

**SE▼PERTERNA**

A black and white photograph of a man with a full beard and short, dark hair, looking over his shoulder towards the camera. He is wearing a sequined tank top. The background is plain white.

**ABOUT SEX**

## ***ENJOY THE MOMENT***

Sex is full of great feelings, and how we choose to have sex, or with whom, or with how many people, is our personal choice. Sex is supposed to be something good and enjoyable. It's up to each and every person to decide if they want to have sex, what they like, and what they want to try.

Safer sex is all about minimising the risks of transmitting HIV and sexually transmitted infections. When practicing safer sex, you can worry less and focus more on what feels good and pleasurable. It's easier to have safer sex when you're prepared, and when you have thought about how you want to take care of yourself, and those you choose to have sex with. This brochure gives you a little help along the way.

## **SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS (STIs)**

No matter whom you have sex with, there is the possibility for STIs to be transmitted during sex—for example, chlamydia, gonorrhoea, and syphilis. Most STIs can easily be transmitted orally, anally, or via the penis, vagina and sometimes fingers. Condoms are a simple method of protection for most kinds of sexual activity. Some STIs however, can be transmitted even when you use condoms, such as syphilis, and condyloma. There is also a risk of transmitting STIs when enjoying oral sex.

A lot of STIs can be treated relatively easily if they are discovered in time. Many of the most common STIs show no symptoms at all, but can still be transmitted to other people. So you may not actually realise



that you have an STI. STIs that have not been treated also increase the risk of transmitting HIV. If you get tested regularly, you will have better knowledge about your health. Find out what works best for you. As a general rule, getting tested every three, six or twelve months is a great idea.

## ***HIV***

In Sweden today, HIV is seen as a chronic infection. There is no vaccine and no cure for HIV. There are effective treatments that make it possible to live with HIV. The HIV virus weakens the immune system in the body, and makes people more susceptible to infections that the immune system can normally handle. If HIV is not treated, it leads to aids.

The HIV virus can be present in blood, sperm, vaginal secretions and breast milk. It can be transmitted during unprotected anal sex, vaginal sex, and oral sex. Condoms and PrEP (more about PrEP later in this brochure) offer good protection against HIV transmission.

About 50 % of those getting HIV get what is called a primary infection. It usually occurs one to four weeks after HIV has been transmitted. The primary infection can give flu-like symptoms and a general feeling of illness. Common symptoms are fever, swollen lymph nodes, muscle pain, skin rash, night sweats, headaches, and a sore throat.

If you have had anal or vaginal sex without a condom, it would be a good idea to get



tested, especially if you think you have, or have had, a primary infection.

Successful HIV treatment can reduce the virus levels so that the risk of HIV transmission is zero. Undetectable = untransmittable.

## ***CONDOMS AND LUBE***

Using a condom is an effective way of minimising the risk of transmitting HIV and sexually transmitted infections. Condoms give you the freedom to enjoy sex with anyone you choose, whether you are living with HIV or not.

Sometimes we choose not to use a condom for different reasons. Using condoms is a good way to show that you take good care of yourself, and that you care about your sexual partners.





## ***ROLL IT RIGHT***

When you put on a condom, hold the tip between your fingers and squeeze the air out, so there is no air inside the condom. Unroll the condom down the shaft of the penis, making sure that the condom is completely rolled out. If the condom is longer than the penis, it's no problem if it's a little creased. Some people prefer to put a dab of lubricant on the head of the penis before rolling on the condom.

## ***TIPS***

- Condoms come in different sizes, fittings, materials, as well as flavors. Experimenting with several types of condoms will help you find out which ones are the best for you, and your partners.



- It's easier to use a condom when you've done it a couple of times. Practice on your own first, to get comfortable.
- For pleasurable anal sex, lubricant is a must. Just remember to only use water-based or silicone-based lube together with condoms. Lube that contains oil or fat can damage the condom.
- Condoms are not just for penises, they are also useful with a lot of sex toys. Remember to change condoms if more than one of you wants to be penetrated by the same penis, or dildo.
- Where will you be having sex next time? Remember to keep condoms and lubricants close by—perhaps

by the side of your bed, in a kitchen drawer, or in your gym bag?

## **PrEP**

Maybe you only use condoms sometimes, or seldom, or don't use them at all. Maybe you want to lower your risk of getting HIV, but condoms don't always work for you. In that case, PrEP can be something that can help you. Using PrEP means taking a medicine that lowers the risk of getting HIV. PrEP stands for pre-exposure prophylaxis. PrEP is available in most parts of Sweden. For more information about your local clinic visit this link: [rfsi.se/en/organisation/health-sexuality-and-hiv/prep/](https://rfsi.se/en/organisation/health-sexuality-and-hiv/prep/).

- If you want to use PrEP, you have to be completely sure you do not have the HIV virus.



- PrEP gives a very high level of protection, but not 100%.
- Forgetting a pill = less effective protection. Take your pills every day.
- PrEP does not protect against chlamydia, gonorrhea or syphilis. Condoms are the only thing that lower the risk of getting sexually transmitted infections like these.
- PrEP can have side effects.
- It is important to get check-ups while taking the medicine. Ask your doctor to check up the current recommendations from “Referensgruppen för antiviral terapi”.





PrEP is an approved medical product in Sweden, and it is part of the high-cost protection system. This means that you never pay more than SEK 2 400 per year for prescription medicine.

## ***SOME TIPS***

It's easy to forget to take your medicine. Here are some ways to help you remember:

- Set a daily alarm on your smartphone. Either with the regular alarm clock or a special medicine app.
- Keep your medicine in your bag, or hang a small container on your keyring.
- Keep your medicine in a place where you will see it every day. Maybe next to your toothbrush or coffee maker?

## ***TWO OR MORE IN A RELATIONSHIP?***

There are lots of different kinds of relationships. Two or more people can have a monogamous relationship, or a more open way of looking at sex and love. Some people use condoms while in a relationship, others choose to get tested together for HIV, or STIs, and then make a decision to keep using condoms or not in their relationship.

Sometimes, relationships don't work out the way you planned. Having sex with someone other than your partner/s, or breaking the rules you have agreed on, can mean exposing your partner/s to the risk of getting an STI. Therefore, it is important to agree on rules for what you do in the relationship and outside of it.



Having the courage to tell your partner/s if you have done something you shouldn't have, is a way of showing respect and consideration.

## **TESTING**

Getting tested regularly for HIV or STIs can make life safer both for yourself, and the people you have sex with. Testing can reduce your worries and make sure you get quick treatment if you do have an infection. Remember, getting tested regularly, for example, every three, six or twelve months, is important. RFSL offers (within Sweden) a free text message reminder service in English. Text the word THREE, SIX or TWELVE to 71111 to start the service.

It can take up to eight weeks after exposure until an HIV test can show conclusively

if there has been an HIV transmission or not, but HIV can often be found after as little as a few weeks. If you feel worried, go for a test. An early diagnosis is always the best thing for your health.

## ***THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT TESTING***

- In Sweden, you have the right to testing and treatment for HIV, and most STIs free of charge.
- Before taking the test/s, make sure to tell the nurse or doctor what sort of sex you have had. This is important because STIs can be present in or on the throat, penis/vagina, and anus.
- When you take an HIV test, you always have the right to be anonymous.



You can get tested at a primary care centre (Vårdcentral), or at a clinic for STIs. If you are young, you can also go to a youth clinic (Ungdomsmottagning). There are also special clinics for men who have sex with men.

## ***BASIC TIPS ABOUT HIV***

- Use condoms and lubricants when having anal sex. Keep the condom on the whole time from start to finish.
- Avoid sperm in your mouth.
- PrEP provides a high level of safety if you take the pills every day.
- Having condomless sex with an hiv-positive person who is undetectable is considered as safe sex.

- Never assume that someone is HIV positive or HIV negative if you don't know.

## ***INFORMATION AND CONTACT***

**Sexual health for men who have sex with men, and for trans people:**

*[en.sexperterna.org](http://en.sexperterna.org)*

**Health for men and trans persons who sell sex:** *[sexwork.sexperterna.org/en](http://sexwork.sexperterna.org/en)*

Clinics and health centres especially for men who have sex with men:

Stockholm:

**Venhälsan (MSM specific STI clinic at Södersjukhuset hospital)**

**RFSL Testpoint Stockholm:** *[testpoint.se](http://testpoint.se)*



Gothenburg:

**Gayhälsan (Gay health clinic at  
Sahlgrenska hospital)**

**RFSL Checkpoint Gothenburg**

*[checkpointgoteborg.org](http://checkpointgoteborg.org)*

Malmö:

**Centrum för sexuell hälsa (Centre for sexual health at Skånes Universitetssjukhus)**

**RFSL Checkpoint Malmö:**

*[safe6.nu/en/hiv-test](http://safe6.nu/en/hiv-test)*

Örebro:

**RFSL Testpoint Örebro:**

*[orebro.rfsl.se/halsa/testpoint](http://orebro.rfsl.se/halsa/testpoint)*

*Fifth revised edition, 2022*

## **SEXPERTERNA**

***Sexperterna are ready to answer all your questions about sex and sex-related issues, in Swedish or English. You can find us at Quiser, Facebook, Instagram or chat with us on [en.sexperterna.org](http://en.sexperterna.org)***