

# SEXUAL HEALTH

- enjoy sex more.
- feel better about yourself.
- be less at risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and other problems such as erectile dysfunction (impotence) or premature ejaculation.
- live longer - maybe.

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### FURTHER INFORMATION

More on STIs, the penis and even how to put on a condom:

- [malehealth.co.uk](http://malehealth.co.uk)

See also NHS Choices:

- [nhs.uk](http://nhs.uk)

If you're happy to pay, [www.lloydspharmacy.com/doctor](http://www.lloydspharmacy.com/doctor) offers online consultations and can send you an STI test in the post.



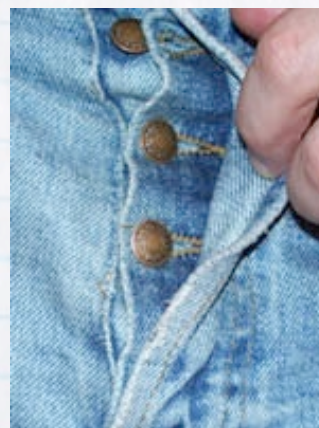
## Can sex really help you live longer?

It's becoming increasingly clear that enjoying a fulfilled and intimate relationship can make an important contribution to good overall health and that a satisfying sex life can be a significant component of any such relationship. Effectively preventing, detecting, and treating diseases of your sexual and reproductive system could also help increase your lifespan.

Although there are many ways to have satisfying and fulfilling sex, it remains an unusual experience for too many of us.

The unscientific but interesting annual surveys by condom makers Durex suggest we're not all satisfied with our sex lives. In the 2011 survey, half of respondents felt their sex lives lacked excitement. Since

enjoyable sex is so important to our sexual health, as well as our overall well-being, it's vital we find ways of improving our experiences between the sheets (or wherever else we choose to have them).



This booklet should help.



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# What about safe sex and sexually transmitted infections (STIs)?

YOUR SEX LIFE WILL BE A LOT  
HAPPIER AND HEALTHIER IF YOU  
TAKE GOOD CARE OF YOURSELF  
AND THOSE YOU HAVE SEX WITH

There are many health problems which can affect the sexual and reproductive organs. At least one man in three will have some sort of prostate-gland disorder during his lifetime. At any one time about 10% of men will be experiencing some form of sexual dysfunction such as erection or ejaculation problems. Sperm counts appear to be falling and as many as one in five men will be affected by fertility problems.

In 2012 sexually transmitted infections (STIs) such as gonorrhoea, chlamydia and HIV are more common than ever before. Last year, there were nearly half a million new cases in Britain.

Yet many men's knowledge of potential problems with their sexual organs is limited. Many of us don't even know the symptoms of the male cancers such as prostate cancer or testicular cancer. The more you know about these problems, the easier it will be for you to prevent them arising in the first place and to detect and treat them if they do.

The symptoms of the main STIs are here. Some symptoms aren't

always obvious, can take a long time to show up, or can appear briefly and then disappear. If you're sexually active with more than one person, or you're about to have sex with a new partner, you should seriously consider having a routine STI check-up. If you think you have an STI, you must see a doctor: it's difficult for you to diagnose your condition accurately, and in any event it's impossible for it to be effectively treated without medicines available only on prescription.

Whether or not you're sexually active, you should also look out for symptoms of other important sexual health problems. (See box on p4.)

Have 'safer sex'

Unless you're sure both you and your partner are HIV negative (ie. not infected with the virus), this is a way of behaving sexually that minimises the risks of transmitting the virus.

It's called 'safer' rather than 'safe' sex as it involves greatly reducing the risk rather than eliminating it completely. Safer sex will also reduce your chances of contracting or passing on many other STIs.

Be assertive.

Choosing safer sex can be difficult. Even if you want to use a condom, you might feel embarrassed if you're not confident you know how to put one on (malehealth.co.uk can show you how). Or, you might be worried about losing your erection.

On the other hand, your partner might not want to have sex with a condom. You might then think that if you insist on using one, it implies that you've got an infection or that you don't trust your partner. It can all get very complicated and there's no easy way to talk about this. But if

your partner's reluctant to use a condom, the only viable strategy is for you to say you're not prepared to have penetrative sex without one.

Take care if you're drunk or have taken drugs – you're less likely to make good choices or use a condom.

Be open.

If you have an STI, it's your responsibility to tell your partner(s). They can then decide if they want to have sex with you and, if so, how. If they've already had sex with you, they may need to get themselves checked to see if they've been infected. You might think that it's not up to you to tell partners on the grounds that it's their responsibility to make sure that whatever they do is safe. You could also be worried that nobody will want to have sex with you if they know you have an STI or that they will be angry with you if you tell them they've been exposed to a risk of infection.

Perhaps your best guide is to ask yourself if you'd want a partner to tell you of any potential risk to your health and to act accordingly.

Be fully involved in decisions about contraception.

A lack of interest in contraception not only annoys women (quite understandably) but can also mean that a couple ends up using a form of contraception that doesn't meet both of their needs when it comes to preventing pregnancy, minimizing the risks of STIs, or, very importantly, simply having fun. Given that about a dozen methods of birth control are now widely available, it should be possible to find at least one that feels right.

## Common STI symptoms

a yellow discharge from your penis  
inflammation of your testicles  
irritation of your penis  
pain when peeing

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# What are the main types of STI?

## YOU DON'T NEED TO HAVE SEX WITH LOTS OF PEOPLE TO RISK CATCHING AN STI — ONE BRIEF ENCOUNTER MAY BE ENOUGH

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs), the bugs that used to be known as venereal disease, or VD, are very common and can affect you whether you're straight, gay or bisexual.

Infections can be transmitted in several ways:

- through vaginal sex
- through oral sex
- through anal sex
- through skin-to-skin contact

Not every infection is passed in all these ways — HIV (the virus that causes AIDS) cannot be passed through skin-to-skin contact, for example.

Some of the more common symptoms to look out for are on page two.

If you have any of these problems, or any other suspicious symptoms, your best bet is to get yourself checked out at a sexual health clinic, GUM (genitourinary medicine) clinic or GP surgery. It's easy, free and GUM clinics provide a totally confidential service.

The best ways to avoid an STI are:

- To be celibate (not always considered a desirable option).
- To practice safer sex (this means always using a condom for penetrative sex).
- To get regular check-ups at a GUM clinic. This is important because not all STIs produce symptoms.

It's important to remember that most STIs can be easily treated.

### CHLAMYDIA

Symptoms may include pain when you pee or unusual discharge from the penis. (In women, they include bleeding between periods or after sex.) But one reason Chlamydia is so common is that most people who have it don't have any symptoms.

The good news is that chlamydia is easy to diagnose and treat. There is a simple urine test and antibiotics.

Point to note: untreated chlamydia can cause serious long-term health problems if it's left.

### GENITAL WARTS

Small growths or bumps on or around your genital or anal area, genital warts are the result of a viral skin infection caused by the human papillomavirus (HPV). There are several treatments available.

Point to note: HPV is spread by skin-to-skin contact so you don't have to have full sex to get it.

### GENITAL HERPES

Caused by the herpes simplex virus (HSV), genital herpes is spread by direct skin to skin contact. The initial infection causes flu-like symptoms with painful blisters on your genitals and surrounding areas. The virus then remains dormant in your body but symptoms can return any time, often when you're run down or unwell.

Symptoms can be reduced with antiviral medicines.

Point to note: virus can be spread to others even when you don't have symptoms. (And like HPV, you don't need to have full sex to catch it.)

### GONORRHOEA

Gonorrhoea is not a virus. It is a bacterial infection. It can cause an

unusual discharge from your penis, and pain when peeing. Again there is a simple swab or urine test and an effective treatment: antibiotics.

Point to note: If left untreated, gonorrhoea can lead to serious long-term problems including infertility.

### SYPHILIS

Another bacterial infection, syphilis is a very infectious. It causes painless sores on the genitals or around the mouth. Other symptoms such as a skin rash or sore throat may then develop. All symptoms can come and go after a few weeks but you still need to get treated because the infection can be very dangerous.

Again the treatment is antibiotics, usually penicillin injections.

Point to note: left untreated, syphilis can cause serious conditions such as stroke, paralysis, blindness or death.

### HIV

HIV is a virus which damages your immune system. It is usually caught through unprotected sex or sharing infected drug needles.

AIDS is the final stage of HIV infection, when your immune system is so weak, the body can no longer fight life-threatening conditions.

Point to note: although there is no cure for HIV, today's treatments enable most people with the virus to live a long and healthy life.

### OTHERS

Other common STIs include trichomoniasis, pubic lice (crabs) and the skin condition scabies. All can be treated. If you have any concerns about any STI, see your GP or go to a sexual health clinic or GUM (genitourinary medicine) clinic.

# The Penis FAQs



The penis, as you have probably discovered, is used for peeing, making babies and generally having fun with. You're very lucky to have one so take care of it.

The MHF's website [malehealth.co.uk](http://malehealth.co.uk) gets more questions about the male tackle than any other subject. We've gone through the lot and tried to answer them on the site. If you read the whole thing you should find the answer to whatever is bugging you. If you can't, drop us an email but remember we can't answer your question individually although we will try to update the site.

## WHAT HAPPENS AS YOU COME?

Sperm are manufactured in the testicles and pass along the epididymis where matured sperm hang out. The epididymis is a microscopically narrow tube 6m long folded into a space of 5cm - an engineering masterpiece. Just before you come the sperm travel along two narrow tubes of muscle called vas deferens. These meet with the seminal vesicles which are behind the bladder just above the prostate gland.

The seminal vesicles and the prostate gland add their own secretions to the semen. These fluids are alkaline which protect the sperm from the acid in the vagina. At orgasm, the semen is propelled from two ejaculatory ducts along the urethra which runs the length of the penis and out of the urethral opening. Sexy, eh?

## WHAT IS THE PENIS MADE OF?

The penis is basically three cylinders of spongy erectile tissue full of blood vessels. The urethra, the body's outlet tube for both sperm and urine (although only one at a time), passes through the middle of the smallest of these - the corpus spongiosum - which is found on the underside of the penis. The corpus spongiosum expands at the tip to form the head of the penis called the glans. The glans is protected by the foreskin.

## WHY IS MY ERECT PENIS BENT?

Every penis is bit bent and a slight bend upwards is not just normal but desirable.

Bent willies are very common and generally do not cause any problem with intercourse. It's a matter of finding what fits, so to speak. You may have a problem if your penis is bent to the left or right so much as to make it difficult or even painful to enter your partner during sex. It could be a condition called Peyronie's. This is not an Italian beer.

## Warning signs

**Lumps, scars, or bending in the penis**

**A discharge from the penis**

**Tight foreskin**

**Inability to get an erection**

**Painful erections or an erection that won't go down.**

**Rapid or delayed ejaculation during sex.**

**Loss of sexual desire.**

**Problems peeing: pain, weak stream, increased frequency or blood in the urine.**

**Pain during ejaculation.**

**Blood in the semen.**

**Testicular pain, lumps or a change in size, shape, or firmness.**

**Sores, blisters, ulcers, or growths on the genitals.**

If the 'bend' is particularly bad, surgery can improve matters.

## CAN THE PENIS BREAK?

It can fracture if it bashes into an immovable object when erect. The most common cause is probably the woman's pubic bone. It can be healed through surgery and splints.

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The MHF is committed to fully participating in the Department of Health in England's Information Standard Scheme for health and social care information. We intend to comply with all aspects and requirements of the Standard.

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A full list of references used in this PDF is available at: [malehealth.co.uk/MMreferences](http://malehealth.co.uk/MMreferences).



This organisation has been certified as a producer of reliable health and social care information.  
[www.theinformationstandard.org](http://www.theinformationstandard.org)

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[menshealthforum.org.uk](http://menshealthforum.org.uk)  
[malehealth.co.uk](http://malehealth.co.uk)

Both the Men's Health Forum and MHFmalehealth are on Twitter and Facebook

Earlier drafts of this content first appeared on [malehealth.co.uk](http://malehealth.co.uk). Give feedback via the site.  
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