HIV & women who have sex with women fact sheet

Are you a woman who has sex with women?

Check out these specific HIV prevention tips and facts for you.

**Women who have sex with women, gay women and bisexual women**

As a woman who has sex with women (WSW), you may not always identify yourself as a lesbian, or bisexual.

Many WSW had their first sexual experience with a man, have had multiple experiences with men, or still have sex with men.1

**Is HIV a risk for lesbians?**

HIV transmission is a risk between women through fingering/fisting, oral sex and sharing sex toys.2 3

The risk is lower than sex involving a man because less bodily fluids are exchanged between women.

Access regular sexual health check ups for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV testing.4

**Safer sex for women who have sex with women**

- Sex is safer when none of your partner’s bodily fluids (vaginal secretions, breast milk or blood - including menstruation) enter your body.
- Ensure your partner’s fluids do not enter your vagina, mouth or any cuts.5

**Safe fingering**

- Wash your hands before and after sex.
- Use plenty of lube for fingering or fisting, especially for the anus.
- Use latex gloves, especially if you have a cut or sore on your hands.6

**Safe oral sex (risk of HIV is minimal)**

- Avoid oral sex if you or your partner have cuts or sores in or around the mouth, or if the
receiving partner is menstruating.

- Use a dental dam, or a condom cut open between the vagina/anus and mouth to prevent STI or HIV transmission.7

Safe sex toys

- Wash sex toys before and after use and between partners.
- Use a new condom every time sex toys are shared.8
- Use sex toys carefully to prevent drawing blood.

Know your rights

You have the right to:

- refuse sex
- have sex with women
- practice safer sex.

- 2. NAM aidsmap 'Female-to-female sexual transmission' [accessed March 2016]
- 4. NHS Choices (2014) ‘Sexual health for lesbian and bisexual women’
- 5. GMHC (2009) 'HIV Risk For Lesbians, Bisexuals & Other Women Who Have Sex With Women
- 6. NHS Choices (2014) ‘Sexual health for lesbian and bisexual women’

Last full review: 10 March 2016

Last updated: 2 May 2018