

What is safe sex?

Created 1 Dec 2008 - 12:00am

HIV positive people have the right to a full and active sex life. You can still enjoy sex regardless of your HIV positive status. Safe sex is any sex that avoids semen, blood or vaginal fluid from getting into the bloodstream of another person.

HIV is not transmitted through kissing, sucking, touching, rubbing, massaging or using hands or fingers to penetrate your anus or vagina providing the person has no cuts, sores or scratches on their hands. If they do have any cuts, sores or scratches, it's advisable to use latex gloves.

Using condoms during insertive anal or vaginal sex can help to minimise the risk of passing the [virus](#) [1] A small infective organism which is incapable of reproducing outside a host cell. on to another person. It is recommended that condoms are always used with a water based lubricant such as Wet Stuff or KY. Oil based lubricants like Vaseline or hand cream can damage the condom.

There is a very low risk of passing on the virus through oral sex. However, if you're HIV positive and the insertive partner, the safest oral sex involves using a condom because any cuts or ulcers in the mouth of your receptive sexual partner can allow the virus to enter their bloodstream. Oral sex for women also poses little risk. There is not much HIV present in women's vaginal fluids and dental dams (thin square pieces of latex to cover the vagina or anus during oral sex) are not necessary for protecting against HIV unless you are menstruating. However they may protect from other sexually transmitted infections which may be common and adversely affect people with HIV.

If you and your partner are both HIV positive, you may not want to use protection, however there is debate around the risks posed by HIV positive people having sex and exposing their partner to a different [strain](#) [2] [HIV strain] Any subgroup of the HIV species. Because HIV mutates very easily, there are many different strains (and may be multiple strains within a single person). of HIV. Becoming infected with a different strain can result in reinfection (superinfection) which may limit your treatment options if you acquire a drug- [resistant](#) [3] HIV which has mutated and is less susceptible to the effects of one or more anti-HIV drugs is said to be resistant. strain. Talk to your doctor or contact your local AIDS Council for more information about the different strains of HIV and how this may impact on the decisions you make around sex.

Sex and menstruation

HIV is present in menstrual fluid. Having sex when you have your period can increase the risk of HIV transmission so it's a good idea to consider using condoms during anal or vaginal sex or dams during oral sex at this time (the risk of passing on HIV during oral sex remains very low, however).

Michelle: "Love will always come along and I think there is always someone for everyone. Just because you are positive it doesn't mean that nobody is going to love you."

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Links:

[1] <http://www.napwa.org.au/glossary/term/125>

[2] <http://www.napwa.org.au/glossary/term/190>

[3] <http://www.napwa.org.au/glossary/term/109>

[4] <http://www.napwa.org.au/resource/next-steps/sex-and-relationships>

[5] <http://www.napwa.org.au/resource/a-positive-diagnosis/what-does-hiv-mean-for-women>