

INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

A Needle and Syringe Program (NSP or the exchange) can also give you support and advice about everything covered in this brochure.

Melbourne Sexual Health Centre
1800 032 017 • www.mshc.org.au
This service offers free testing for HIV and all other sexually transmissible infections

RhED
1800 458 752 • www.sexworker.org.au
Health, safety and legal information for sex workers.

YEAH
www.yeah.org.au/findaservice
National Youth Initiative on sexual health, alcohol and drug issues.

DirectLine
1800 888 236 • www.directline.org.au
24-hour. If you want to talk to someone about your drug use or find a support service.

Touchbase
www.touchbase.org.au
Online resource about harm reduction and safer sex designed for LGBTIQ people.

Agency details:

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SAFER
USING 18

SAFER
SEX

Safer sex is about protecting yourself and your sexual partners against sexually transmissible infections (STIs) and unplanned pregnancy.

One of the best ways to make sex safer is to use barrier protection like condoms, female condoms or dams and lubricant. You can find information on safer sex and free condoms and safer sex products at NSPs.

STIs

Condoms (and other barrier methods) are the best way to prevent the spread of STIs.

Most STIs do not show symptoms.

If you think you might have an STI, don't panic, the good news is most STIs can be easily treated and cured, although some like HIV require ongoing treatment and do not yet have a cure.

Most STI tests involve a simple urine sample, swab or visual examination.

It's important to have regular check-ups. You can catch an STI from having unprotected sex even once.

Symptoms of STIs

Many STIs have no obvious symptoms, so if you think you or your sexual partners might have been at risk, the best thing to do is visit your doctor or sexual health clinic.

Some common symptoms include:

- Unusual or smelly discharge
- Pain when urinating
- Unusual sores or blisters
- Itching or irritation
- Pain during sex
- Pain in your lower abdomen or pelvis.

You can get an STI test from any doctor or sexual health service.

CONDOMS

Condoms are an easy way to protect against HIV, STIs, and unwanted pregnancy. They are available for free at the NSP (the exchange) and many doctors and health care providers, or at low cost from most supermarkets and convenience stores.

UNPLANNED PREGNANCY

[If you think you might be pregnant you should get support as soon as you can. An NSP worker can help you find a service and make an appointment for you.](#)

If you have had unprotected sex or a condom broke and you're worried that you or a sexual partner could become pregnant, you should consider taking the emergency contraceptive pill.

It's most effective when taken within 72 hours, so it's important that you don't leave it too long.

[There is information on pregnancy in the brochure titled 'Healthy Mum and Baby'.](#)

HIV

HIV is a virus that slowly weakens the immune system until it can't fight off some infections. It usually spreads through unprotected sex, sharing injecting equipment, or through pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding.

HIV is easily treatable. Not only does treatment protect you and your health from the virus, it can prevent HIV in your sexual partners.

Getting tested for HIV is an easy way to keep on top of your sexual health. Tests are quick, easy, and available from any doctor, with results usually available in less than 10 days.

If you test positive for HIV, your doctor can help you get on treatment, or you can contact the Victorian HIV Service at Alfred Hospital on (03) 9076 6081.

Treatment/undetectable viral load

When people with HIV are on effective treatment and have very low levels of virus in their body (or undetectable viral load) they cannot pass on HIV.

If you already have HIV, getting on treatment and taking it every day can protect your health, and reduce the chance of passing on HIV.

Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP)

Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is the regular use of HIV medications by HIV-negative people to prevent HIV.

Taken as prescribed, PrEP is highly effective at preventing HIV and helps people control their risk of HIV infection

PrEP is available with a prescription from a doctor, which can be filled at a community pharmacy. Some pharmacies may need to order it in. The normal prescription charges apply.

For more information on PrEP you should speak to your doctor or to Thorne Harbour Health (formerly the Victorian AIDS Council) on Toll Free: 1800 134 840. More information is also available at PAN.org.au.

Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP)

PEP is a four-week course of medicine you take if you think you've been exposed to HIV. The medicine aims to prevent you from becoming HIV-positive.

You need to begin PEP within 72 hours of being exposed to HIV. If you think you need PEP you should contact the PEP INFOLINE on 1800 889 887.

CHEMSEX

Chemsex is when people use drugs like ice to lower their inhibitions to enhance the feeling of sex. Using drugs can mean that you make decisions around sex that increase your risk of blood borne viruses and sexually transmissible infections.

It may also mean that you end up sharing injecting equipment and taking risks you would not have otherwise taken.

Always carry condoms and lube, your own needles, syringes, swabs, spoon, pipes and any other equipment you might need.

- Try to keep things as clean as you can
- Mix up on a clean surface
- Always wash your hands before and after injecting
- Never let a used fit come into contact with a group mix
- Always dispose of injecting equipment properly
- Use condoms and lube every time you have sex.

SEX WORK

If you identify as a sex worker or engage in 'sex for swap' you need to look after your safety, health and know your rights.

[The Resourcing Health and Education in the sex industry \(RhED\) program can give you information, resources and provide you with support. You can contact RhED on 1800 458 752 or email \[sexworker@sexworker.org.au\]\(mailto:sexworker@sexworker.org.au\).](#)
