

Before, During and After

Vaccination – Get vaccinated against Hepatitis A and B (see contact list for the places that provide this).

Condoms, lube, gloves and dams can protect you against most sexually transmitted infections. The contact list shows where you can get these.

PEP or Post Exposure Prophylaxis is a course of medication that can stop you becoming HIV positive after you've been exposed to the virus. It is available from the sexual health clinics listed on the contact sheet and from local emergency departments out of hours.

PrEP or pre-exposure prophylaxis is regularly taken HIV medication which research is indicating will help protect a person against HIV infection. For more information contact Nottingham Sexual Health Service or visit www.iwantprepnw.co.uk or www.prepster.info.

STI testing. If you think you have had a risk you can be tested at one of the agencies on the contact list.

BBV testing is available at The Health Shop, Nottingham Sexual Health Service, Kingsmill The Hub and Trihealth Bassetlaw.

Positive barebacking can lead to complications and limitations in your drug treatment options. The Chemsex study also suggests you are vulnerable to co-infection with another virus, eg Hepatitis C.²

Hepatitis C a recent study has shown that the virus can present in both semen and rectal fluid in sufficient quantities to transmit the virus.³

²*The Chemsex Study: drug use in sexual settings among gay and bisexual men in Lambeth, Southwark & Lewisham* by Adam Bourne, David Reid, Ford Hickson, Sergio Torres Rueda and Peter Weatherburn. Published by Sigma Research, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (March 2014). ISBN: 978-1-906673-18-5.

³Foster AL et al. Shedding of hepatitis C virus into the rectum of HIV-infected men who have sex with men. *Clin Infect Dis*, online edition, 2016.

Other Potential Harms

Consent to sex

Drug use can focus you on your own needs and desires and make you less sensitive to the needs of others. Inversely, drugs can alter your consciousness to such a degree that it makes even basic communication difficult. It may not be possible to negotiate safer sex or tell someone what you are comfortable with at the peak of your high. **GALOP** provides in-depth information and helpful advice on this issue. Contact them for details. If you think you have been sexually assaulted contact the Topaz Centre for immediate help and advice. If you feel that you are in immediate danger call 999.

Debt

Partying can be expensive. The cost of your drugs, venue entry fees and taxi fares can all add up. If you have any concerns regarding debt then you can access debt advice at the CAB or any local advice centres.

Mental Health

Some chemsex sessions / parties can last for days. Prolonged drug use and lack of sleep can have a significant effect on your mental health, especially the use of stimulant drugs such as crystal meth and mephedrone. Look out for uncomfortable symptoms e.g. feeling unsafe, paranoia, anxiety and depression. Give yourself breaks between sessions and look after yourself by sleeping and eating healthily when you are not partying. Information on specific drugs and their effects is available from drug services listed on the contact sheet. **Erowid** is the most comprehensive online database net and worth a look. The GMFA website also has some useful information on drugs.

Prescribed Drugs

If you are likely to have a long session then you will need to remember to take prescribed medicines with you as missed doses could lead to complications, unexpected episodes or drug failure.



Drug Use (General)

No drug use is risk free but if you are well informed about the drugs you are taking then this will minimise the risks. Each drug has specific actions and implications for health and well-being.

It is worth remembering that most drugs are likely to lower your inhibitions. You may find yourself agreeing to things that you would not normally consider. Thinking about your personal limits in advance may be helpful. If you are attending a group session with a friend you may find it helpful to discuss this with them in advance.

First Aid awareness will help you know how to respond to a drug emergency. The Health Shop provides overdose response sessions regularly throughout the year. If you think one of your party has overdosed then call an ambulance as soon as possible. The Police do not generally attend overdoses unless asked to attend by the ambulance crew.

For advice and information about drug use contact one of the drug services listed on the contact sheet.

It is now believed that some illegal drugs can have specific detrimental effects on the uptake and effectiveness of certain HIV medications.¹

¹Guidance on the Clinical Management of Acute and Chronic Harms of Club Drugs and Novel Psychoactive Substances (Novel Psychoactive Treatment UK Network NEPTUNE).

SLAMMING (injecting drugs)

You can protect yourself against blood borne viruses or BBVs (HIV, Hepatitis B and C) by using new injecting equipment (works) and other related equipment.

If you learn how to inject yourself you can be sure new works are used, what was injected and how it was injected. Some white powders look alike but can be very different in action. If someone else injects you they could "miss" (miss the intended site and cause injury), deliberately mislead (spike) you or mistakenly inject you with the wrong substance. Imagine going into a k-hole

when you are expecting an m-cat rush! If someone is going to inject you, make sure you either prepare the injection or watch the injection being prepared.

If someone else injects you and it goes wrong they can be liable for prosecution.

You can minimise the damage to your body by learning safer injecting techniques, the safest way to prepare your drugs and by using the appropriate injecting equipment. The Health Shop or a pharmacy exchange can provide you with all the equipment you need. Safety advice around all aspects of injecting and drug use is available from any of the drug services on the contact list.

If you are concerned about an injection site please attend your local drug service for advice and treatment. If you have an immediate concern and your drug service is shut attend the urgent care centre or your local emergency department.

HOW CAN SEX BE SAFER?

Unprotected sex carries a risk of acquiring and passing on STIs (including Hepatitis A). Using condoms reduces the chance of this happening. Condoms don't take away all the risk, however, as they may not cover the part of the body where the STI is (such as a Herpes blister or a Syphilis sore). Also some STIs are spread during types of sex where people are less likely to use condoms, e.g. oral sex and rimming. The more sexual partners you have, the more likely you are to have sex with someone with an infection. Condoms are available from the agencies on the contact list.

Safer anal sex

The main way HIV is passed on between men is through anal sex without a condom / barebacking. Anal penetration can cause tears in the anus which can allow virus to enter the body as the lining of the anus is very thin and does not self-lubricate. It is recommended to use plenty of water based (not oil) lubricant and condoms to minimise possible tearing.

Safer oral sex

Oral sex is generally seen as low risk as it is less likely that HIV is transmitted this way. However, many STIs such as Syphilis and Gonorrhoea are commonly passed on through oral sex. If you have any cuts or sores in or around your mouth it is recommended that you avoid oral sex as there is an increased risk of STIs.

Safer fingering and fisting

Always wash your hands before touching your own or someone else's genitals, and if possible in between touching different sets of genitals (eg your own and someone else's). Also make sure that you don't use fingers that have been in contact with someone's anus to touch other parts. Fingering, fisting and other BDSM (bondage, dominance, submission and sadomasochism) activities can cause tears and cuts and so are high risk in terms of infection. You can minimise the risk of tears and cuts by using plenty of lube, keeping your finger nails short and by covering your hands with latex/non-latex gloves during digital anal penetration.

Safer sex with toys

Bacteria and infections can be passed by sharing sex toys as micro-organisms can live on them. It is important they are clean and you don't share toys. If this is not possible then covering the toy with a condom and changing it for each new person or part of the body is an effective way of preventing body fluid exchange. Hot water and anti-bacterial soap is an effective way of cleaning toys, specifically designed sex toy cleaner is also available generally from the .

Douches and lube shooters

Ideally these should not be shared but if sharing has to take place then douching equipment should be thoroughly cleaned between uses / people. Use sex toy cleaner or sterilising tablets. Instead of sharing lube shooters use single use 2ml syringes.