

What is 'safer' sex?

- Sex which reduces the risk of catching a sexually transmitted infection (STI).
- Sex which reduces the risk of pregnancy.

Sex using a condom is 'safer' because not only does it help protect against STIs but if used correctly is an effective form of contraception.

What are sexually transmitted infections?

STIs are infections which can be passed on during sexual contact.

Symptoms vary but some infections do not have any symptoms so you may not even know you are infected.

Most STIs are easily treated. It is important to get treatment as quickly as possible as they can cause **permanent damage** such as infertility. You also risk passing on the infection to others.

Who is at risk?

If you are sexually active and particularly if you are unsure about your partner's sexual or drug history, you risk catching STIs.

For peace of mind get a check-up at your local Genito Urinary Medicine clinic. It's free and confidential. Please telephone to make an appointment.

If you discover that you have an STI, it is really important that you tell anyone you've had sex with to get a check-up.

Useful Contacts

Genito Urinary Medicine (GUM) Clinics

Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast ☎ 028 9063 4050;

Altnagelvin Hospital, Londonderry ☎ 028 7161 1269;

Causeway Hospital, Coleraine ☎ 028 7034 6028;

Daisy Hill Hospital, Newry ☎ 028 3083 5050.

(GUM clinics also provide check-ups and treatment)

The HIV Support Centre
Freephone ☎ 0800 137437

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Don't risk getting pregnant

Every time you have sex without using contraception you risk pregnancy, even if it's the first time, even if you are having your period. You can get pregnant if sperm comes into contact with vaginal fluids, even without penetration.

Withdrawing before ejaculation is not a method of contraception, and douching (washing the vagina) after intercourse will not prevent pregnancy.

Contraception

There are several methods of contraception. The most effective forms, if used properly, are the pill, injectable contraceptive, implants and IUD/IUS.

Although condoms are slightly less effective, they provide protection against sexually transmitted infections.

For maximum protection against pregnancy and STIs use a condom with one of the other forms of contraception listed above.

Emergency contraception

If you've had unprotected sex or think your contraception might have failed, there are two types of emergency contraception:

- Emergency pills – must be started within 3 days or **72 hours** (but they can be more effective if taken within 24 hours).
- IUD – must be fitted within **5 days**.

You can get these from:

- family planning clinics;
- some GPs;
- Genito Urinary Medicine (GUM) clinics;
- some hospital A&E depts;
- Brook Belfast.

Useful Contacts

fpaNI
Provides information and advice on contraception and general sexual health, and details of local family planning clinics and GUM clinics.
☎ 028 9031 6100 (Belfast)
☎ 028 7126 0016 (Londonderry)
☎ 0845 122 8687 (Helpline)
www.fpa.org.uk

Brook
Provides information, advice and contraceptive supplies for young people up to the age of 19.
Belfast: ☎ 9032 8866
Coleraine: ☎ 7034 2178
www.brook.org.uk

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