

SAFER SEX

This brochure has been written to give you some information about safer sex. It is perhaps useful to think about what is meant by sex.

Most people think of an erect penis going into a vagina when they think about sex. Sex can be about other types of physical intimacy – oral sex, anal sex, erotic massage, French kissing – just to name a few. Safer sex, in its fullest meaning covers all of these. This brochure will concentrate on the penetrative sexual activities (oral, anal and vaginal sex).

Safer sex is all about looking after yourself and your partner. It is about avoiding unwanted pregnancy, reducing the risk of sexually transmissible infections (STIs) and staying emotionally healthy.

The only totally sure way of never getting an STI or having an unwanted pregnancy is to not have sex. For many people this is a considered decision, and the right one for them.

If you have sex, you need to make it as safe as possible for you and your partner. Just because someone looks healthy doesn't mean they do not have an infection that can be sexually transmitted. Even if you ask your partner if they have a STI they may say no because they do not know they have a STI. Not everyone who has an STI has symptoms.

What is meant by safer sex?

Safer sex means not letting your partner's body fluids (semen, vaginal fluids, blood) get into your body and vice versa. You can reduce these risks by:

- using barriers like condoms or dams with water based lubricant;
- having a sexual health check before having unprotected sex with a new partner; and
- reducing the number of partners you have.

Condoms, when used according to the instructions, are very effective at preventing pregnancy, transmission of HIV, Hepatitis B, Chlamydia and Gonorrhoea.

However, using condoms and dams does not give you 100% protection against all STIs.

Infections such as Genital Warts and Genital Herpes may affect the genital skin in an area that is not covered by the condom/dam, or you and your sexual partner may have genital contact prior to using a condom or dam. Condoms and dams do significantly reduce the risk of acquiring Genital Herpes, Genital Warts and Syphilis.

Safer sex is sex that you enjoy, a partner with whom you feel safe. It is free of coercion and can include laughter, experimentation and play. Good sex comes through good communication.

Safer sex can help keep you physically healthy. It can also help with your emotional well-being. Thinking and planning for safer sex helps you to make considered decisions about:

- when to have sex for the first time;
- how frequently you want to have sex;
- who to have sex with;
- how to have sex;
- who to tell about your sex life; and
- having safer sex.

Choosing to have safer sex means thinking about:

- the use of alcohol and/or drugs and how alcohol and drugs may increase your risk of engaging in unsafe sex;
- privacy, trust and communication when engaging in sexual activity; and
- the use of barriers to prevent STIs.

It all sounds too hard

Negotiating safer sex can be difficult. If you need help you can talk with the staff of the Sexual Health Service.

Sexual Health Service Tasmania is staffed Monday to Friday from 8.30 am until 5.00 pm. Clinic times vary from site to site so please contact your local office for details (see contact details on the back of this pamphlet).

**Sexual Health Service
Clinical Services**

HOBART

60 Collins Street
Hobart 7000
Ph: (03) 6233 3557

LAUNCESTON

42 Canning Street
Launceston 7250
Ph: (03) 6336 2216

DEVONPORT

23 Steele Street
Devonport 7310
Ph: (03) 6421 7759

BURNIE

11 Jones Street
BURNIE 7320
Ph: (03) 6434 6315

**SEXUAL HEALTH SERVICE
A joint Australian and State
Government Program**

The Royal Hobart Hospital is Tasmania's largest hospital and provides a number of state-wide services including cardiothoracic surgery, neurosurgery, burns management, hyperbaric and diving medicine, neonatal intensive care and high-risk obstetrics. It is the major teaching and research hospital for the State and works closely with the University of Tasmania.

Many students in the health care professions are taught within the Hospital, and gaining skills in examining and interviewing patients is an important part of their education and training. We ask for your co-operation and encourage you to participate in our teaching and research activities. Your permission is required for participation.

The Royal Hobart Hospital encourages feedback from patients, relatives and visitors. This feedback helps staff to better understand the needs of patients and provide the best possible patient care.



**The Royal Hobart Hospital
is a smoke-free site**

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**Information
Pamphlet**

Sexual
Health
SERVICE

Safer Sex