BELOW THE BELT

A SEXUAL HEALTH GUIDE FOR GAY, BISEXUAL AND OTHER MEN THAT HAVE SEX WITH MEN.

PRODUCED BY HORIZON LGB&T
Gay and Bisexual Men’s Sexual Health is always at the forefront of society.
But these days there is very little information in paper form where you can educate yourself on health and well-being and sexual health in today’s modern world. The internet is a wonderful tool for information but there are plenty of conflicting opinions throughout that can sometimes “muddy” the facts.
So we have created this handy little pocket guide to staying safe while you are enjoying a healthy sex life and keeping yourself and those around you safe in a constantly changing and sometimes quite risky community.

A LITTLE ABOUT US:
HORIZON LGB&T is a bespoke arm of the wider “HORIZON drug, alcohol and sexual health” project that supports the whole LGB&T Community in Blackpool, funded by Public Health at Blackpool Borough Council; the project sits with Renaissance at Drugline, at 102 Dickson Road.
Renaissance at Drugline is a harm reduction charity that has been supporting the community across Lancashire since 1986. Drugline was set up in the 80's to support the rise in recreational drug use throughout the country. It has continued now for over 30 years and through this time funding has come and gone and projects have launched and closed. In 2011 more work was being undertaken in sexual health so Drugline chose to re-brand and became Renaissance at Drugline. Throughout the years the organisation has always supported the LGB&T community through projects such as SHIVER and Healthier Living. Then in 2014 the HORIZON Partnership was formed and LGB&T Community Development sat within this new sexual health and Drug and Alcohol Support system in Blackpool.

ABBREVIATIONS TO NOTE
MSM: Men who have sex with Men though do not identify as Gay or Bisexual
Cut: A circumcised penis where the foreskin has been removed
Uncut: An uncircumcised penis where the foreskin has not been removed
Active: A guy who prefers to give anal sex rather than to receive (Top)
Passive: A guy who prefers to receive anal sex than to give (Bottom or Btm)
Versatile: A guy who enjoys both the active and the passive role during anal sex
Side: A guy that doesn’t engage in anal sex at all
STI: Sexually Transmitted Infection
Bare Backing: The highly risky act of anal sex without a condom
PENIS, DICK, COCK, TROUSERSNAKE

Call it what you want guys, we have one, only one, and it's ours, we need to look after it. The most common concern with every man in the world is that his penis may not be normal. It may be too small, too big, cut or uncut, curved, too straight. These worries affect all of us at some point in our lives. We can almost guarantee that you will be worrying for no reason at all; we are all different and that is what makes us who we are.

MEASURING YOUR PENIS

Most guys opinion on the size of their penis will be formed while they are still going through puberty. But your penis doesn't stop growing until you are around 21 years old. There is still a lot of anxiety around penis size so it's good to remember that you probably have the wrong perspective of your penis. Looking down toward your penis it will always look smaller than it actually is. Try standing in front of a full length mirror. This will give a more accurate perception of your penis.

At some stage most lads will get a ruler or a tape measure out to find out how long or how thick (Girth) their penis is. There is very little point doing this when the penis is flaccid as the length of an un-erect penis can vary a lot depending on many factors including temperature. To get a more precise measurement its best to measure your penis when you have an erection and it is pretty standard to measure along the top of your penis from the base to the tip.

AVERAGE PENIS SIZE

According to a study carried out in 2015 of more than 15,000 adult men, the average dimensions of a man’s penis are

- **Length** 13.12cm (5.16 inches) when erect
- **Girth** (Circumference) 11.66cm (4.59 inches) when erect

There are many differences in the angle of an erect penis, some guys point straight up and some straight down. Some have a slight bend to the left or the right. There is no “Right” shape. Each penis is unique.
FIVE PENIS FACTS*
You can break your penis
If the penis is violently twisted when erect, it can break. There are no bones in the penis, but the tubes that fill with blood during an erection can burst. Blood pours out of them inside the penis and causes a very painful swelling. Reported cases of penile fracture are rare, but it’s thought that some men are too embarrassed to report it to their doctor. Damage during sex, where a partner is on top, is responsible for about one-third of all cases. The breakage usually occurs when a man’s penis slips out of his partner and is violently bent.

Men have several night-time erections
On average, a healthy man has three to five erections during a full night’s sleep, with each erection lasting 25-35 minutes. It’s common for men to wake up with an erection, informally called a “morning glory”. This is in fact the last in the series of night-time erections. The cause of night-time erections isn’t fully understood. However, studies suggest they are closely associated with the phase of sleep known as REM (rapid eye movement) sleep. This is when dreaming is most common. Whatever their cause, most doctors agree that night-time erections are a sign that everything is in working order.

Penis length is not linked to foot size
The idea that the size of your penis is in proportion to your shoe size is a myth, according to a study published in the British Journal of Urology International. Researchers at University College London measured the penises of 104 men, including teenagers and pensioners. The average penis length in this group was 13cm (5.1 inches) when soft and gently stretched, and the average British shoe size was nine (43 European size). However, researchers found no link between shoe size and penis length.

Small penises make big erections
Shorter penises increase more in length than longer ones when they become erect. Research based on the penis measurements of 2,770 men found that shorter penises increased by 86% when erect, nearly twice that of longer penises (47%). In the 1988 study published in the Journal of Sex Research, researchers also found that the difference in length between a short penis and a longer one was a lot less obvious when erect than when flaccid. For example, the flaccid penises varied in length by 3.1cm (1.2 inches), whereas the average erect lengths differed by only 1.7cm (0.67 inches).
The penis is not a muscle
Contrary to popular belief, the so-called love muscle doesn’t contain any muscles. That’s why you can’t move it very much when it’s erect. The penis is a kind of sponge that fills with blood when a man is sexually excited. Blood builds up inside two cylinder-shaped chambers, causing the penis to swell and stiffen. The swelling blocks off the veins that normally take blood away from the penis. As an erection disappears, the arteries in the two chambers narrow again, allowing blood to drain away from the penis.
*Source www.nhs.uk/Livewell/penis-health/pages/Five-penis-facts.aspx
MEN’S SEXUAL PROBLEMS

It’s estimated that 1 in 10 men have problems relating to sex such as erectile dysfunction or premature ejaculation. Sexual problems can affect any man, gay, straight, bisexual or transgender. The best thing is not to worry and if your concerns are high, speak to your GP.

PREMATURE EJACULATION
This is when a man ejaculates (or “Cums”) sooner than he wants to during sex. It’s only a problem if it bothers him or his partner. There are many factors that can cause this including stress, anxiety or sometimes depression. More often than not it will not continue for long but if you are concerned then you can speak to your GP or a sexual health practitioner at HORIZON LGB&T who may refer you to a psychosexual therapist for more help.

ERECTILE DYSFUNCTION (IMPOTENCE)
Erectile dysfunction is when a man cannot obtain or keep an erection (a hard penis). Most men experience this at some time in their life and sometimes on more than one occasion. The causes of this can be either physical or psychological. Physical causes can include diabetes, raised blood pressure and sometimes heart disease. Factors such as alcohol, drug use, smoking and some prescription medication can also cause erectile dysfunction. Psychological factors usually boil down to worry, be it financial, relationships, family or work all these can contribute. Sometime even worrying about not getting hard can cause erectile dysfunction.

If you are concerned in any way about anything that we have or maybe haven’t mentioned here then you can speak to your GP, the team at your local sexual health clinic or a practitioner at HORIZON LGB&T in confidence.
Having unprotected penetrative sex is the most likely way to pass on or contract a STI (Sexually transmitted Infection). Using a condom helps protect against HIV and cuts the risk of getting many other STIs. Condoms are supplied FREE by HORIZON LGB&T and can be obtained from our offices in Blackpool as well as through our community sexual health outreach programme where we supply bars and saunas in the area. You can also receive free condoms and lube through the post with our Postal Scheme and you can sign up to this at our website www.druglinelancs.co.uk and follow the link to the postal condom scheme.

A recent survey of gay and bisexual men by the organisation Stonewall revealed that one in three men had never had an HIV test, and one in four had never been tested for any STI.

Recent statistics from Public Health England (PHE) have revealed an increase in both syphilis and gonorrhoea. More than 70% of the 39,000 new cases of gonorrhoea in 2015 were in men who have sex with men (MSM).

We recommend that if you regularly engage in unprotected sex and/or change your partners regularly, that you have a regular check-up at a sexual health clinic every 3 to 6 months. It’s very important also to remember that all STIs including HIV can be present without showing any symptoms.

www.druglinelancs.co.uk
HIV
Human Immunodeficiency Virus or HIV is a virus that attacks the immune system and weakens your ability to fight infections and disease. It is most commonly caught by having anal sex without using a condom. HIV can also be passed by sharing needles. There is currently no cure for HIV but treatments are available to manage the condition and enable most people to live a long and happy life.
AIDS is the final stage of HIV infection, when your body can no longer fight life-threatening infections. With early diagnosis and effective treatment, most people with HIV will not go on to develop AIDS.

The best way to protect yourself is by using condoms for anal sex. It is possible to spread the virus through oral sex and sharing sex toys although the chances of this happening are very low. It is estimated you have a 1 in 5,000 chance of contracting the virus if you give oral sex to someone that is already infected and not on medication.

HIV is changing all the time. Please read more info on Treatment as Prevention, PEP and PrEP further on in this guide.

HEPATITIS A
Hepatitis A is a liver infection that’s spread by a virus in faeces (poo). It is spread mainly through contaminated food or poor hand-washing, but also passes on easily through sex, including oral-anal sex (“rimming”) and giving oral sex after anal sex. Gay and bisexual men with multiple partners are particularly at risk.
Symptoms of Hepatitis A can appear up to eight weeks after sex, and include tiredness and nausea. Hepatitis A is not usually life-threatening and most people make a full recovery within a couple of months.

Men can avoid getting hepatitis A by:
- Washing hands after sex (ideally buttocks, groin and penis too)
- Changing condoms between anal and oral sex
- Using latex gloves for fisting
- Not sharing sex toys

If you think you might have Hepatitis A, or have any questions, visit a sexual health clinic or GP. The Hepatitis A vaccine is available for people travelling to countries where the disease is common.

HEPATITIS B
Hepatitis B is a viral infection that causes inflammation of the liver. It often doesn’t cause any obvious symptoms but can lead to a persistent infection. This can eventually cause serious liver disease, including
cirrhosis and liver cancer.
Hepatitis B is spread through contact with an infected person’s blood or body fluids. Men who have sex with men (MSM) are at risk of hepatitis B but they can be protected by the hepatitis B vaccination. Vaccination for MSM is available from sexual health clinics, genitourinary medicine (GUM) clinics or from GPs.

HEPATITIS C
Hepatitis C is a viral infection that causes inflammation of the liver. It often doesn’t cause any obvious symptoms, but can lead to a persistent infection. This can eventually cause serious liver disease, including cirrhosis and liver cancer.
It is spread through contact with an infected person’s blood or body fluids. Men who are concerned they are at risk should consult their doctor or sexual health clinic.
Hepatitis C can be treated and is curable in many cases.

GONORRHOEA (‘THE CLAP’)
This bacterial infection can cause stinging when urinating or the feeling that you want to urinate but can’t. It’s passed on through anal, oral or vaginal sex with an infected person.

It is important to remember that gonorrhoea can be present without any symptoms however those that can show include a yellow/green discharge from the penis and pain or discomfort when going to the toilet to pee. Gonorrhoea is treated with antibiotics.

CHLAMYDIA

This is a bacterial infection of the urethra, rectum or throat. There may be a discharge and pain when passing urine, or pain in the testicles (although chlamydia can be symptom-free).
It can be passed on during sex with an infected person in the same way as gonorrhoea and NSU. It’s treated with antibiotics. It is very important when speaking to a clinician that you are clear about the type of sex that you have been having because Oral, Anal and Penile
Chlamydia all need treating in different ways. If you do not get the correct medication the STI will return again and again.

**SHIGELLA**
This is a bacterial infection of the intestine that causes severe diarrhoea and stomach cramps. It is often mistaken for food poisoning.

It can be caught during sexual activity, including anal-oral sex (“rimming”) and giving oral sex after anal sex. It is spread very easily – all it takes is a tiny amount of infected poo (faeces) getting into your mouth.

A person with shigella can be infectious for up to a month. It can be treated with antibiotics. Men who suspect they have shigella should visit their GP or sexual health clinic to get tested.

Men can avoid getting shigella by washing hands after sex (buttocks, groin and penis too, if you can by taking a shower), and changing condoms between anal and oral sex.

Using latex gloves for fingering or fisting offers protection. And don’t share sex toys or douching equipment.

**GENITAL HERPES**
Genital herpes is a viral infection. Symptoms can include painful blisters and ulcers on or around the penis or anus, although some men have no symptoms.

The virus remains in the body and can cause recurrent episodes of blisters.

Genital herpes can be passed on through oral sex with someone with a cold sore around or in their mouth, or by close, skin-to-skin genital contact with someone who has genital herpes.
Antiviral tablets can help the healing process. A GP or sexual health clinic can prescribe treatment.

**SYphilis**
Syphilis is a bacterial infection that causes a painless ulcer, usually in the genital area but sometimes also found in the mouth. The ulcer will disappear on its own but other symptoms may appear, such as a rash on the body and swollen glands.

In its early stages, syphilis is very infectious and can be passed on by close skin contact during sex. If it’s left untreated for years, it can spread to the brain, the heart, or other parts of the body and cause serious, long-term problems.

Treatment is with antibiotic injections or tablets.

**Genital Warts**
This is a common viral infection that appears a few weeks or months after sex with an infected person. It can cause small fleshy growths, on or around the head of the penis, around the anus and also other genital areas.

The sooner warts are treated the easier they are to deal with. You can’t treat genital warts with the same cream you use for warts on the hands. A doctor or sexual health clinic can freeze them or prescribe a cream to help remove them.

**Pubic Lice (‘crabs’)**
Pubic lice (also known as ‘crabs’) are small, parasitic insects that live in body hair. They are the most common STI.

They only grow to pinhead size so can be difficult to spot, although their tiny dark eggs can be seen stuck to hair.

Pubic lice prefer pubic hair (hair around your testicles and anus) but can also be found in body hair (but not head hair). The lice are transmitted by skin to skin contact but can also be picked up from clothes, towels and bedding. Symptoms include itching or a rash.

Treatment can be done at home with lotions or creams bought at a chemist (no prescription is needed). Some people choose to shave off their pubic hair to get rid of ‘crabs’. This does not work and you will still need to treat the area with a cream or a lotion. If you are too embarrassed to buy something over the counter you can also get treatments online in the form of a lice-killing lotion containing 1% permethrin or a mousse containing pyrethrins and piperonyl butoxide.

**Scabies**
This is an infection caused by tiny mites that burrow under the skin. It causes intense itching for most people (though some
hardly notice it). Itching usually starts two or more weeks after sex with an infected person. You can get scabies from sharing beds and towels, but this is less common. Treatment is similar to treating pubic lice, although you may continue to itch for a few weeks after the mites have been eradicated.

GET TESTED
If you have any of the symptoms listed in this guide or are worried you may have an STI, speak to your GP or visit a Sexual Health Clinic. You can also speak to a sexual health practitioner at HORIZON LGB&T in Confidence. Getting tested regularly is a good idea to ensure you have a healthy sex life. Please remember HORIZON LGB&T and NHS services are free.

KNOW YOUR PROSTATE
Every man has one, it’s important for their sex life, yet few men know anything about their prostate or what can go wrong with it. Better knowledge about this walnut-sized gland will help men to make better choices about testing and treatment. The prostate is located below the bladder. It produces some of the fluid in semen and is crucial to a man’s sex life.

The prostate often enlarges as men get older, but for two-thirds of men aged 50 or over this doesn’t cause any problems. Prostate cancer is the most common of cancers in men in the UK and more than 11,000 men die from it every year. However if prostate cancer is diagnosed in the early stages the chances of survival are generally good. Most men with early prostate cancer have no symptoms at all. Some of the symptoms of prostate cancer below can also be caused by other medical problems. Symptoms of all prostate problems include:

• Needing to pee often, especially at night
• Difficulty starting to pee
• Straining to pee or taking a long time to finish
• Pain when peeing or during sex

If you have any of these symptoms, you should talk to your GP. It is advised that men should be tested starting at age 50 if they are at average risk of prostate cancer and have at least a 10-year life expectancy, at age 45 if they are at high risk and at age 40 if they are at very high risk (those with several first-degree relatives who have a history or prostate problems).
IT’S ALL ABOUT THE BALLS
The testicles (or balls) are the two oval-shaped male sex organs that sit inside the scrotum on either side of the penis. The testicles are an important part of the male reproductive system because they produce sperm and the hormone testosterone, which plays a major role in male sexual development. Most men’s testicles are about the same size, though it’s common for one to be slightly bigger than the other. It’s also common for one testicle to hang lower than the other one.
The testicles should feel smooth, without any lumps or bumps, and firm but not hard. You may feel a soft tube at the back of each testicle, which is called the epididymis.
Cancer of the testicle is one of the less common cancers and tends to mostly affect men between 15 and 49 years of age. The most common symptom is a painless lump or swelling in one of the testicles. It can be the size of a pea or it may be much larger. Other symptoms can include:
• A dull ache in the scrotum
• A feeling of heaviness in the scrotum
• It’s important to be aware of what feels normal for you. Get to know your body and see your GP if you notice any changes.
If you notice any changes or anything unusual about your balls, you should see your GP.
HIV – KNOW YOUR STATUS

It has never been more important to know your HIV status and it has never been simpler to get tested. Approximately 103,700 people are living with HIV in the UK according to Public Health England. MSM (Men who have sex with men) account for 43% of those living with HIV and 55% of all new diagnoses in 2014.

It is still estimated that around 13,500 people in the UK remain undiagnosed (have not been tested) reasons for this are that the HIV can be present in the body for years without showing any sign of symptoms. It is suggested that gay, bisexual men and other Men who have sex with men should present for an HIV test annually. We at HORIZON LGB&T recommend that if you change sexual partners regularly you get tested every 3 to 6 months. You can get tested for HIV FREE of charge at your local sexual health clinic, at HORIZON LGB&T and you can now also test yourself at home FREE by visiting www.Test.HIV.

The best way to prevent contracting HIV is to use a condom for anal sex. Not only will this protect you from HIV but also all other sexually transmitted infections. However there are also new ways to prevent HIV that can be used in addition to condoms.
PEPSE OR PEP - POST EXPOSURE PROPHYLAXIS (PEPSE)
If you believe that you have come into contact with the HIV virus, either by engaging in penetrative sex without a condom, sharing a sex toy, sharing injecting drug equipment (* see also “Chemsex”) or for any other reason when you feel that you may have been exposed to the virus then you can present at your local sexual health clinic or Accident and Emergency at any hospital to talk about PEPSE or PeP.

PEPSE and PeP is a 1 month course of high strength anti-retroviral medication that can, if taken properly, suppress the HIV virus before it develops in your body and therefore stop you contracting the virus. PEPSE/PeP can only be taken up to 72 hours after exposure and clinicians prefer you to begin the course within 24 hours. There is a lot of bad press out there that talks about horrific side effects from taking PEPSE and PeP. As with all medication some people can experience side effects however the side effects these days from a course of PEPSE or PeP are minimal and you will receive support and medical assistance while you are taking the course both during and afterwards.

Remember – You must access PEPSE or PeP within 72 Hours of exposure (preferably 24 hours) and if the sexual health clinic is not open you can get PeP and PEPSE from Accident and Emergency at the hospital. DO NOT LEAVE WITHOUT IT.

TREATMENT AS PREVENTION.
If you receive a positive diagnosis the chances are your will be prescribed anti-retro viral treatment from you clinician. When taken effectively these drugs can lower the amount of HIV virus in your body to what is called an Undetectable Status. With careful monitoring and an effective administration of this medication an undetectable status can be achieved which means that the HIV virus is suppressed enough that there is a very low risk of passing on the virus. At present there is still no cure for HIV but with an undetectable status you are dramatically reducing the risk of any sexual partners contracting the virus.

PreP – Pre Exposure Prophylaxis
PreP is a combination drug that if taken correctly can reduce the risk of contracting the HIV Virus. It is formulated to be taken by someone that is negative of HIV before exposure can occur and it is advised to be taken at least 1 week before it can become effective. People who would benefit from taking PreP are those
who regularly have sex with HIV positive partners without using condoms or those that engage in Chemsex. Studies have been undertaken including the PROUD study in England in 2014 which reported that PreP dramatically reduced the risk of HIV infection by 86%. It is however believed that the benefit of taking PreP is much higher than this.

At present PreP is not available in the UK. However PreP can be bought legally online from outside the EU for personal use. More information on PreP can be found at www.prepster.info or from a sexual health practitioner at HORIZON. It is a MUST that you speak to a sexual health practitioner at your local sexual health clinic before you start to take PreP. All clinics in the UK will monitor your kidney function and general health free of charge if you choose to purchase and take PreP.

PLEASE REMEMBER – Although PreP is proven to dramatically reduce the risk of contracting the HIV virus, it in no way protects you from any other Sexually Transmitted Infection or Blood Born Virus (BBV). The only way to reduce the risk of all STI’s and BBV’s while having sex is to use a condom.

CHEMSEX

Chemsex is a word invented by gay men using “Hook up” apps that work on GPS to describe a specific behaviour that involves certain sexually disinhibiting recreational drugs and risky sexual practices. When Chemsex began the drugs used were crystal methamphetamine (Meth, Tina), Mephedrone and/or GHB/GBL. Risks associated with these drugs, apart from the general massive health effects, include the use of injecting equipment which, if not used properly, can cause serious health problems including exposure to HIV and other Blood Born Viruses such as Hepatitis C. Because the cocktail of these drugs heightens your sex drive people engaging in Chemsex more often than not take massive risks with their sexual health. So called Chemsex parties are often known to be “Condom Free events” where all participants are expected to engage in unprotected sex (or bare backing) therefore putting everyone at risk of contracting HIV and other STI’s.

As with all things in society, the original Chemsex drugs of choice have been diluted across the UK and now the term ChemSex is used, by some, to refer to any sexual act undertaken while using any illegal drug or narcotic. Because drugs and alcohol lower our inhibitions there is a much higher chance of people engaging
in risky condomless sex, therefore putting themselves at a very high risk of contracting HIV and other STIs.
For more information on Chemsex visit www.chemsexsupport.com and support is also available from HORIZON LGB&T on 01253 311431. Remember you can also obtain FREE CLEAN injecting equipment from our Needle Exchange Hub at 102 Dickson Road in Blackpool.

FIND OUT MORE
Your sexual health is your responsibility so look after yourself, find out more and get to know your body.

Useful Numbers
HORIZON LGBT
01253 311431
Blackpool Sexual Health Services
01253 957171
NHS Direct
111
More information can be found at www.nhs.uk/LiveWell and our website www.druglinelancs.co.uk

Other publications in this series:
I Kissed a Girl – Sexual health guide for Lesbian and Bisexual Women and other Women who have sex with women
On the QT – A Sexual Health Guide for the Trans* Community

www.druglinelancs.co.uk
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