



RISK REDUCTION STRATEGIES



When you are sexually active there are multiple ways to reduce your risk of acquiring or transmitting HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

5 THINGS TO KNOW:

1. Common body fluids that can transmit HIV include cum, pre-cum, rectal secretions, vaginal secretions and blood.
2. STIs often show no signs and can be easily spread by anal, oral and many types of foreplay.
3. Having STIs will increase your risk of acquiring HIV. This is because STIs can cause sores or inflammation which allows HIV to enter into your body.
4. HIV positive people who maintain an **undetectable viral load** are very unlikely to be able to transmit the infection during sex.
5. Sex is normal, natural and fun, but all sex carries some level of risk, so it's important to test for HIV and STIs at least once a year.

BARRIER STRATEGIES

CONDOMS

How it works: Condoms work by creating a barrier between the skin and body fluids, preventing infections moving from one person to another.

Limitations: Condoms only cover the penis, so they can't protect you from STIs that are spread by skin to skin contact if they are present on other areas of the skin.

How to use it: Check that the packet isn't torn or expired, make sure you roll the condom on the right way (not inside out), use plenty of **lubricant** and check the condom regularly during sex. Remember, condoms need to be used for the whole duration of penetration in order to be effective.

LUBRICANT

How it works: Lube reduces friction when skin (and the lining of your arse) rubs together, which reduces the risk of HIV transmission by preventing trauma to the skin or lining of your arse.

Limitations: Water-based or silicon-based lubes are the best lubricants to use; Oil-based lubes can corrode the latex of **condoms** and **gloves** and cause them to break.

How to use it: Lube can be used during fucking, fingering, fisting, or using sex toys. It is important to use plenty of lube and reapply it during sex as it is absorbed by the skin and evaporates.

GLOVES

How it works: These act as barriers like condoms for the hand while fisting, preventing body fluids moving between hands and the rectum. Small microscopic cuts in the rectum are common and can also be present on the hands and arms, which provide a potential transmission route for HIV and Hepatitis C.

BIOMEDICAL STRATEGIES

PRE-EXPOSURE PROPHYLAXIS (PrEP)

How it works: PrEP involves taking a HIV medication called Truvada (containing Tenofovir and Emtricitabine), which protects you from HIV by stopping HIV from multiplying and spreading throughout your body.

Limitations: PrEP needs to be taken everyday and doesn't protect you from STIs like syphilis, gonorrhoea or chlamydia, so should be used along with other risk reduction methods, including condoms.

Who should use it: PrEP is recommended for individuals who are engaging in anal sex without a condom, have a HIV positive partner, or have regular sexual contact with multiple sexual partners.

POST-EXPOSURE PROPHYLAXIS (PEP)

How it works: PEP is a 4 week course of HIV medication taken as soon as possible after exposure to HIV, which helps prevent HIV from becoming established in the body.

Limitations: PEP must be started within 72 hours of the potential HIV exposure.

How to use it: PEP is free and can be accessed by first calling the PEP line on 1300 767 161 where you will be assessed and referred to an Emergency Department or Sexual Health Clinic.

BIOMEDICAL STRATEGIES, continued...

UNDETECTABLE VIRAL LOAD (UDVL)

How it works: Viral load is a measure of the amount of HIV virus in a HIV positive person's blood, which is related to how infectious a HIV positive person is. UDVL means the level of virus in a person's blood is below a 'detectable' level. Studies show that UDVL greatly reduces the risk of a HIV positive person transmitting HIV during sex.

Limitations: Variations in viral load can occur throughout a person's lifetime, sometimes as a result of catching an STI or missing doses of HIV medication. UDVL does not mean that other risk reduction strategies such as **condoms or PrEP** should be abandoned.

BEHAVIOURAL STRATEGIES

WITHDRAWAL

How it works: Withdrawal or 'pulling out' is when the top pulls out before cumming during anal sex to reduce the chance of passing HIV to the bottom.

Limitations: Pre-cum can contain enough HIV to be infectious, which can enter tiny tears in the lining of the bottom's arse. This method also doesn't protect you from STIs such as Syphilis, Gonorrhoea, and Chlamydia.

SERO-SORTING

How it works: Sero-sorting is where HIV negative guys seek other HIV guys for sex, or HIV positive guys seek other HIV positive guys for sex.

Limitations: It is impossible to know someone's HIV status just by looking at them, so you need to rely on your sex partner to tell you if they have HIV or not. Often people who have recently acquired HIV do not know they have it as it takes 6 weeks for the virus to be detected on a blood test and longer for rapid HIV tests. In Australia almost half of all people who acquire HIV do so from someone who didn't know they were HIV positive.

STRATEGIC POSITIONING

How it works: Strategic positioning is where you choose to be the top while fucking, because topping without a condom is less of a risk for acquiring HIV in comparison to bottoming without condoms.

Limitations: Topping is still high risk for HIV, especially if you are uncut. It also doesn't protect you from other STIs, such as Syphilis, Gonorrhoea or Chlamydia.

REDUCING SEX PARTNERS

How it works: Having less sexual partners statically reduces the chance of being exposed to HIV, simply because the greater the number of sexual partners, the greater the opportunity of risk exposure.

Limitations: It only takes one risk exposure to acquire HIV. Reducing the number of sexual partners on its own is therefore not necessarily an effective strategy, although if using **condoms, PrEP** and other risk reduction strategies, it can reduce your risk of acquiring HIV and other STIs.

MONOGAMY

How it works: Monogamy is when you only have sex with one person, and they only have sex with you. By restricting your sexual activities to one person, you can reduce your chance of acquiring HIV. This can be because you are both HIV negative, or if your monogamous partner is HIV positive then other STIs are less likely to interfere with his **viral load**.

Limitations: It's important not to assume your relationship is 'monogamous'. This needs to be discussed with new boyfriends, girlfriends or fuck buddies and be agreed to.

How to use it: It is recommended that both partners in a monogamous relationship get a HIV and STI test at the beginning of the relationship and before considering sex without a condom.

AVOIDING ANAL SEX

How it works: In order to reduce the chance of acquiring or transmitting HIV, some people avoid anal sex altogether. For some people, this is an easy strategy because they do not enjoy anal sex.

Limitations: It is still possible to catch other STIs, such as Syphilis, Gonorrhoea or Chlamydia, from other sexual activities, such as oral sex, vaginal sex, rimming, oral-vaginal (eating out vagina), fingering, fisting, and/or sharing sex toys. There is also a small risk of HIV infection from oral sex and fisting.