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How can I have sex more safely?



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You can have fun—and erotic—sex with no risk of getting HIV. There are many sexual activities that do not involve any risk of semen, vaginal fluids or blood entering your bloodstream.

What are some examples of safer sex?

Some “no risk” activities are:

- kissing—including “deep” or open-mouth kissing
- hugging
- massaging
- fondling, touching, rubbing
- masturbating (alone or with your partner).

Also No risk:

Touching the penis, vagina or anus is not risky, unless you have fresh cuts or sores, even if they are unnoticeable, that could allow HIV-infected semen, vaginal fluids or blood to enter your bloodstream.

Low risk:

Oral sex is considered “low” risk because saliva doesn’t transmit HIV. However, if you have any fresh cuts or sores in your mouth (even unnoticeable), infected semen, vaginal fluids or blood can enter your bloodstream when you lick or suck a penis, vagina or anus (see Question 12 “How risky is oral sex?”).

High risk:

The linings of the vagina and the anus are delicate and thin, and can tear easily. These small tears can be invisible and unnoticeable, but enough to let HIV into your bloodstream. Therefore, the riskiest sexual activities are:

- having vaginal or anal intercourse without a condom (see Question 14 “How risky is anal sex?”)
- sharing sex toys without using a new condom for each user, or without cleaning them between users.

Safer sex includes:

- talking to your partner about safer sex before having sex (see Question 15 “How do I talk about using condoms?”)
- using a latex or polyurethane condom for:
 - vaginal or anal intercourse
 - oral sex on a man
 - oral sex on a woman—you can use a condom, cut open lengthwise, or a dental dam placed over the vulva
 - shared sex toys
- trying a female condom (see Question 17 “What is a female condom?”)
- using lots of water-based lubricant (don’t use Vaseline® or oil-based products that weaken latex condoms).

Never re-use condoms.

For more information, contact your local AIDS service organization or health care practitioner.

For more copies of this fact sheet or other documents on HIV/AIDS, contact the
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