

# Safe Sex

## Safe sex is about:

- preventing sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- avoiding unintended pregnancy
- staying emotionally healthy.

## Do's

Preventing sexually transmissible infections (STIs).

The most significant STIs in Australia are genital herpes, genital warts, chlamydia, trichomonas, gonorrhoea, hepatitis B, syphilis and HIV. These can be passed from person to person through:

- vaginal sex
- oral sex
- anal sex
- close sexual contact
- some can be passed from a mother to her child during pregnancy or childbirth
- some can be passed from person to person through sharing needles or injecting drug equipment.

Use of condoms reduces the person to person spread of many STIs, including HIV. Some STIs can spread from person to person even when condoms are used.

Sometimes STIs cause symptoms but very often a person can have an STI without knowing it. A person with an STI may look perfectly healthy. If you have had unprotected sex, you have been at risk of an STI. Go to your local doctor, family planning clinic or sexual health clinic for a sexual health check.

To avoid unintended pregnancy, get contraception sorted out before you start having sex. Talk with your local doctor, family planning clinic or sexual health clinic about the best form of contraception for you.

To stay emotionally healthy, be in control.

## It is up to you:

**when to start having sex**

**when to have sex**

**who to have sex with**

**how to have sex**

**to have safe sex every time.**

## Tips

Always use condoms when you have vaginal or anal sex

Do not have sex with a person who has a visible sore, ulcer or lump on the genitals or around the anal area. Suggest that person see their local doctor, local family planning clinic or sexual health clinic.

Some STIs can infect the throat. It is therefore important to use protection when having oral sex. If you are giving a man oral sex (his penis in your mouth), then he will need to wear a condom. It does not matter whether you are male or female, if you put your mouth in contact with your partner's anus or vulva while having sex you will need to use a dental dam.

If you are having unprotected sex, talk to your partner about the risks involved. Some STIs can be cured but some cannot, including HIV. From a good discussion with your partner, you may be able to come to a clear agreement about using condoms.

There are lots of ways to enjoy physical intimacy with your partner. Explore other ways to be intimate which do not put you at risk of STIs or an unintended pregnancy.

Drinking alcohol and taking other drugs may affect your ability to make safe decisions. If you tend not to use condoms after drinking alcohol or taking other drugs, it may be time to think about this and the risks involved. While for some it may be unrealistic to think of not enjoying a drink, there are many ways of cutting down so that you stay in control and can make more rational choices about your sexual contact. One way of cutting down alcohol intake is to make every second drink a non-alcoholic one or, start drinking light beers.

Use of condoms is the only method of contraception that also protects against STIs. When using other methods (like the pill, Implanon, Depo, diaphragm or IUCD), use condoms as well.

If you use sex toys, use condoms and change the condom for each person. Wash the toys carefully after use and wash your hands after removing the condom.

## Helpful Hints

Be in control. Have safe sex every time.

Get contraception and safe sex sorted out before you have sex.

If you have had unprotected sex, you may be at risk of an STI. Have a sexual health check-up and consider emergency contraception if required.

## Other Resources

Queensland Health Sexual Health website  
[www.health.qld.gov.au/sexhealth/](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/sexhealth/)