around wrists.
- Mites can also be found on your feet, buttocks, stomach, arse, cock and balls.
- If you've never had scabies before it can take over four weeks to start itching, but only a few days if you've had them in the past.

> How is scabies passed on?

- Scabies is easily passed on during sex.
- They could be passed on through sharing clothes, towels and bedding, but this isn't common.

> How is scabies prevented?

There's no way to stop infection but following some simple guidelines will stop it spreading.

- People will need to be treated if they've had sex with or shared a bed, towels, clothing or bedding with someone with scabies.
- Any shared clothing, bedding and towels should be washed on a hot wash.
- Leather clothing can be dry cleaned or left in a plastic bag for a week (the mites and eggs will die by then).

> How is scabies treated?

- Chemists sell lotions to treat scabies for a few pounds (no prescription needed).
- The lotions are free from GUM clinics.
- Lyclear is one brand that treats scabies.
- You spread the lotion over your whole body, including palms of your hands, soles of your feet and between fingers and toes.
- You leave it on for up to 24 hours.
- Repeat the treatment a week later.
- Even when the treatment works you may still itch for several weeks.
- If after two weeks you still itch, a GUM clinic will advise you what to do.

GUT INFECTIONS

> How common are gut infections?

It's often difficult to know whether gut infections have come from general stomach bugs, food poisoning or from sex. Clinics don't keep figures on gut infections they treat - people often go to their doctor with gut infections. Men who rim, especially if they rim a lot of men, will be more likely to get gut infections.

> What causes gut infections?

A large number of bacteria are responsible for gut infections, leading to diarrhoea or stomach pains. Shigella (causing shigellosis) and salmonella (causing salmonellosis) are examples. Some gut infections are caused by parasites, such as threadworm, amoebas (causing amoebiasis) and giardia (causing giardiasis).

> What are the symptoms of gut infections?

Symptoms can include:

- Diarrhoea.
- Stomach cramps.
- Farting a lot.
- Fever.
- Blood in the diarrhoea.
- Losing weight.

With threadworms, you might:

- Feel itching around and inside your arse.
- See the worms in your shit, looking like short threads of white cotton.

> How are gut infections passed on?

Besides food-poisoning, they're also passed on by getting tiny amounts of shit on your fingers and in your mouth.

This can happen during:

- Rimming.
- Fucking.
- Fingering.
- Scat.
- Handling used dildos or condoms.

Threadworms are caused when the invisible worm eggs get on your fingers and then into your mouth.

This usually happens during:

- Rimming.
- Fingering.
- Fucking.
- Touching used condoms, dildos or someone's arse.

> How are gut infections prevented?

- By avoiding contact with small amounts of shit during sex. You can use latex gloves for fisting and fingering or a latex barrier (e.g. a condom cut into a square) for rimming.
- By washing your hands after handling used condoms or after sex involving arse play.
- You may decide to cut down on rimming or not to rim at all.

> How are gut infections treated?

- If you think you've got a gut infection from sex, your doctor will only know which tests to carry out if you say you think you got it from sex. Not telling the doctor this means they'll not test for the right things, leaving the infection to possibly cause you serious damage.
- A sample of your shit will be tested.
- Anti-diarrhoea treatments may make some gut infections worse - antibiotics will have to be used for some infections. Partners should be checked or treated to stop you being re-infected.
- Gut infections can cause serious problems if HIV has weakened your immune system. Sometimes the infections can be very difficult to get rid of or impossible to cure.
- Threadworms are treated by taking tablets or powders sold in chemists costing a few pounds (no prescription needed).

THRUSH

> How common is thrush?

Although more of a problem for women, gay men get it but it's rare unless you have HIV.

> What causes thrush?

Thrush usually happens when too much of the body's own natural fungus (candida) grows. Occasionally it can be passed on during sex. It's more common amongst men with HIV.

> What are the symptoms of thrush?

There may be no symptoms but there could be:

- Itching and a rash or inflammation.
- Pain during sex or when pissing.
- Sticky white patches (eg. under the foreskin) or in the mouth (especially in men with HIV).

> How is thrush passed on?

Through unprotected:

- Fucking, being fucked and fingering.
- There's a small risk from sucking and being sucked.

> How is thrush prevented?

- By using a condom for fucking and sucking.
- Keeping your skin dry and cool. Wearing cotton boxers.
- Sex is best avoided involving skin that is sore or broken.

> How is thrush treated?

- Thrush is treated with anti-fungal creams or tablets.
- If you keep getting thrush, it's a good idea your partner gets checked and treated in case you are getting reinfected from them.

Viruses

Viruses cannot be cured by medicines. Eventually your body's own immune system will deal with a virus, either killing it off or keeping it under control. Viruses are tricky to treat - antibiotics have no effect on them and making vaccines against them often doesn't work. Often a virus will stay in your body for years (like warts) or even a lifetime (like HIV or herpes). A virus is more likely to cause symptoms when your immune system isn't managing to keep it under control.

HEPATITIS

> What causes hepatitis?

Hepatitis means 'inflammation of the liver'. It can be caused by viruses that can be passed on during sex. Different viruses cause different types of hepatitis, some more serious than others. The viruses are spread in different ways. **Vaccinations can protect you against the two most common types of hepatitis, A and B.** There is a combined vaccine that protects against both A and B.

HEPATITIS A

> How common is hepatitis A?

Many gay men have had hepatitis A, which is why many clinics offer free vaccination against it. But clinics don't report many cases of hepatitis A among gay men because most men are diagnosed with it by their doctor. Also, a lot of men have mild symptoms, recover and don't realise they've had hepatitis A.

Hepatitis A is usually the least serious of the three main types of hepatitis, but can still make you very ill. People travelling in countries with poor hygiene risk getting it too. There are sometimes outbreaks among gay men and it's easy to pick up.

> What causes hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is caused by a virus found in shit. It's spread when tiny amounts of shit get into your mouth.

> What are the symptoms of hepatitis A?

Symptoms can be mild, so you may not realise you have hepatitis A.

Up to six weeks after being infected you may feel mild flu-like symptoms

You can also:

- Have a fever or diarrhoea.
- Feel sick or very tired.
- Have dark coloured piss.
- Have pale shit.
- Lose weight.
- You may feel sick when faced with tobacco smoke, fatty food and alcohol.
- Your skin and the whites of your eyes can turn yellow.

The illness can last for many weeks, taking many months to get your strength back. You'll be most infectious before symptoms show.

> How is hepatitis A passed on?

The virus, contained in shit, needs to get into your mouth to infect you. Traces of shit can be left on your hands and on food prepared by an infectious person. Especially abroad, water can also become contaminated.

During sex shit can get on your fingers and in your mouth through:

- Rimming.
- Fingering.
- Fucking without condoms.
- Handling used condoms and dildos.

> How is hepatitis A prevented?

- By getting vaccinated against hepatitis A.

Or if you've not been vaccinated, by:

- Avoiding any sex involving contact with shit.
- Using condoms for fucking.
- Washing hands after handling used condoms, dildos or fingering someone.
- Using a latex barrier between the arse and mouth of you and the man you're rimming.
- Using latex gloves and water-based lube for arse play.

> How can I get the hepatitis A vaccination?

- GPs can vaccinate people travelling to countries outside Europe where hepatitis A is a problem. Your GP may also give the vaccination if you say you're gay, but you might not want your doctor knowing this or putting it on your notes (see p56-57).
- A lot of GUM clinics give the vaccination, but many don't. Ask around to find which clinics offer it. If a clinic says no, they may change their mind if you insist. Remind them that government guidelines state gay men are at risk and should be vaccinated.

There are two types of vaccination against hepatitis A.

- 1 The one protects for only a few months. It's called 'immunoglobulin' and is given to people travelling to countries where hepatitis A is common.
- 2 The other protects for years. Gay men need this one (not 'immunoglobulin'). The first injection protects for a year. A second injection given six months later increases your protection to 10 years. After 10 years a booster is needed.

- A blood test before being vaccinated shows if you've picked up the virus already. If you have, you're now immune and don't need the vaccine.
- Hepatitis vaccines are safe if you have HIV, but can briefly effect your viral load. So, the person vaccinating you needs to know if you have HIV and the doctor treating your HIV should be told you are being vaccinated.

> How is hepatitis A treated?

- The treatment for hepatitis A is plenty of rest, which can mean many weeks off sick if you work.
- Your doctor will tell you for how long you should avoid drinking alcohol while your liver recovers.
- You'll need to avoid recreational drugs.
- A blood test can show when you've fully recovered.

HEPATITIS B

> How common is hepatitis B?

Because many gay men have had it, clinics offer free vaccination. Clinics don't report many cases of hepatitis B because most people are diagnosed with it by their doctor.

Hepatitis B is very infectious and can easily be passed on during sex. Many people get it without realising. For others it can mean months of feeling ill.

> What causes hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is caused by a virus that attacks the liver. It's found in body fluids like blood, cum and spit.

> What are the symptoms of hepatitis B?

- Many people have no obvious symptoms.
- But you may get a flu-like illness which can be mild or more severe.

Other symptoms can include:

- Fever.
- Headaches.
- Feeling exhausted.
- Having no appetite.
- Being sick.
- Feeling pain in your stomach.

You may get jaundice, which means:

- Your skin and the whites of your eyes turn yellow.
- Your shit goes a pale colour.
- Your piss is dark-coloured.

You can have the virus for between one and six months before showing any symptoms. The vast majority of people get over their symptoms, suffer no lasting damage and stop being infectious. About 1 in 10 people who get the virus become 'carriers'. This means they feel fine but stay infectious to others. 'Carriers' run a small risk of getting cirrhosis of the liver (which can lead to cancer). About 1 in 100 people who get hepatitis B die from it.

> How is hepatitis B passed on?

The virus is usually in:

- Blood.
- Cum.
- Pre-cum.

The virus is a lot more infectious than HIV, so it's much easier to get or pass on through sex. It can be passed on through unprotected:

- Fucking and being fucked.
- Sucking.
- Rimming.
- Sharing toothbrushes and razors (they could have infected blood on them).

The virus can be in spit and piss, so it's possible it could be passed on through kissing and watersports (but this isn't common).

> How is hepatitis B prevented?

- By getting vaccinated against hepatitis B.

Or if you've not been vaccinated, by:

- Using a condom for fucking.
- Using condoms for sucking.
- Using a latex barrier when rimming.

To get the hepatitis B vaccination

- Gay men are at greater risk, so GUM clinics offer free vaccinations.
- Some GPs also give the vaccine but this means telling your GP you're gay. This could go on your medical notes and cause problems later getting life insurance or mortgages (see p56-57).
- A blood test before you're vaccinated shows if you've already had hepatitis B. If so, you're now immune and don't need the vaccine.
- The vaccinations are usually given as three injections over six months. You only get full protection if you have all the injections.
- The vaccine works for about 95% of people. The older you are (or if you have HIV), the less effective it can be. You might lose your protection sooner.
- A blood test after the last injection shows if the vaccine has worked.
- After five years you'll need a booster injection.
- Hepatitis vaccines are safe if you have HIV, but can briefly effect your viral load. So, the person vaccinating you needs to know if you have HIV and the doctor treating your HIV should be told you are being vaccinated.

> How is hepatitis B treated?

- You may need plenty of rest and, if you work, many weeks off sick.
- You may have to stop drinking alcohol for up to a year while your liver recovers. You'll also need to avoid recreational drugs.
- If tests show you're a 'carrier', drugs may be able to control the virus.

HEPATITIS C

> How common is hepatitis C?

In this country hepatitis C is a common and growing problem among people who use drugs. It's not as big a health issue among gay men as hepatitis A and B, but among gay men with HIV it's more common.

> What causes hepatitis C?

- Hepatitis C is caused by a virus and can be very serious.
- Many people with untreated hepatitis C eventually develop some kind of liver disease.
- It's not as easy to get through sex as hepatitis A and B.

> What are the symptoms of hepatitis C?

- Very few people notice any symptoms when first infected.
- Even over time symptoms are difficult to spot, taking years before you begin to feel ill.
- Extreme tiredness and depression can be symptoms.
- A blood test can show if you've been infected with the virus.



> How is hepatitis C passed on?

- The virus is in blood and is spread when infected blood gets into another person's body.
- Anal sex without condoms can pass it on, as bleeding can happen during fucking (or fisting).
- Having HIV can make your blood more infectious for hepatitis C.
- People who inject drugs are at risk if they share injecting equipment.
- Blood donations are checked for hepatitis C.

> How is hepatitis C prevented?

- There's no vaccine for hepatitis C.
- Using a condom and a water-based lubricant should stop the virus being passed on through bleeding during fucking. Latex gloves will help prevent infection through fisting.
- Avoid sharing toothbrushes and razors with someone you know has the hepatitis C virus.
- Not sharing injecting equipment takes away the risk if injecting drugs.

> How is hepatitis C treated?

- Infection is confirmed through a test which looks for hepatitis C antibodies (which can take up to 6 months to appear in the blood).
- Treatment lasting six to twelve months involves the drugs Alpha Interferon and Ribavirin.
- Hepatitis C may get worse quicker if you have HIV as well. If you have both infections you and your doctor may have to decide which illness needs treating first, as HIV drugs and hepatitis C infection can both damage the liver.

Page 75 has details of hepatitis information sources.

HERPES

> How common is herpes?

About 1000 gay men each year are treated at clinics for their first episode of genital and anal herpes. This figure doesn't include men who gets sores from time to time but don't go to clinics for treatment.

> What causes herpes?

Herpes is caused by two types of the herpes simplex virus. Both types can cause blisters, usually on the moist skin:

- In or around the mouth or nose ('cold sores').
- On or around the cock or inside the arse ('genital' or 'anal' herpes).

During sex both types of the virus can be passed from one part of your body to someone else's. For example, if someone with a cold sore sucks another man's cock it can lead to herpes blisters on that cock.

Many of us have been infected with one or both of the two herpes simplex viruses without knowing. This is because our immune system often stops the virus causing any symptoms.

> What are the symptoms of herpes?

- The virus can cause painful blisters where it first got into your body (usually on or in your cock, mouth, throat or arse).
- You can have swollen glands, flu-like aches, pains in your legs or lower back, usually strongest the first time the blisters appear.
- Itching or tingling in the affected area may warn you the blisters are about to appear.
- Blisters hold an infectious clear fluid.
- The blister will burst, then a scab forms.
- The scab gradually heals within 10 to 14 days.
- This might be the first and last time you get the blisters.
- But if they come back, it'll be to the same part of your body as before.
- Usually they'll not be as bad as the first time, but may still be painful.

> How is herpes passed on?

By skin contact with someone's herpes sores through:

- Sucking and being sucked.
- Rimming and being rimmed.
- Fucking and being fucked without condoms.
- Wanking or fingering someone with blisters on their cock or in their arse.
- Contact with cold sores in or around the mouth (for example, during kissing or oral sex).
- The virus can be in the spit of someone with cold sores.
- It's possible for the virus to be passed on through contact with skin that has no sores.

> How is herpes prevented?

- Sex should be avoided if you or your partner has a cold sore or herpes blister.
- As the virus is in the skin just before the blisters appear, you should avoid sex if you feel a blister coming on.
- Using a condom should help stop herpes being passed on through fucking or sucking.
- Wash hands if sores are touched and before handling contact lenses.
- If you have a cold sore it's a bad idea to use your spit as a lubricant during sex or when putting contact lenses in (spit isn't a good lube as it dries quickly).

> How is herpes treated?

- The virus stays in your body, but your immune system should keep it under control most of the time and clear up blisters if they happen.
- Tablets can make the blisters go away more quickly. Some drugs can stop the blisters before they appear.
- Creams for treating cold sores are no good for genital or anal herpes. Clinics can tell you what to use.
- Certain things bring on the sores (tiredness, stress or sunbathing, for example). Avoiding these will cut down how often you get blisters.
- If blisters appear, bathing in salt water eases the pain, as do pain-killing products such as Solarcaine or Xylocaine spray or cream.
- Men with HIV or those who get blisters a lot can be given an anti-herpes drug to take regularly to stop blisters happening.

Page 75 has details about a herpes information line



WARTS

> How common are warts?

Genital and anal warts are one of the most common infections. Over 3000 gay men are treated in clinics for them each year. A lot of visits to clinics are to do with warts because it can take a long time for treatment to make them go away.

> What causes warts?

Anal and genital warts are caused by a virus that lives in the skin. Once you have the virus it can stay in your body for several years, but that doesn't mean you'll keep getting warts.

> What are the symptoms of warts?

- A few weeks or many months after infection very small growths (the size of a pinhead to begin with) appear on their own or in groups.
- They grow mostly on the head of your cock and in and around your arse. Occasionally they appear in your mouth, on your face or on other parts of your body.
- Untreated the warts can spread, get bigger, sometimes becoming 'cauliflower' shaped.
- They may itch and warts in the arse can bleed.

> How are warts passed on?

- Usually when someone's skin touches another person's warts - this can happen during sex.
- It's also possible for the virus to be passed on when no warts are on the skin.

> How are warts prevented?

- Using a condom will help stop warts being spread through fucking.
- By covering the affected area with a latex barrier during sex until the warts have been treated.

> How are warts treated?

If you have genital warts you must be seen by a doctor. They can't be cured with treatments from chemists used for warts on the hand. The sooner warts are treated the easier they are to get rid of. It's a good idea to occasionally check your penis and arsehole for warts.

Treatments are:

- Freezing the warts with liquid nitrogen.
- Or putting on a special type of acid.
- Or a cream is used instead.

It can take several trips to the clinic to get rid of warts. You may be given cream to put on the warts at home. If other treatments don't work, warts can be removed surgically or by laser, but this isn't common.

The wart virus lives on in the body even when the warts have gone. So they can come back and need treating again. If you have HIV, warts can be harder to treat.

MOLLUSCUM

> How rare is molluscum?

Molluscum is one of the least common infections. Around a couple of hundred gay men are treated for it each year in clinics. Molluscum can affect anyone, but is more common if you have HIV.

> What causes molluscum?

Molluscum contagiosum is caused by a virus that affects the skin.

> What are the symptoms of molluscum?

A couple of weeks or up to six months after contact with the virus, pale-coloured, painless, soft, pearl-shaped growths the size of a freckle appear:

- On the body.
- On or around the arse.
- On the cock.
- On the face.

> How is molluscum passed on?

- By touching the growths.
- This can happen during sex but molluscum can also be passed on through general touching, using other people's towels or it can be caught from swimming pools.

> How is molluscum prevented?

- By not having sex until your molluscum has been treated, if it's on a part of your body people touch during sex.
- By not sharing towels and flannels if one of you has molluscum.
- Scratching can spread the molluscum around your skin. With molluscum on your face wet shaving can spread them, so an electric razor is better.

> How is molluscum treated?

- Some doctors prefer to wait and see if the molluscum will clear up on its own after a few months.
- The growths can be frozen or scraped off by a doctor.
- Or chemicals can be painted on.
- A cream is sometimes used.

Treatment can take a lot of visits to the clinic, especially if you have a lot of growths.



H I V

> How common is HIV?

Each year around 1,500 gay men in the UK find out they have HIV. About 1 in 10 gay men have HIV in cities with large gay populations like London, Brighton, Manchester and Birmingham. Of all the gay men in the UK with HIV about a quarter don't realise they have it.

> What causes HIV infection?

HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) is a virus that weakens the immune system. Having HIV can lead to AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome). This is the name given to a collection of illnesses caused when HIV has damaged a person's immune system.

> What are the symptoms of HIV infection?

If you're infected with HIV there are usually no symptoms straight away. In the weeks after infection you may get a flu-like illness with any of the following symptoms: fever, swollen glands, sore throat and sometimes a rash on the body.

But many people don't notice obvious symptoms. And they're easily confused with symptoms of other common infections.

For months or years after someone is infected with HIV there may be no symptoms. But over time, you may get symptoms of infections and diseases caused by your immune system getting weaker.

> How is HIV passed on?

HIV is in the body fluids of an infected person. Only some fluids have enough HIV in them to infect someone. These fluids in men are:

- **Blood.**
- **Cum.**
- **Pre-cum.**

Spit, sweat and piss don't have enough HIV in them to infect someone.

HIV is usually spread:

- **When, during sex, an infectious body fluid gets from a person with HIV into the body (and then bloodstream) of an uninfected person.**
- **When someone who injects drugs shares injecting equipment with someone with HIV.**

HIV isn't as infectious as most other sexually transmitted infections. HIV isn't automatically passed on *every time* unsafe sex happens, but it could be passed on *any time* it happens.

ANAL SEX (FUCKING)

HIV is usually passed on sexually between men when they fuck without condoms.

- **A man with HIV fucking an uninfected man is more likely to pass on HIV.**
- **An uninfected man fucking a man with HIV is less likely to pass on HIV (but it can still happen).**
- **HIV is more likely to be passed on if a man with HIV cums inside an uninfected man.**

Here's how:

HIV in cum

If a man with HIV fucks an uninfected man without a condom, infected cum is left in the uninfected guy's arse. The arse lining easily absorbs this cum and the HIV in it, allowing the virus into the uninfected man's bloodstream. Even if the man doing the fucking pulls out before he cums, his infected *pre-cum* can still pass on HIV to the other man. But cum in the arse is the riskiest thing.

Bleeding

When a man is being fucked, the lining of his arse can tear a little and bleed. Contact with blood makes it easier for HIV to be passed on, no matter which man is fucking or being fucked or which man has HIV.

ORAL SEX (SUCKING)

It's not clear how many gay men have got HIV from oral sex - but we do know that it does happen. The vast majority of gay men with HIV got it from unprotected fucking, with a much smaller number getting it from sucking. We think that most guys who got HIV from oral sex got cum in their mouths while sucking off a man with HIV.

HIV is in the cum and pre-cum of men with HIV. Used properly, a condom can stop HIV being passed on during cocksucking.

Some men who don't have HIV use condoms to stop cum or pre-cum getting in their mouth.

If you don't have HIV and decide not to use condoms for cocksucking, you can reduce the risk of picking up HIV by:

- Not getting cum in your mouth.
- Not sucking cock when you have a throat infection, even if it's not sore.
- Not sucking cock when you have bleeding gums, or have had dental work in the last couple of weeks.
- Not sucking cock if he has cuts or sores on his cock.
- Doing it fewer times with fewer men.

Some men with HIV wear a condom to stop cum or pre-cum getting in their partner's mouth when being sucked off.

If you have HIV and decide not to use condoms for cocksucking, you can reduce the risk of passing on HIV by:

- Not cumming in the other guy's mouth.
- Not getting sucked if you have cuts or sores on your cock.
- Not getting sucked if you have another STI or a high viral load.
- Doing it fewer times with fewer men.

> How is HIV infection prevented?

- Using a condom for fucking or sucking.
- Some men use extra strong condoms, feeling these give more protection but some studies show that regular strength condoms are just as safe for anal sex.
- If you want extra strong condoms here are examples: *Mates Super Strong*, *Durex Ultra Strong*, *Boys Own*, *HT Specials* and *Safeguard Forte*.
- Using a *water-based* lubricant for fucking.
- A lubricant makes it less likely that condoms break.
- *Oil-based* lubricants like massage and baby oil, sun tan lotion, skin cream, Vaseline or food products containing oil destroy rubber, making condoms split.
- Water-based lubricants such as *KY Jelly*, *Liquid Silk* and *Wetstuff* don't damage condoms.

> How is HIV infection treated?

There is no vaccine or cure for HIV but:

- Many of the illnesses those of us with HIV get can be treated or kept under control with drugs.
- If you have HIV, drugs can lower the amount of HIV made in your body, usually meaning better health.
- These drugs are quite new - we don't know if they'll work over many years.
- For some people the drugs don't work very well or not at all. They can have unpleasant side effects and be hard to take.
- If you're diagnosed with HIV, you might not be given drugs straight away. Tests are done to see how well your body is keeping the HIV under control before decisions are made about treatment.
- Treatment may be different depending on where you're being treated.

> The HIV test (antibody test)

An HIV antibody test, usually done on a sample of your blood, shows if you have HIV. The test doesn't look for HIV itself, but for the 'antibodies' to the virus.

Antibodies

- Antibodies are made by the body to fight infections.
- But antibodies made to fight HIV can't destroy the virus.
- If antibodies to HIV are found, the test is 'positive' and the person is said to be 'HIV positive' - that means they have HIV and could pass it on through unprotected sex.
- If antibodies aren't found, the test is 'negative' and the person is said to be 'HIV negative' - they don't have HIV.

The window period

- If you're infected with HIV, antibodies aren't made straight away. It can take weeks or months before they appear.
- This is called the 'window period' and it usually lasts less than three months.
- Because of the window period, if you want to know if you have HIV, you must wait three months before being tested.
- That's three months since the time you think you may have been infected.
- A test done before then can come back 'negative' when really you are infected and very infectious, but it's not showing in your blood because antibodies to HIV haven't been made yet.

> Trusting the test

HIV tests are very reliable. Before you're given a positive result, to be extra sure another two tests are carried out on the blood sample. Two different ways of testing the blood are used to make sure a positive result is reliable.

> What a 'positive' result means

- If you get a positive result it means you've been infected with HIV.
- You can infect others if you have unprotected sex.
- It doesn't say anything about how your health will be in the future. It doesn't mean you have AIDS or will go on to develop AIDS.
- If people know you have HIV, it might mean you'll come across hostility and prejudice.

> What a 'negative' result means

- A 'negative' test result means you haven't been infected with HIV - so long as the test was done at least three months after the last time you did something that put you at risk of getting HIV.
- If you do something that has a risk for HIV and later get a negative test, it doesn't mean you're immune from HIV or can take risks in the future and stay uninfected.

> Whose test is it anyway?

An HIV test result is only true for the person whose blood is tested. It can be easy to hear of results given to friends, boyfriends and ex-boyfriends and be tempted to guess what that might mean for ourselves. But only by being tested yourself can you be sure whether you have HIV or not.

> Where to test?

GUM CLINICS

The best places to test are GUM clinics.

- You can use any GUM clinic.
- Some have special times when HIV tests are done. The advantage is that results are ready sooner - sometimes on the same day or the day after.
- If you don't want to go to a special HIV testing session, you can be tested during normal clinic times.
- A clinic can tell you over the phone how they organise HIV testing and how soon you'd have your result.
- Clinics offer the most confidential way of being tested. Your GP will not be told your test result.

PRIVATE CLINICS

These clinics advertise in the press and you must pay to be tested. Counselling and follow-up care often aren't provided.

GPS (FAMILY DOCTORS)

The advantages are:

- You might have a very good relationship with your GP and they may be able to give you the help and support you need.

The drawbacks are:

- Your doctor may not have much experience about HIV or about the issues involved in testing.
- They may not give you advice and counselling before and after the test.
- A GP might put on your medical records that you asked about a test, as well as any test result. This can cause problems if you apply for life insurance or a mortgage.

> HIV tests and money matters

- Insurance companies ask doctors about their patients (including about HIV tests). Problems can be caused even if your GP tells them you got a 'negative' test result or you just talked about testing. Before your doctor gives your details to insurance companies the doctor should ask for your permission. But if you say no, your application will be turned down. You can ask your doctor not to put in your notes anything to do with HIV or being gay - many will agree to.
- Insurance companies will also ask *you* questions about HIV. Not telling the truth will make your insurance invalid, even if you tested at a GUM clinic.
- For advice on HIV tests and financial questions call THT Direct 0845 12 21 200.

> Thinking of having an HIV test?

Having an HIV test can have a huge impact on your life, whatever your result. Have you asked yourself:

- Is there a good reason to test? Have I really put myself at risk of getting HIV?
- Am I feeling pressured to test from other people? A partner? Family or friends? Medical staff? Things in the press or TV?

Only have an HIV test if you decide you want one and have thought about how you'd cope with your result.

> The test ...and after

Some GUM clinics have a same-day result service, but test results usually take one or two days. They can take a week, and in some areas up to two weeks.

- You should be offered the chance to talk things over before you take the test and after you get your result.
- You should get your result face to face, not over the phone or by letter.
- Whether your result is positive or negative, you can talk to someone about your feelings and what you might want to do next.

To answer your questions about HIV testing call:

- THT Direct 0845 12 21 200.
- National AIDS Helpline 0800 567 123.
- Gay switchboards.
- Your local gay men's health project.
- Talk to a health adviser or counsellor at a GUM clinic.
- Or check out this website: www.youchoose.org.uk

Talking to someone about testing doesn't mean you have to go ahead and have the test.



GUM

CLINICS

PART TWO

> What are 'GUM Clinics'?

At GUM (Genito Urinary Medicine) clinics you can get tested and treated for sexually transmitted infections. They're usually part of a hospital. You might hear them called:

- STD (sexually transmitted disease) clinics.
- 'Special clinics'
- Sexual health clinics.
- 'VD clinics'.
- 'Clap clinics'.

You can find out where your local clinic is from:

- Directory enquiries.
- Your local gay switchboard.
- Your local gay men's health project.
- THT Direct 0845 12 21 200.
- National AIDS Helpline 0800 567 123.
- In the phone book under 'Genito Urinary Medicine' or 'Sexually Transmitted Disease'.
- Or visit this website: www.shastd.org.uk

> Who'll know if I've been to a clinic?

Your confidentiality is guaranteed by law.

- Your GUM clinic records cannot be shown to your GP or insurance companies.
- But if you go to your GP first and you're referred in writing to a clinic, then the clinic sends your GP a letter saying what tests or treatment you've had.
- These details can go on your GP records, possibly causing problems if you one day apply for a mortgage or life insurance. You can ask your GP not to put information about your sex life in your notes.

Many gay men prefer to go straight to a GUM clinic, not their doctor, for hepatitis vaccinations, HIV tests, check-ups or treatment for STIs.

Worried about being seen by people you know? Away from home when you need help? No problem. You can use any clinic - and don't need to be sent there by your doctor.

> What GUM Clinics can do for you

At most GUM clinics you should be able to get free:

- Information and advice about having a healthy sex life.
- Tests and treatments for sexually transmitted infections.
- Someone to chat to (a 'health adviser') about anything on your mind.
- Vaccinations against hepatitis B (and often hepatitis A).
- HIV tests - and counselling before the test and after you get your result.
- Sexual health check-ups.
- Condoms and water-based lube.
- In some areas there are special clinic times for gay men. (You don't have to use these - you can also use the regular clinic times).
- A confidential service.

> You and your health adviser

Most clinics have Health Advisers or Counsellors. They have experience of a wide range of problems and can spend more time with you than a doctor. They won't tell you what to do, but they'll talk through the choices you have.

You can talk about:

- Sexually transmitted infections.
- Confidential ways of telling people you've had sex with that they may have an infection and need a check-up.
- Things on your mind about your sex life or relationships.
- Whether or not to use condoms with your regular partner.
- Sexual assault (recently or in the past) or violence in a relationship.
- HIV testing.
- Loss of sex drive or problems getting erections.
- Relationships when one of you has HIV and the other doesn't.
- Being HIV positive.
- Choices around HIV treatments.
- Problems taking treatments.

To chat to a health adviser:

- Ask for an appointment.
- You can ask to see someone without an appointment if you don't mind waiting.
- You can speak to a health adviser over the phone.
- Health advisers can see couples who want to talk things through together.
- Or you can take along a friend for support.
- But before seeing both of you, the health adviser will usually want to see you briefly on your own first.
- You can ask to see a male or gay health adviser - if this is possible.
- You can see a health adviser without having to see a doctor first.

If the clinic finds you have an infection, you may be asked to see the health adviser. This is so that you can talk about:

- What the infection is and how it's treated.
- How you got it and how to avoid getting it again.
- What having it means for other people you have sex with.
- Different ways your sexual partners can be advised to have a check-up.

Health advisers provide a confidential service. You can ask them not to put into your clinic notes the things you talk to them about.

> At the Clinic

Some things may be different from clinic to clinic, but here's a rough idea.

Before you go:

- Clinics are usually open office hours (not weekends or Bank Holidays).
- So you're best ringing the clinic to ask about opening times and appointments. Most clinics use an appointments system.
- Some have early evening clinics one or more days a week.
- Sometimes a clinic might not be able to see you for a few days.

Make sure you have left enough time, it can take two to three hours to see a doctor, have tests, get results, be given treatment and talk to a health adviser. To help you prepare for your visit:

- You shouldn't piss for about four hours - the clinic will need to take a sample of your piss when you get there. Pissing washes bacteria out of your cock, making it harder for tests to find signs of infections.
- Make a note of any medicines you're already taking - you'll be asked this at the clinic.
- Take something to read - there's often a lot of waiting.
- Think about the questions you might be asked at the clinic (see p61).

At reception they'll ask if you've been before. If not, you'll need to register. You'll usually be asked for:

- Your address and a phone number in case they need to contact you.
- Your date of birth (to stop your notes getting mixed up with someone else's).
- The name of your GP and where your GP is based - in case the clinic can't contact you in an emergency using the other details you've given. It's OK if you don't have a GP. You don't have to give your GP's name.

> Your personal details

You can give a false name, but remember which name you use, as you'll have to use this name every time you visit the clinic. Giving false details isn't a good idea in case the clinic needs to get in touch with you.

You'll be given your own personal number. Your records are kept against this number, so you'll need it for future visits and phone calls to the clinic.

> Seeing the doctor

When seeing the doctor (in some clinics a 'nurse specialist'), here are the kind of questions you could be asked:

- When did you last have sex?
- Was it with a man or a woman? (if the doctor doesn't ask this, it'd be best to mention the sex was with a man, if it was).
- Was this a 'regular' or 'casual' partner? (have you had sex with this person before?)
- What kind of sex was it? (sucking, fucking, wanking, rimming, etc.)
- How many 'sexual partners' have you had recently?
- Do you know how to contact them?
- If you think you have an infection, what symptoms have you had and when did you notice them?
- Are you allergic to any medicines, such as penicillin?
- What medicines are you taking at the moment?
- Have you had any sexually transmitted infections before?
- Do you have any health problems generally?

Although it can be embarrassing, giving honest answers helps the doctor know which tests or treatments you need.

Sometimes the doctor uses words to talk about sex that might not be words you use. You can use the words you feel comfortable with - the doctor will understand what you mean.

If you're asked if you've been the 'passive' or 'active' partner in anal sex, the doctor means, did you do the fucking ('active') or were you fucked ('passive')? Let the doctor know if you do both or if you haven't had anal sex.

> Being examined

- The doctor will ask you to pull your pants down so she/he can look for any signs of infection.
- They may feel for swollen glands in your groin or neck.
- When you're dressed, the doctor will tell you what tests they want you to have. The doctor or a nurse should do the tests and explain as they go along what each test is for.

> Tests

- A blood sample will be taken from your arm. This is not a test for HIV, but a test for syphilis done to everyone seen by GUM clinics.
- Everyone will usually be offered an HIV test. If you want one you can have one, but you should be offered counselling before the test (and after you get your result).
- If offered an HIV test, don't feel pressured into having one until you've had time to think it over.
- You should be offered a hepatitis B vaccination.

A swab will also be taken from your throat to check for infections like gonorrhoea.

A swab will be taken from your urethra. This may hurt as a very small swab-stick is put down it, but it's over in a second.

If you're being checked for infections in your arse, a swab will be taken from there. For this:

- You lie on the bed on your side with your knees up against your chest.
- Wearing rubber gloves the doctor or nurse will put some lubricating jelly around your arse hole to make taking the swab easier.
- The swab's taken through a tube (a proctoscope) put up your arse.



The last test is on your urine, when you'll be asked to piss into one or two containers. You should not piss for at least four hours before this test.

> Results

Some results are ready before you leave - others go to a lab. You can usually ring the clinic for results a week later. Some clinics won't give results over the phone, preferring people to come back for them. HIV test results are usually given in person, not by phone or letter.

When some of the test results are ready:

- The doctor will tell you what they've found.
- If you have an infection, you'll get free medicines there and then, or you'll get a prescription to take to the hospital pharmacy.

Sometimes the doctor won't know whether you have an infection until the other results come back from the laboratory. You may be given medicines anyway or be asked to ring or visit the clinic later to find out what your test results are.

> Treatments

You'll be told how to take the medicines, and not to have any sex with anyone until told by the clinic that the infection has gone.

It's very important to finish the whole course of tablets - even if the symptoms go away (never give your tablets to anyone else).

Sometimes the treatment doesn't always work and the infection is still there - even if it seems it's cleared up. So, you need to come back for more tests.

> Telling others

The clinic will talk to you about whether you want to tell other people you've had sex with that they need to be checked too. If you don't know details of who you had sex with, just say so. If you feel OK about people being contacted, you can do it yourself or the clinic can do it for you anonymously. It's your choice. You don't have to give anyone else's details.

If you test for HIV and get a 'positive' result, the clinic will talk to you about how other people you've had sex with could be told.

> What you have a right to expect

You should expect the best treatment from GUM clinics. All of them follow guidelines about what should happen in the clinic.

You have the right to expect to:

- Have your confidentiality and privacy respected.
- Know the name of the person treating you.
- Have explained to you what is being done to you.
- Be able to complain and get a reply to your complaint.
- Ask for a male (or female) doctor or nurse.
- Take someone with you when you're seeing a doctor or being treated.
- Ask to be treated by a different member of staff.
- Go to another clinic for treatment (perhaps not possible for HIV treatment).
- Be treated without unnecessary pain.
- Be seen by a doctor within a reasonable time.
- Not to be pressured into taking any tests, including HIV tests.
- Be treated fairly whatever your race, HIV status, age, sexuality or what you do sexually.

> Confidentiality

Any information a clinic has about you must stay confidential - by law.

- Your medical records and test results should stay within the GUM department and not go to other parts of the hospital without your permission.
- Information about you should not be sent to your GP without your written permission (unless you were referred to the clinic in writing by your GP).

> Getting the best from your clinic

GUM clinic staff are trained professionals, but you might be unhappy about the service you get. Clinics can only improve if we tell them how they could be doing things better. If you have something to say, let the clinic know - so things can change for all of us.

Making your comments or complaints known:

- Before taking your complaint elsewhere, speak to a member of staff first (sooner, rather than leaving it too long).
- Ask to see the clinic's complaints procedure.
- Some clinics have complaints phonedlines or anonymous comments boxes.
- Put your complaint in a letter - the complaints procedure will tell you who to send it to. You should get an answer very quickly.
- You can make anonymous complaints, but only if you put your name to a complaint can it be officially acted on.

Complaints can really change things.

For help with a complaint you can contact your local gay men's health project.



PART THREE

GLOSSARY

Fellatio

Shigellosis

Urethra

Immunoglobulin

Proctoscope

Fellatio

Booster

Jaundice

ardiasis

Amoebiasis

Abomasias

Immunoglobulin

Shigellosis

WORDS EXPLAINED

'Active'	when a man is the one doing the fucking, not the one being fucked.
Amoebiasis	a gut infection that can be passed on during sex.
Amoebas	small bugs that cause 'amoebiasis', an infection in your gut.
Anti-fungal	to treat infections caused by a fungus (a sort of mould).
Antibiotics	medicine to treat infections caused by bacteria (but no good against viruses).
Antibody	made by the body to fight infections. They show up in blood tests.
Bacteria	germs that cause infections. Bacteria can be treated with antibiotics.
Body fluids	in men: blood, cum, pre-cum, piss, sweat, tears, spit (HIV is passed on in blood, cum and pre-cum only).
Booster	an injection to increase protection against an infection.



Candidiasis	a name for thrush, a fungus that grows in/on the body and mouth.
'Carrier'	someone who is able to pass their infection on after most people have stopped being infectious. They may also not have symptoms of their infection.
'Casual partner'	someone you don't have sex with regularly (perhaps once or only a few times).
'The clap'	a name sometimes used for gonorrhoea.
Cold sore	a herpes blister that people can get on the lips or around the mouth.
Diagnosed	when a test shows whether someone has an infection or not.
Dildo	a rubber sex toy usually shaped like a cock that's put up someone's arse.
Discharge	an infectious fluid that comes from a part of the body that has an infection.
Fellatio	cock-sucking.
Fingering	putting a finger into someone's arse during sex or someone doing this to you.
Fisting	putting a fist and/or forearm into another man's arse during sex or someone doing this to you.
Fungal	to do with fungus.
Fungus	a sort of mould that causes infections, usually in warm moist parts of the body such as the mouth, arse and on the cock.

Genital to do with the cock and balls.

Genitals a name for the cock and balls.

Giardiasis a gut infection that can be passed on during sex, also called giardia (pronounced 'jardee-a').

Glands parts of the body's immune system found in the armpits, neck, groin. They can become swollen when the body is trying to fight off an infection.

GP 'general practitioner', a name for a family doctor.

GUM 'Genito-urinary medicine', meaning 'to do with infections of the genitals and bladder'.

Health adviser someone working in a GUM clinic who provides information and the chance to talk confidentially about sexual problems.

Hepatitis (Hep) an infection of the liver caused by different viruses that can be passed on during sex.

Herpes the common name for an infection caused by two types of the herpes simplex virus. It can be passed on during sex, often causing blisters in the arse, on the cock and around the mouth.



Immune when someone cannot get an infection, either because they have already had it or because their immune system can stop the infection from getting a hold in the body.

Immune system the parts of the body that try to recognise, fight and destroy infections.

Immunoglobulin an immunisation giving short-lived protection against hepatitis A.

Immunisation an injection that protects someone from getting an infection.

Jaundice a symptom of hepatitis when someone's skin and whites of their eyes go yellow and their shit and piss change colour.

Latex barrier rubber glove, condom or dental dam (viruses and bacteria can't get through these). You can cut up a condom into a square as a cheap alternative to dental dams (which otherwise need to be bought from dentist suppliers).

Mutual masturbation when two men wank each other.

Non-gonococcal means an infection that is not connected with the bacteria that causes gonorrhoea.

Non-specific when the cause of an infection isn't clear.

Parasite	a very small living thing that lives inside or on someone's body.		Secondary syphilis	the second stage of syphilis.
'Passive'	when a man is the one being fucked, not the one doing the fucking.		Sex toys	objects such as dildos used during sex, often put inside someone's body.
Pre-cum	the clear fluid that comes from a man's cock to lubricate it when he's sexually excited. Also called 'pre-ejaculate'.		'Sexual partner'	someone you had sex with, either once or more than once.
Primary syphilis	the first stage of syphilis.		Shigellosis	a gut infection that can be passed on during sex.
Proctoscope	a metal or plastic tube used in clinics to check for infections inside the arse.		STD/STI	'sexually transmitted disease' and 'sexually transmitted infection'.
Recreational drugs	'party' drugs such as cannabis, 'speed', ecstasy or cocaine.		Sterile	when used about men it means unable to father children. Used about fluids it means free from bacteria and other germs.
'Regular partner'	someone you have sex with more than once, on a regular basis.		Swab	object used to collect bacteria or a virus from a part of the body.
Rimming	licking around or putting your tongue into a man's arse hole or someone doing this to you.		Tertiary syphilis	the third, final and most serious stage of syphilis.
Same-day testing	when HIV test results are ready on the same day as the test was carried out.		Undetectable viral load	when a blood test shows that levels of HIV being made in someone's body have fallen below the level the test can measure. HIV can still be in the blood (and cum) but in too small an amount to be picked up by a viral load test.
Salmonellosis	a gut infection caused by the salmonella bug that can be passed on during sex.			
Scat	sex that involves playing with shit			
To screen	to look for signs of infection.			
				
				
				
				
				
				
				

Urethra	the 'pipe' in the cock that piss comes down.
Vaccination	see 'immunisation'.
VD	venereal disease, the name once used for infections passed on sexually.
Viral load	the amount of HIV being produced in the body of an infected person.
Viral load test	a test measuring how much HIV is being made in someone's body.
Virus	something that is passed from one person to another causing disease. A virus is harder to treat than bacteria; often the body has to be left to overcome the virus itself. Viruses can't be treated with antibiotics.
Watersports	sex that involves piss.
Window period	the time between when someone is infected with HIV and when signs of that infection ('antibodies') show up in the blood. Lasts less than three months in most cases. During the window period someone can test HIV negative when they are in fact infected with HIV and very infectious.

> Useful information

If you want details of your local GUM clinics, the services they offer or you'd like to talk about HIV or other STIs you can ring:

THT Direct
0845 12 21 200

National AIDS Helpline
0800 567 123
(free - 24 hours daily)

0800 521 361 Minicom Service
(free - 10am to 10pm daily)

> Contact details

This website has information about sexually transmitted infections and addresses and opening times of clinics throughout the country: www.shastd.org.uk

For information on hepatitis:

British Liver Trust Information Line
01473 276 328
(office hours)

www.british-liver-trust.org.uk

For information on herpes:

Herpes Viruses Association Helpline
020 7609 9061
(office hours)

www.herpes.org.uk

CHAPS is a partnership of community-based organisations, co-ordinated by Terrence Higgins Trust, delivering HIV prevention initiatives to gay men and bisexual men in England and Wales.



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WWW.THT.ORG.UK



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