

HIV & men who have sex with men

Are you a man who has sex with men?

Stay safe and healthy with these specific HIV prevention choices and facts for you.

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Sources:
www.avert.org/fact-sheet-sources



Men who have sex with men

As a man who has sex with men, you may not identify as gay or bisexual, and may have had or still have, sex with women too.

But if you have sex with other men, there are some specific things to think about.

Why is HIV a risk?

The skin of the anus is thin and doesn't self-lubricate, so having anal sex can cause small tears.

These tears allow HIV to enter the body easily.

This makes anal sex without a condom a very common route of HIV transmission.



Safer sex for men who have sex with men



Talk about HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) with your potential sexual partner(s) – you can't tell who is HIV-positive and who is HIV-negative.



Drugs to enhance sex also usually reduce your inhibitions. This means you may take more risks – such as not using condoms or having more forceful sex – increasing the chances of HIV infection.



Condoms are the best way to protect yourself from HIV and STIs. Use a new condom every time you have anal sex.



PrEP prevents HIV infection but doesn't prevent STIs.



Use lots of water-based (not oil-based) lubricant to prevent tearing the lining of the anus during sex.



Use latex gloves for anal fingering or fisting.



There's a small risk of HIV infection from oral sex if you have bleeding cuts or sores in your mouth. In this event, use a condom when giving or receiving oral sex.

Circumcision and HIV risk



Be aware that studies suggest circumcision only reduces your HIV risk during anal sex if you are the insertive partner or 'top'.



More research is needed to understand its impact on transmission during anal sex.



Circumcision should always be voluntary and carried out by a trained medical professional.

Need more information? See our HIV and male circumcision factsheet.

What about pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP)?



PrEP is a daily antiretroviral (ARV) drug for HIV-negative people at greater risk of HIV exposure.



Taken correctly, PrEP prevents HIV infection.



PrEP isn't available everywhere, but access is increasing, so check with your healthcare provider.

And post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP)?

PEP is a 4-week course of ARV drugs taken after possible HIV exposure to prevent HIV infection. For example, if you have had:

- ✓ anal sex with a man who is HIV-positive and your condom breaks
- ✓ sex without a condom with a man who doesn't know his HIV status.

You must start PEP within 72 hours of possible exposure to be effective.



PEP is different to PrEP. It's taken after exposure and is not for long term use.



Need more information? See our PEP factsheet.

Get tested for HIV every 3 months



HIV infection may not be picked up by HIV tests for up to 3 months after exposure, so get tested regularly to keep your status up to date.



Knowing your status means you can access treatment if needed. This will keep you healthy and reduce the likelihood of you passing HIV on.



The weeks immediately after infection are when the levels of HIV in your body may be highest, increasing the likelihood of transmission during unprotected sex.

Get tested regularly for STIs

Having regular sexual health check-ups to diagnose and treat other STIs keeps you healthy and in control.



Hepatitis is increasingly common among men who have sex with men. Vaccines for hepatitis A and B are available in some places (ask your healthcare provider). There is no vaccine for hepatitis C.



I've tested, I'm positive, now what?

- ✓ Antiretroviral treatment (ART) is very effective if taken correctly. It lowers your viral load, keeping you healthy and reducing the chance of you passing on HIV through sex.
- ✓ ART for men who have sex with men is the same as for anyone else who is living with HIV.
- ✓ ART can make your viral load 'undetectable'. If confirmed by a health professional this means you can't transmit HIV through sex.

If you're living with HIV?

Don't assume that your sexual partners know your status.



If you're planning to have sex without a condom with someone who's also HIV-positive, be aware that you're putting yourself at risk of other STIs, including hepatitis C, and re-infection with a different strain of HIV (including drug resistant strains).



Know your rights

You have the right to:

- ✓ insist on using a condom and practice safer sex
- ✓ a voluntary and confidential HIV test
- ✓ not disclose your sexuality or HIV status.