

# Groundswell

Out of homelessness



## Safer sex and contraception

### Contraception and preventing unplanned pregnancy

- Regular contraception is available free on the NHS. There are many different types of contraception and you can discuss with a healthcare professional to decide which method might work best for you.
- Emergency contraception (such as the “morning after pill”) can prevent pregnancy after sex without a condom or if the regular contraception you have used has failed – for example, a condom has split. In most cases you need to have emergency contraception within 3 days of unprotected sex for it to be effective – **the sooner you take it, the more effective it will be.**
- **Contraception and emergency contraception** are available from: GP surgeries, sexual health clinics, walk-in centres and pharmacies

### Abortion and pregnancy services

An abortion is a procedure to end a pregnancy. It's also sometimes known as a termination of pregnancy. The pregnancy is ended either by taking medicines, or having a surgical procedure. Abortions can be undertaken up to 24 weeks but are ideally undertaken early in pregnancy.

### What to do if you think you are at risk of HIV exposure?

PEP (Post-exposure prophylaxis) is a treatment that can stop an HIV infection developing after the virus has entered your body. It is meant as an emergency measure to be used as a last resort, like if a condom fails during sex or following sexual assault. PEP must be taken within 72 hours (though ideally should be taken within 24 hours). Taking PEP does **not** protect you from other sexually transmitted infections or unplanned pregnancy.

**If you need PEP it is available on the NHS for free.**

You can get PEP from:

- Sexual health clinics
- HIV clinics
- If you need PEP over the weekend or outside of office hours, when clinics will often be closed, the best place to go is an A&E department.

If you're worried that you've been exposed to HIV, you can also call the free confidential helpline:

**Terrence Higgins Trust Direct: 0808 802 1221**

### Help after rape and sexual assault

A sexual assault is any sexual act that a person did not consent to or is forced into against their will. It is a form of sexual violence and includes rape (an assault involving penetration of the vagina, anus or mouth), or other sexual offences, such as groping, forced kissing, child sexual abuse or the torture of a person in a sexual manner. **If you have been sexually assaulted, remember that it wasn't your fault and don't be afraid to get help.**

GP surgeries, A&E departments, sexual health clinics will all be able to help you. You can also go to the police, but you don't have to do this.

If you need to talk to someone over the phone to get advice call the following free 24-hour helpline:

**National Domestic Abuse Helpline: 0808 2000 247**

GPs and sexual health services can arrange a referral to pregnancy termination services. Alternatively, you can call a central booking number to access pregnancy termination advice and services: **0333 999 9951**

**This information is correct as of 01/07/20**

## Sexually transmitted infections

- A sexually transmitted infection (STI) is an infection that is **passed on when you have sex**. This can happen through: **vaginal sex, anal sex and oral sex**.
- **STIs can be spread during sex between** men and women, women and women or men and men.
- **Common sexually transmitted infections include:** Chlamydia, Gonorrhoea, Syphilis, Hepatitis B, HIV (human immunodeficiency virus), Genital warts and Herpes.

Left untreated, **STIs can affect your health**, sometimes seriously. For example, chlamydia and gonorrhoea can make you infertile (unable to have a baby), syphilis can damage your brain and heart, hepatitis B can lead to liver cancer and HIV attacks the immune system.

## What are the symptoms of an STI?

Many people with STIs do not get symptoms and feel fine, but they can still pass on the infection. **It is important to get a check-up if you have had unprotected sex (sex without a condom), or feel you are at risk, even if you have no symptoms.**

**If you have any of the following symptoms, you may have an STI and need to get tested and treated:**

In women and men	In women	In men
Pain or burning when peeing	Yellow, green-ish, or smelly liquid from the vagina	Yellow, green-ish, or smelly liquid coming from the penis
Itching, burning or tingling around the genitals (vagina/penis) or anus (bottom)	Bleeding between periods or after sex	Irritation of the urethra (the tube urine comes out of)
Blisters, sores, spots or lumps around the genitals (vagina/penis) or anus (bottom)	Pain during sex	Pain in your testicles
Black powder or tiny white dots in your underwear – this could be droppings or eggs from pubic lice	Pain in your lower belly	

## How do I get an STI test?

You can get tested at:

- A sexual health clinic
- GP surgeries
- Some pharmacies can also test for chlamydia

To find your nearest clinic and for further information about STIs you can contact the confidential **National Sexual Health Line: 0300 123 7123**

## How are STIs treated?

Many STIs can be cured with antibiotics. Some, such as HIV, have no cure, but can be treated to prevent them getting worse. All treatments at sexual health clinics are free of charge.

## Protecting yourself against STIs

The risk of getting an STI from different sexual activities varies. However, in nearly every case, condoms will help protect you against this risk.