



LGBT FOUNDATION

# CHEMSAFE: HEALTH

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# Further Support Page

## **The Reach**

Provides in-person support for chemsex: [www.gmpash.org.uk](http://www.gmpash.org.uk)

## **George House Trust**

Support for people living with HIV: [www.ght.org.uk](http://www.ght.org.uk)

## **Terrence Higgins Trust**

Providing information about HIV and testing: [www.tht.org.uk](http://www.tht.org.uk)

## **Narcotics Anonymous**

12 step programme for support on narcotics: [www.ukna.org](http://www.ukna.org)

## **The Northern**

Sexual Health testing for Manchester: [www.thenorthernsexualhealth.co.uk](http://www.thenorthernsexualhealth.co.uk)

## **Friday/Monday**

Online resource on drugs and sex: [www.fridaymonday.org.uk](http://www.fridaymonday.org.uk)

## **Controlling Chemsex**

Online support and info on chemsex: [www.controllingchemsex.com](http://www.controllingchemsex.com)

## **Chemsafe.Space**

Digital resource for chemsex services in GM: [www.chemsafe.space](http://www.chemsafe.space)

## **St. Mary's**

Sexual assault referral centre: [www.stmaryscentre.org](http://www.stmaryscentre.org)

## **Change Grow Live**

Services supporting drug and alcohol use: [www.changegrowlive.org](http://www.changegrowlive.org)

## **Introduction**

LGBT Foundation, BHA for Equality and George House Trust work together in the Passionate about Sexual Health (PaSH) partnership to promote safer sex and support people living with or at risk of contracting HIV. Our goal is to stop HIV transmission in Greater Manchester. This resource offers information to help people involved in chemsex stay safe and cut down or stop using substances.

## **Chemsex Definition**

"Chemsex" is the use of drugs to 'intensify' sexual experiences, usually organised through apps. These sessions can sometimes last for days and involve several people. While chemsex is often associated with cisgender gay and bisexual men, people of any identity and background can engage in chemsex. Some risks include mental health issues, sexual health problems, addiction, and harm to relationships.



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## Just the (Safety) Tips

If you do decide to engage in chemsex, we have some tips below to help keep you as safe as possible:

- Remember to take medications (HIV, PrEP, mental health, etc.) and make sure you have spare pills
- You can also set alarms or reminders on your phone, or use a notepad to remember when you have taken substances to avoid risking an overdose
- Avoid sharing slamming equipment with others, as this is one of the largest contributors to HIV transmission within chemsex settings
- One of the biggest factors contributing to HIV diagnosis is a lack of education. It's important to know how HIV is transmitted and how to protect yourself

## PEP Protection

PEP (Post-Exposure Prophylaxis) is a treatment to prevent HIV infection after potential exposure. In the UK, you can get PEP from sexual health clinics and emergency departments. It's most effective within 24 hours of exposure, but it can be taken up to 72 hours after exposure. If you need to access PEP, you can do so with the handy script card on the next page.

I want to access Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) because I may have been exposed to HIV. My exposure happened on \_\_\_\_\_ (date) at \_\_\_\_\_ (time). PEP is emergency medication and it is important that I am assessed today. PEP must be started within 72 hours of exposure and it will be more effective the sooner I take it.

## **Longer, Harder, Sorer**

Looking after your physical health during chemsex is important so that you can stay healthy and safe, and this includes looking after your sexual health! Using substances can lead you to have sex much longer than usual and potentially with more people, which can increase your chances of contracting STIs and HIV. This is because as substances keep you awake and hornier for longer, and drugs can delay ejaculation, you may have rougher sex without lube (as it may dry up or you may forget to use enough). This can cause small tears on your penis or in your bum, making it easier for infections to enter your body. This can be true even if you use condoms when having sex as you can get bacterial STIs like gonorrhoea. It's important that if you are regularly having sex with multiple partners you go for a sexual health full screening every 3 months.

When you get an STI you may or may not get symptoms, which is why it's important to test regularly. However, some symptoms you could have if you have contracted an STI can include:

- **Painful peeing**
- **Unusual discharge**
- **Lumps**
- **A rash**
- **Bleeding**
- **Itchiness**
- **Sore throat**
- **Warts**



## PrEPared

People at chemsex sessions might not use condoms, as they may use PrEP or have an undetectable HIV status. PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis) is a medication you can take to help prevent HIV (but not STI) transmission. The main ways to take PrEP are:

- Daily dosing means 1 pill every day. After 7 days you are fully protected for as long as you keep taking PrEP. This is appropriate for people of any gender and sexuality
- Event-based dosing means you take 2 pills at least 2 and a half hours before unprotected sex, 1 pill 24 hours after that and 1 pill 24 hours after that. Currently, only people with a penis can dose event-based
- If someone is living with HIV and is undetectable, they cannot transmit HIV to partners, even without condoms. This is called 'Undetectable = Untransmittable' or 'U=U'

Some people who don't use condoms at chemsex parties might be living with HIV and have a detectable viral load. Some people may have recently contracted HIV but have not had time to test for it yet, as HIV is only detectable in a test after a minimum of 3 months, and can be very infectious. It's important to either ensure they are negative or on PrEP if you don't use condoms for sex, or you can just use a condom for safety. If you don't use condoms or PrEP, you must regularly test for STIs and HIV, and access PEP (Post-Exposure Prophylaxis).

## Hepatitis C

Much like HIV, Hepatitis C can be passed on through blood, including small tears you may get from having sex. This STI can be transmitted through blood during sex, as well as on people's hands and sex toys. As such, to avoid contracting these blood-borne viruses (BBV):

- Try to engage in chemsex parties with fewer people
- Use a new condom every time you use a new hole (including when using sex toys)
- Wash yourself and sex toys thoroughly in between partners to reduce risks
- If you decide to slam (inject) drugs, don't share injecting equipment as this can also lead to the transmission of viruses

## Managing Mpox

Mpox is transmitted through close contact between people, including touching, kissing and air droplets. It can also be transmitted on clothing and surfaces if they have been in contact with fluid from a sore. Mpox isn't an STI, but it can be transmitted during sexual contact. Symptoms include:

- High temperature
- Headaches
- Muscle/joint pain
- Painful groin and neck glands
- Shivering
- fatigue
- chickenpox-like rash (appearing in 1 to 5 days)

If you are worried you may have mpox, you should seek medical help for treatment and if you want to be vaccinated for mpox, you can check the [information on the NHS website](#).





**WE EMPOWER  
LGBTQ+ PEOPLE TO  
REALISE THEIR  
FULL POTENTIAL  
EVERYDAY**

LGBT Foundation offers inclusive sexual health services for the LGBTQ+ community. We offer free rapid HIV testing, STI screening, condom and lube distribution, sexual health advice, and information on PrEP and PEP

Contact us at 0345 3 30 30 30 or email [sexualhealth@lgbt.foundation](mailto:sexualhealth@lgbt.foundation)