Safer SEX ...

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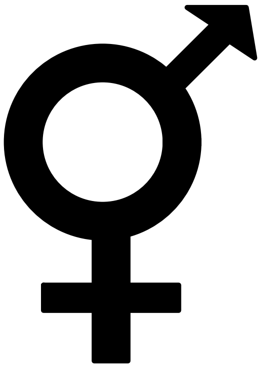

Safer SEX ...

with men, women ... or both?

SEXUALITY

The labels "straight" and "gay" don't always reflect what we do or feel.

Surveys, from the Kinsey survey of 1948 onwards, have shown that a large number of people can and do have sex with both men and women (33% in Kinseys survey had both male and female sexual partners during their life. 12% of men in a 1992 Playboy survey had sex with both men and women, etc).

Coming to university provides a good opportunity to decide for yourself what you want and feel, free from many of the social pressures that operate in the "real world".

Feeling attraction for some men *and* some women is just as "normal" as any other choice on the spectrum between gay and straight – probably very few people are absolutely 100% one way or the other in any case, in terms of feelings. It doesn't necessarily mean that you are "uncertain" or "confused" about your sexuality – some people are very sure that they (for example) are mainly attracted to the opposite sex with an occasional interest in the same sex.

The label "bisexual" is used by some people to describe such feelings, although it's not an ideal term. Contacts for the bisexual community are given below, and can offer advice and help.

The important thing as far as sexual health is concerned is to use appropriate protection when having sex with others, regardless of the genders (or number) of people involved.

"Scoring isn't all that matters ..."

"what counts is doing it with your mates"

SAFER SEX

The key principle in safer sex is not to exchange any body fluids (blood and semen especially). The following guidelines apply to HIV and AIDS: HIV is very difficult to transmit in general, but don't forget that other sexually transmitted diseases, such as Hepatitis B, are also serious and can be more easily transmitted. Vaccination against Hep. B is available in confidence from GUM clinics.

Safe activities include: Phone or net/email sex; sharing fantasies; massage (but don't forget that oils can damage condoms/latex); self masturbation with partner; kissing; hugging; bondage and whipping etc that doesn't cut the skin.

Low risk: oral sex on a man using a condom; oral sex on a woman using a latex or polyurethane barrier between the mouth and genitals; masturbating each other; fisting or finger-fucking using a latex/polyurethane glove (a new one for each person, please!); rimming (oral-anal contact) with a barrier.

Moderate risk: anal intercourse with a condom; vaginal intercourse with a condom; sharing uncovered sex toys (again, shared dildos, etc, need a new barrier for each new person or orifice); unprotected oral-genital sex – provided that there is no blood or cum around; unprotected finger or fist fucking.

High risk: unprotected anal intercourse; unprotected vaginal intercourse; sharing needles (for drugs, piercing, etc); sharing implements that draw blood (whips, knives, etc); unprotected oral sex on a menstruating woman; unprotected oral sex on a man whilst he comes; unprotected oral-anal contact; getting the other persons urine or feces in your mouth, vagina or arse.

The reason for listing vaginal and anal sex with condoms as "medium risk" is that condoms can *break or come off*, especially if they have been put on wrongly, weakened by oil-based lubricant, are too loose or tight, etc. Non-penetrative sex is definitely safer and need not be less interesting. It also makes other diseases like herpes and gonorrhea less easy to catch, as does always using a barrier for oral sex.

CONDOM BASICS

Use latex condoms for vaginal and anal intercourse. Stronger forms (eg: the German HT Special brand, Durex Ultra Strong, Mates Super Strong) are recommended for anal sex. Only water-based lubricants (eg: K-Y, Probe) should be used with rubber condoms, as oil-containing products (Vaseline, lotion, whipped cream, etc) can destroy latex. A drop of lubricant inside the condom can increase sensitivity. Check for a safety-standard such as the CE Mark for EU condoms, and that the expiry date has not been passed.

Spermicides will help prevent pregnancy but don't necessarily help protect against HIV.

For vaginal intercourse there is now the (expensive) option of female condoms. These *cannot* be used for anal sex unless the inner ring is removed first.

Condoms (without spermicides, unless you really like the taste ...) can be used for oral sex on a man. For oral sex on a woman, or for oral-anal sex, use a "dental dam" (a latex square), a condom or latex glove cut to produce a flat sheet.

Never reuse a barrier!

EMOTIONAL SAFETY

Negotiation and discussion before/during and after sex can help to make it safer and more enjoyable. Be clear to yourself what risks you are prepared to take, and which you will not accept. Just because you or your partner is young or "straight" doesn't make safer sex precautions unnecessary.

For obvious reasons its sensible to check that someone understands the codes of practice of consensual SM and safer sex before you let them put you in a situation you can't escape from!

Information on Bisexuality

Useful contact points for bisexual information are:

Bisexual Phonelines : 0131 557 3620, Thursdays, 7.30 – 9.30pm. 0181 569 7500, Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 7.30 – 9.30pm.

Bi Community News : BM RiBBiT, London WC1N 3XX. Monthly bisexual magazine. Subscription for 1 year costs £ 7.50 (unwaged £ 6).

Local bi groups are listed in *Bi Community News*. There are groups in most cities in the UK, and in Glasgow and Edinburgh.

Books: **Bi Any Other Name: Bisexual People Speak Out**, by Loraine Hutchins and Lani Kaahumanu. Alyson publications, Boston. Can be ordered via GMP.

Women and Bisexuality, by Sue George. Scarlet Press, London, 1993.

Information on Safer Sex

Student health centers.

National AIDS Helpline (0800) 567 123. 24 hours a day, calls are free.

Terrence Higgins Trust, 52 Gray's Inn Rd., London WC1X 8LT. Support, advice, counselling and leaflets. 0171 242 1010, 12–10pm daily.

Local STD/GUM clinics.

This leaflet was produced by *Bisexuals Action on Sexual Health.* **For further information, contact:** BASH, PO Box 10048, London SE15 4ZD.