



HIV, SYPHILIS AND HEPATITIS: AN EASY READ GUIDE



The PaSH  Partnership

Passionate about Sexual Health across Greater Manchester



WELCOME

This is a straightforward guide about LGBTQ+ sexual health. It's been made for people with learning difficulties and those who support them.

Talking about sex can be hard, but it's important to know how to have safer sex. This guide will help you learn about sexual health, safer sex, and where to find support. Everyone deserves to have a fulfilling and safe sex life, no matter who they are.

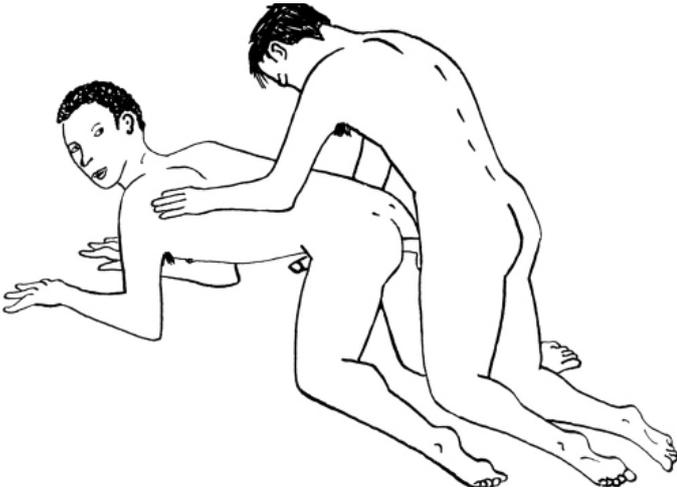
We want to say a big thank you to the amazing community and team at Better Things for their valuable contributions to this resource. We would also like to thank the community for providing lived experiences, feedback, insights, and support that helped us create this easy read resource.



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What is Syphilis?

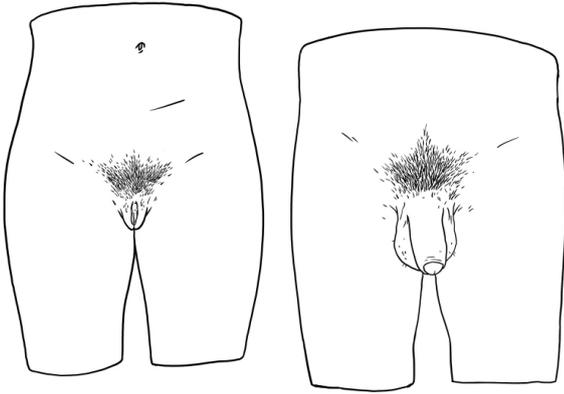


Syphilis is a bacterial illness that can be passed on through having sex.



Anyone can get syphilis, but men who have sex with men are more at risk of getting syphilis.

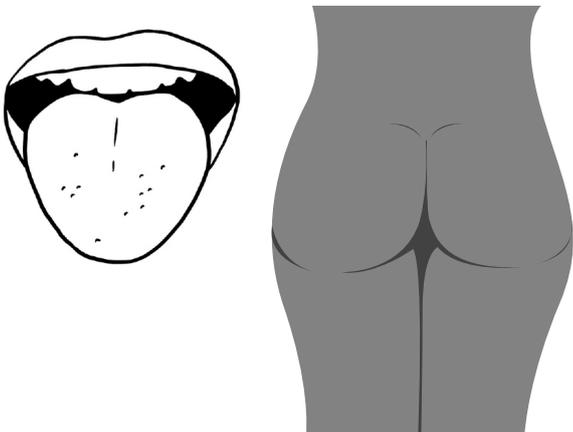
How is Syphilis Passed On?



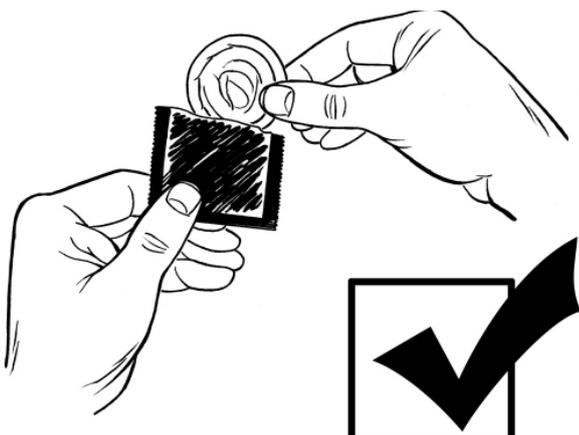
You can get syphilis by having skin contact with a spot that has syphilis in it (called a chancre).



This means you can get syphilis through sex, oral sex, fingering and rimming.

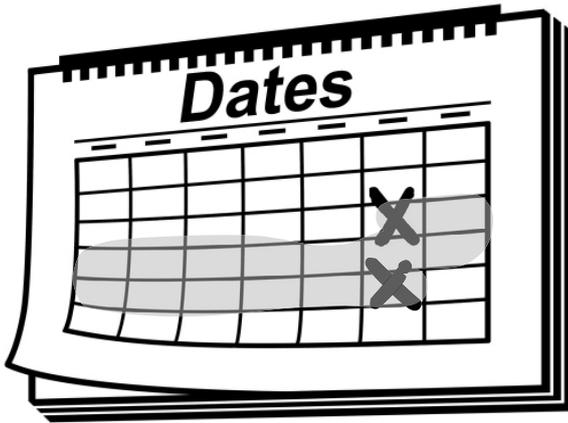


Rimming is when someone uses their mouth to lick the area around another person's bum hole.



Using condoms can help stop the spreading of syphilis.

Syphilis Symptoms



If you have syphilis, you can see the early symptoms about 2-3 weeks after you get it.



The main symptom is a small, painless spot which can appear on:

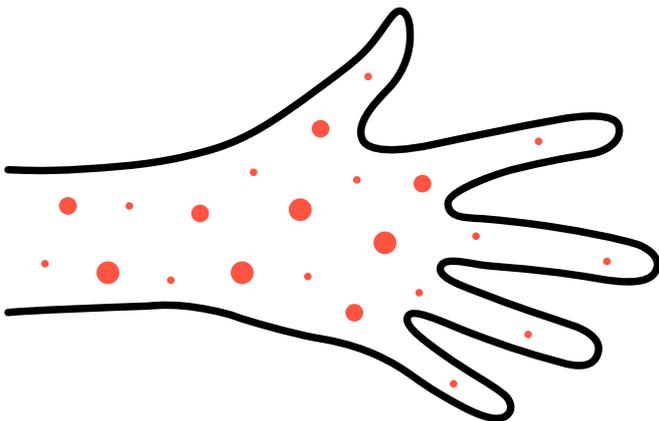
- the penis/vagina
- around the bum
- on or in the lips and mouth
- fingers



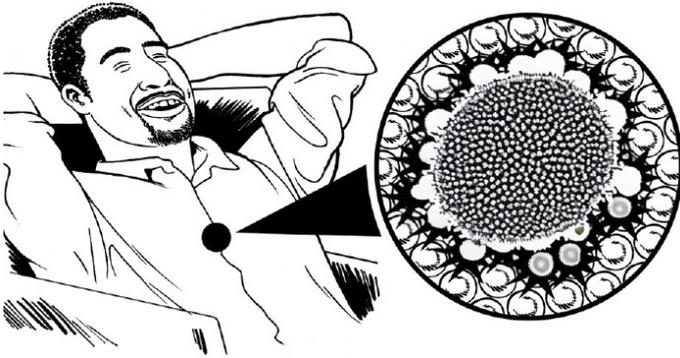
These can last from 2 - 8 weeks long. If you don't get medicine for syphilis, you can get 'secondary syphilis'.

Secondary syphilis symptoms include:

- a red rash on your hands and feet
- white areas in your mouth
- a fever
- swollen glands (your neck, armpits and top of your legs).



Syphilis Symptoms



These symptoms can pass after a few weeks but that does not mean the syphilis has gone away.



The late stage of syphilis can appear years later and can have very bad effects on your health later in life.



You can get medicine at any time, so it is important to test 2-3 times a year for syphilis. This will help keep you and your partners healthy.



It is best to test for syphilis regularly and get treatment if you test positive. You should test 2-3 times a year as part of a sexual health full screening.

Testing and Treatment: Syphilis



You can test for syphilis by going to a sexual health clinic or ordering a testing kit online (visit lgbt.foundation/testing).



Syphilis will appear on a test 3 - 6 weeks after you have gotten it. If it has been less than three weeks since you last had sex, syphilis would not appear in a test.



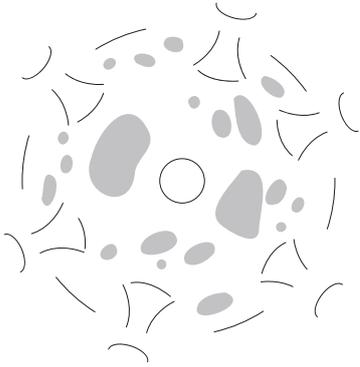
Syphilis can be easily treated and cured with either a jab (injection) or antibiotic medicine.



If you need further support, you can:

- Visit a local Sexual Health Centre
- Speak to someone in the Sexual Health Team at LGBT Foundation

What is HIV?



HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus. It is a virus that damages your immune system, meaning you can get sicker easier.



There is currently no cure for HIV. However, it can be easily managed with medication so it doesn't cause you any harm.

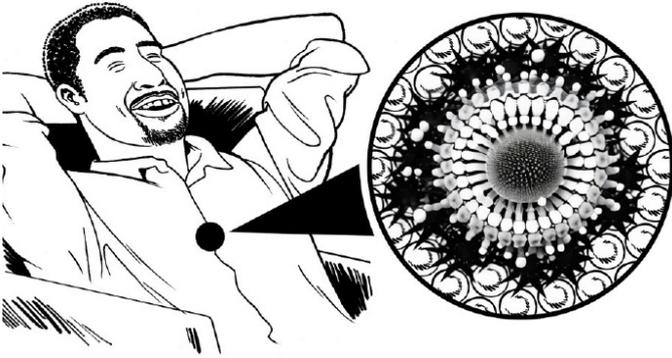


It is important to test regularly for HIV at least once a year. If you do get HIV and don't know it, it can cause serious health problems later in life. This is called 'advanced' or 'late-stage' HIV.

U = U

Most people who are living with HIV are undetectable by taking medicine. Undetectable means you don't have enough HIV in your body to pass it on to anyone else.

HIV Symptoms



A lot of people who get HIV will not have any symptoms. If you do get symptoms, this will happen 2-6 weeks after you get it.



The symptoms of HIV are very common and can be confused with other illnesses. Some symptoms include:

- A flu
- Aching joints
- A rash
- Night sweats

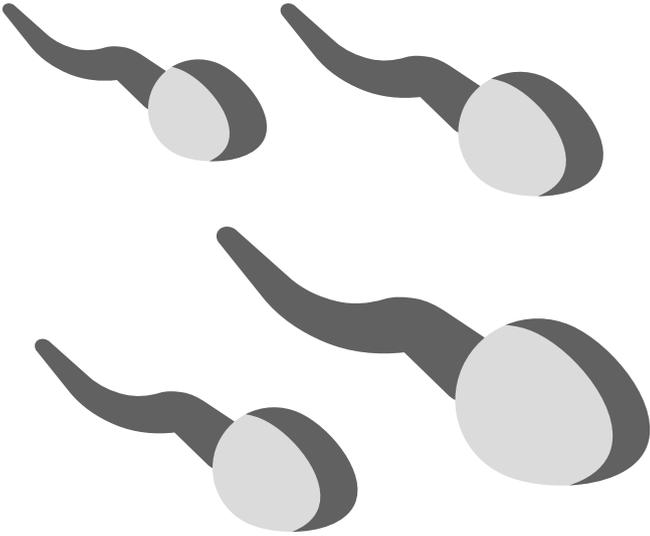


The only real way to know if you have HIV is to test for it. If you think you may have gotten HIV after having sex recently, it is best to go for a test as soon as possible.



You should test for HIV every year as part of an annual Sexual Health full screening.

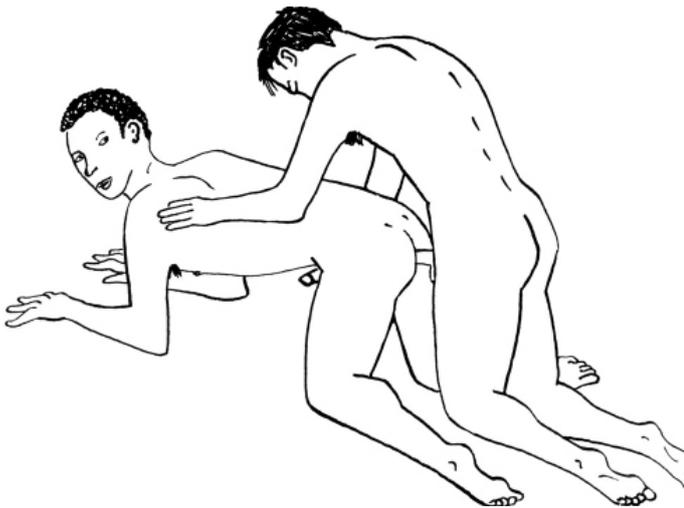
How HIV is Passed On



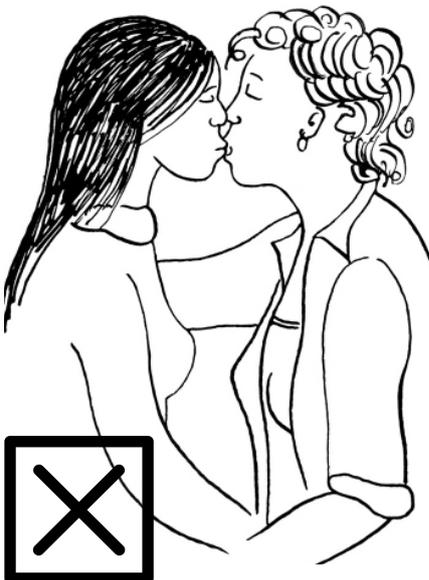
You can only get HIV if someone is HIV detectable. This happens if you are exposed to bodily fluids like:

- Blood
- Semen (cum & pre-cum)
- Vaginal fluids
- Anal mucus (fluids)

These fluids can be passed on by:



- Sex without a condom
- Sharing sex toys
- Sharing needles
- From parent to baby during pregnancy
- Getting HIV positive blood into your body



HIV cannot be passed on by:

- Hugging
- Kissing
- Touching hands
- Sharing a toilet or household items
- Being near or in the same room as someone who is HIV positive

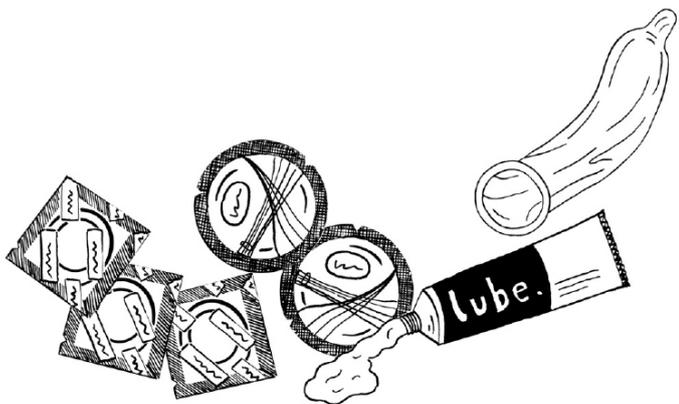
Preventing HIV



There are several ways you can prevent getting HIV. The best way to know your HIV status is to test for it regularly, at least once a year.



Asking your partners when their last HIV test was or their HIV status is also important so you can make the best decision for your health.



Using condoms and plenty of lube during sex helps prevent HIV from being passed on!

Preventing HIV



You can also take a medication called PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis) that stops you from getting HIV even if you are exposed to it. You can get PrEP for free through the NHS.

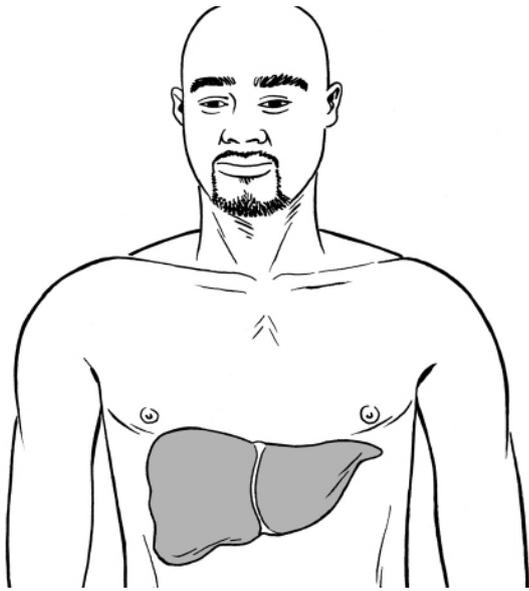


You can also use PEP (Post Exposure Prophylaxis) if you think you have recently been exposed to HIV.

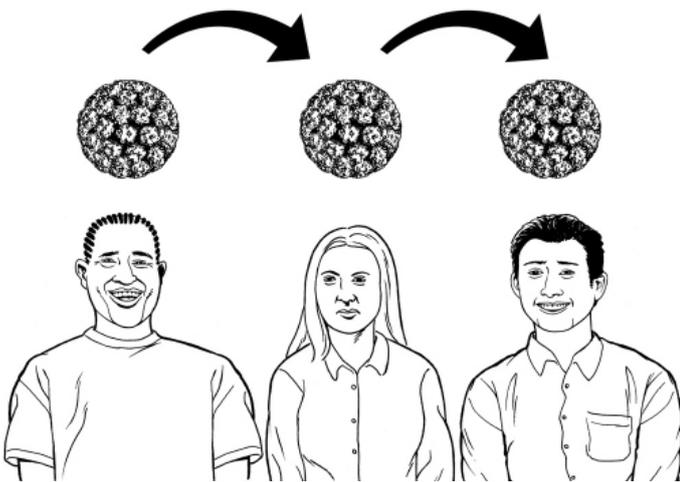


PEP must be taken within 3 days since you last had sex to fight off any HIV in your body. You can get PEP from a sexual health clinic or A&E.

What is Hepatitis?



Hepatitis is a disease that can damage your liver and make you very sick if you don't get treatment.



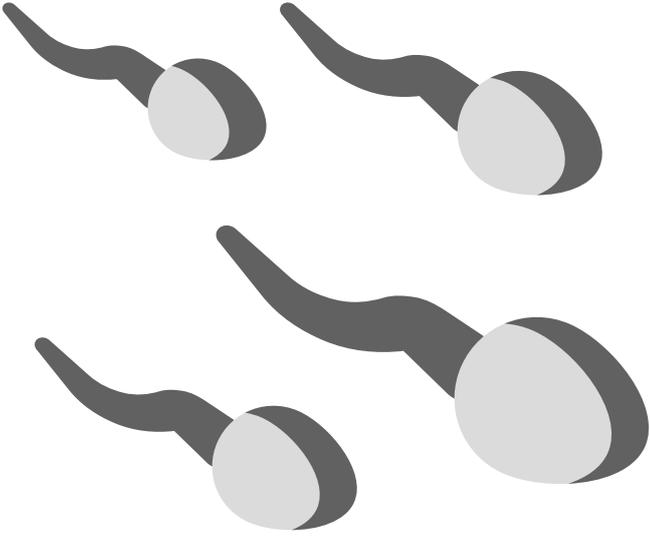
There are 3 common types (strains) of hepatitis called Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C. These can all be passed on through sex or sexual contact with someone who has hepatitis.



The main difference between the 3 strains of hepatitis is how they are spread:

- Hepatitis A is spread through things like oral sex

What is Hepatitis?



- Hepatitis B can be spread through bodily fluids (cum, vaginal fluids, blood)
- Hepatitis C is spread through blood



It's important to test regularly for hepatitis so you don't develop more illnesses. You can do this as part of your annual sexual health test.

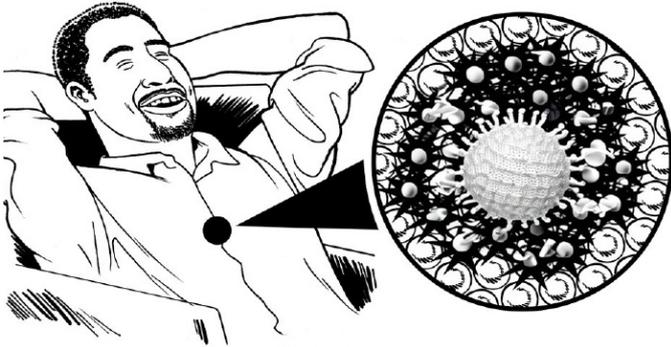
Hepatitis Symptoms

Most people who get hepatitis might not have any symptoms to begin with. However, some symptoms you may develop could include:

- Tiredness
- Joint/muscle pain
- High temperature
- Not feeling hungry
- Feeling sick or vomiting
- Stomach pain
- Skin turning yellow or itchy
- Darker coloured pee

Symptoms can sometimes not appear for years, so it is always best to test regularly.

Untreated hepatitis can lead to 'chronic liver disease', so it is really important you regularly test and protect yourself during sex.



How Hepatitis is Spread and Prevented



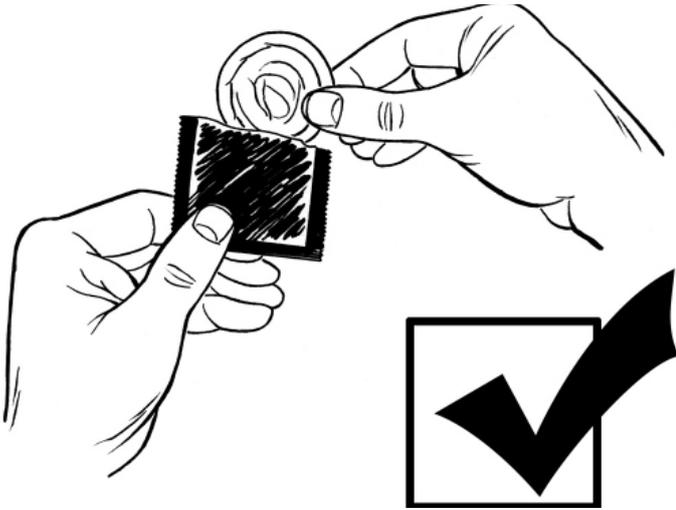
Ways hepatitis can be spread include:

- Anal, vaginal and oral sex
- Sharing sex toys
- Blood
- Touching surfaces with hepatitis on it and then touching your mouth
- Sharing needles, razorblades and toothbrushes
- Coming into contact with infected blood
- Eating and drinking unclean food and water



You cannot get Hepatitis B or C through things like shaking hands, coughing, sneezing or through touching surfaces.

How Hepatitis is Spread and Prevented



Using condoms or dental dams can help stop you getting hepatitis during sex. Use condoms if you are sharing sex toys, and change the condom each time someone new uses the toy(s).



You should not share any items/ surfaces with someone who has Hepatitis A. Never share items like needles, razorblades and toothbrushes.



If you think you have gotten hepatitis, it is best to go get a sexual health test done at your local sexual health clinic or testing site.

Treating Hepatitis



To confirm if you have hepatitis, you will need to get a blood test. Most strains of hepatitis take about 6 to 9 weeks to appear on a test.



Hepatitis A and B will often go away on their own, usually in 2 months. However, having Hepatitis A makes it easier to get Hepatitis B, so you may be given medication or a vaccine that protects you.

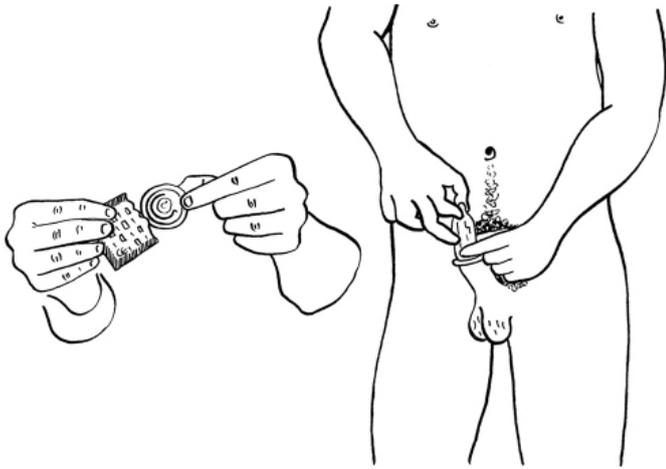


You can be vaccinated for Hepatitis B so you can't get it in the future.

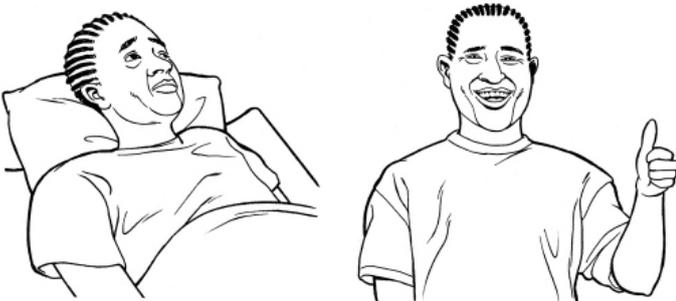


Hepatitis C can clear on its own, but it is likely to turn into something called 'Chronic Hepatitis C'. If you get this, you will see a specialist doctor for help.

Treating Hepatitis



If you have hepatitis, it is best to use condoms when you have sex until you finish treatment.



This will stop you and your partners from staying or getting more sick.

USEFUL INFORMATION

The Passionate about Sexual Health Partnership (PaSH) is a collaboration of BHA for Equality, George House Trust, and LGBT Foundation.

LGBT Foundation provides support to LGBTQ+ individuals. They offer free STI and HIV testing in the centre of Manchester's Gay Village and you can order testing kits, condoms, and lube for free to your home. They also give advice and information on sexual health.

You can find more information on their website at lgbt.foundation/testing or if you are looking for advice and support email **sexualhealth@lgbt.foundation** or call **0345 3 303 030**.



BHA for Equality is a charity that helps people with health and social care needs, including services for HIV and sexual health, cancer, TB, mental health, and community health education. They offer free community testing for HIV, HIV testing kits, and free condoms and lube for Black, Asian or other ethnic minority residents of Greater Manchester.

Visit their website at thebha.org.uk and you can call or email for support at **0330 1281186** or **info@thebha.org.uk**



George House Trust has provided support and advocacy services for people living with HIV since 1985. They help people live well and confidently with HIV and keep good physical and mental health.

For more information you can go to **George House Trust's website** at ght.org.uk/ or you can call or email at **0161 274 4499** or **talk@ght.org.uk**



WE'RE HERE TO EMPOWER, ENCOURAGE AND CELEBRATE OUR WONDERFUL LGBTQ+ COMMUNITIES

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