

# HIV & SEX WORK

Are you involved in sex work, or do you know someone who is?

Find out how to protect your sexual health and prevent HIV infection.

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Last review: March 2016  
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References: [www.avert.org/learn-share/hiv-fact-sheets/sex-work](http://www.avert.org/learn-share/hiv-fact-sheets/sex-work)



AVERTing HIV and AIDS

Charity no: 1074849



## What is sex work?

Sex work involves the provision of sexual services in exchange for money/goods, either regularly or occasionally.

Sexual services could include:



oral sex



penetrative sexual intercourse



using sex toys to stimulate pleasure



performing fantasies and/or fetish sex.

Sex work:



can take place in a person's home, a brothel, on the street or in any other place



is criminalised in many countries.

As a sex worker, you still have rights.

See: know your rights.

## Sex work and HIV transmission

Sex workers may be more vulnerable to HIV due to many reasons:

- large numbers of sex partners
- unsafe working conditions
- unable to negotiate condom use
- social stigma & discrimination
- criminalised work environments.



These circumstances may put you at increased risk of HIV transmission.



Remember, clients may have large sexual networks that could have exposed them to HIV... always use a condom to protect yourself.



Don't let the promise of more money influence you to have unprotected sex and risk your health.



You have the right to access HIV prevention, testing and treatment to protect yourself.



Know your HIV status and get treatment early if you test HIV-positive.

## Protecting yourself from HIV

- Use condoms consistently and correctly. Use a female condom if the client refuses to use a male condom.
- If the client refuses to use a condom, offer non-penetrative activities such as masturbation, external ejaculation or using clean sex toys.
- Use lubricant to reduce friction and prevent the condom breaking, especially for anal sex.
- Access emergency contraception and emergency HIV treatment (PEP) if the condom breaks.

*Read AVERT's 'Emergency HIV Treatment' fact sheet for more information.*

- Refuse offers of more money for unprotected sex.
- Many sexually transmitted infections (STIs) do not have symptoms so access regular sexual health check ups & HIV testing.
- Do not trust or assume your client is HIV-negative or has no STIs.
- Avoid using drinks or drugs before you engage with a client.
- Avoid working alone - have friends you can call on.

## Sexual health check ups and HIV testing



It is important to have regular sexual health check ups even if you never have unprotected sex.



Some STIs can be passed on even if you use a condom.



Having an STI makes you more vulnerable to HIV infection.

*Read AVERT's 'HIV and STIs' fact sheet for more information.*



Know your HIV status and access treatment to protect your health.

## If you are HIV-positive

If you test positive for HIV:



access HIV treatment to improve your health.



take HIV treatment and use condoms consistently if you continue sex work



access HIV counselling for advice about living with HIV and managing your work.

## Male and transgender sex workers

If you are a male or transgender sex worker, advice is similar to that for female sex workers. In addition to this:



access counselling and advice about having post-surgery sex



if you use drugs to improve sexual performance such as Viagra, make sure you know the facts about them



use plenty of lube for anal sex.

## Know your rights

You have the right to:



refuse a client for any reason



insist on using a condom



be free from forced sex work, either by an employer, a manager or a client



be aware of the law on sex work in your country.