

Where can I get further help?

If you'd like more information, make an appointment to see your GP, or at your local sexual health clinic. You can also take a look at the Trust's website to see what services we offer and contact details. If you cannot get online please contact our Customer Services team on 0800 587 2108 for more details

Website – www.southwestyorkshire.nhs.uk

Follow us on Twitter to get updates on what we're doing: @allofusinmind

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Booklets available in this series:

Anger – How do I manage it?

Baby Blues – Will we be ok?

Bereavement – How can I cope?

Confidence – How can I get some?

Healthy Living – What should I do?

Low Moods – How can I feel better?

My body, my health – Check it out!

Pain – What can I do to help myself?

Self Harm – How can I help myself?

Shyness – How can I manage it?

Sleep – How can I get some?

Stress – How do I manage it?

The end of life – How can I prepare for it?

Worries – How can I best deal with them?

Your feedback is welcome

We invite you to share any comments, compliments, concerns or complaints you have about the Trust. Please speak to a member of staff or contact our customers services team on 0800 587 2108, who can also provide help in understanding this information, including in other formats.

Healthy Sex

How can I be sure?



With all of us in mind

Healthy Sex – How can I be sure?

It is important to talk openly about sex. Remember it is a natural part of life and you should never be embarrassed to ask questions. You may want to know what contraception is available, what 'healthy sex' is and the laws surrounding it. For more support and information find your local sexual health clinic and make an appointment, there are also usually walk in centres where you can get instant advice. Until you get there we've created this booklet to help you on your way. It will give you some information to help you make healthy and informed choices to have sex in the right way, at the right time, with the right person.

Step one: Know what you can and can't do

It's important to know the law around having sex; it's there to protect people, particularly young people and those who are vulnerable. For all sexual orientations it is illegal to engage in any form of sexual activity with someone under the age of 16, even if you both give consent. Consent means that a person agrees by choice and has the freedom and capacity to make that choice.

Those in a position of trust, for example a teacher, a nurse or a social worker must not engage in sexual activity with anyone under 18 years of age that they are professionally involved with, otherwise they are breaking the law. There are usually organisational based policies in place to ban sexual activity with someone who is a vulnerable adult, regardless of their age.

“How old do I have to be to have sex?”

If you feel that you may have been the victim of unlawful sexual activity please speak with someone you trust such as a family member or teacher. If you prefer to speak to somebody else you can anonymously ring Childline (0800 1111111) or the Samaritans (08457 909090) and a trained counsellor will listen to you.

Step two: Take your time

Are you ready?

This question is not just for young people but it is worth considering all through your life. Take your time before having sex with your new partner, take it at your own pace and enjoy yourself. Make sure you feel comfortable with the situation and you are not feeling pressured into doing anything that you don't want to do.

Get protected

Contraception is vital if you don't want to have a baby. It is also very important to consider protection against sexually transmitted infections. There are two forms of contraception that a man can use and 13 for women! That doesn't mean that the woman should take full responsibility – it should always be a decision that you make together with your partner.

“I want to know a bit about contraception”

Before you decide on the option right for you, you need to consider:

- Is it likely that you will want to have a baby in the near future?
- Your lifestyle – what type of contraception suits you now and will it need to change soon?
- Whether you want to use it every day, every time you have sex or less often.

The most common forms of contraception include:

- Condoms
- Contraceptive pill
- Implant (IUD)
- Female or male sterilisation
- Latex/polyurethane square

To understand all of the options available to you and your partner please speak with your local contraception and sexual health clinic. They will be able to advise you on the best form of contraception for you and will let you know where you can get it.

Remember contraceptives aren't 100% guaranteed to stop you from getting pregnant or catching a sexually transmitted infection but they will massively reduce the risk of it happening.

Step three: Know your body

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI's), also referred to as Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD's).

“I want to enjoy sex in a safe way”

STI's are passed on through sexual activity. Sexual activity covers everything from touching a person's genitals to oral and penetrative sex. It is important to take your sexual health seriously as it's not just your health you are responsible for, but also that of your sexual partner.

For many STI's, including Chlamydia and HIV, it is common to have no symptoms or ones that are often mistaken for other common illnesses. Despite there being no obvious symptoms, some STI's can have very serious long term effects if left untreated. If however you do experience symptoms, these may include:

- Pain when urinating.
- Itching, burning or tingling around the genital area.
- Blisters, sores, spots or lumps around the genitals and anus.

In women only:

- Yellow or green vaginal discharge.
- Discharge that smells.
- Bleeding between periods or after sex.
- Pain during sex.
- Lower abdominal pain.

In men only:

- Discharge from the penis.
- Irritation of the urethra (where your wee comes out).

It's not to say if you have any of the above symptoms that you do have an STI but it is advisable to get checked out all the same. Also you must bear in mind that many STI's don't show symptoms, so it's good to get tested regularly if you are sexually active even if you feel well. Speak with your GP or local sexual health clinic about getting tested for STI's.

The most effective way to reduce the risk of getting or passing on an STI is to wear a condom (male or female) when having vaginal, anal or oral sex. Check on the condom packet for the 'CE' mark. This means that it has been tested to European Safety Standards.

Also, if you share sex toys, make sure you wash them properly or sterilise them before passing them on to someone else, or else use a new condom or polyurethane square. This will limit the risk of passing on any STI's.

“I'm worried that I don't have a libido any more, is there something wrong with me?”

Sexual problems

It is very common for people to experience changes in their sexual desires and libido. This could be because of a psychological or physical reason. Many problems are only temporary and can be resolved in different ways.

Talk

This could be talking to your partner, to someone you trust or to a health care professional. By talking you might find that you don't have a problem at all and others are experiencing the same things as you. However if there is a definite reason for your problem, by talking to the right person you can soon get back to how you want to be. Don't sit and stew, it'll only make things worse!

“What is a sexually transmitted infection and how do I catch it?”

Get checked out

If you feel that something is not right with your body; such as new lumps, erection problems or pains when having sex, you should visit your GP or local sexual health clinic. They will talk to you to try and find out the possible cause of this problem, this may also involve examinations or tests to make sure there aren't any underlying health problems. Health care professionals are experts; they work in confidence and will not judge in any circumstance.

Exercise and diet

You might wonder what exercise and diet has to do with sex. It's not essential that you do lots of exercise and eat healthily in order to have sex but the reality is that a person who is happy with their lifestyle is more likely to enjoy sex. The benefits of feeling good contribute directly to your sex life. If you are confident with your body you're more likely to enjoy sharing intimate moments with your partner. Similarly if you eat well you're more likely to have the 'get up and go' to want to have sex!

You can find out more about the benefits of living a healthy lifestyle by visiting www.swyt.co/selfhelpguides.

Keep clean

Good body hygiene is about keeping clean; ridding your body the best you can of unwanted smells is a way of being respectful of your partner. Make sure your body is clean by washing every day.

Step four: Let's start a conversation

If you have any concerns about sex or want to know more about having safe sex, please get in touch with your local sexual health clinic. These services often offer walk-in clinics where you can be seen by a health professional straight away. You can find out where your nearest service is by visiting www.nhs.uk/livewell

We want you to find this book uplifting and helpful. However it is not intended to be a direct substitute for a consultation with a healthcare professional.

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