

EASY READING BROCHURE

Sexual Health

**An information brochure for adults
with low English literacy**



EASY READING



Vecova Centre for Disability Services and Research is a leading-edge, registered not-for-profit charitable research and service organization that has been building the capacity of persons with disabilities and enriching communities through leadership, innovation and collaboration since 1969. Affiliated with the University of Calgary we are recognized as a leader in the field of disability services and research.

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Vecova Centre for Disability Services and Research

3304, 33rd Street NW, Calgary, AB T2L 2A6

Tel: 403.284.1121 Fax: 403.284.1146

www.vecova.ca



What is an Easy Reading Brochure?

Plain language is a way of writing so that more people can understand the information. There are some things we do with plain language that you would not see out-side of plain language.

For example, words like understand and outside, used in the first paragraph, have a - in the middle. This helps to make a longer word that is made of more words, easier to read.

We also use things like square brackets and definitions:

Square Brackets []

Some-times you will see square brackets, like these [], beside a word. The letters between the brackets are there to help people learn how to say the word.

Definition Box

Some words you see will have a box around the word like "Definition Box" to the left. Beside each box, there will be a paragraph that has an line around it, like this one. This is to help people learn what the word means.

**If you are sexually active
or thinking about it, you
need to be prepared –
both of you.**

- Calgary Sexual Health Centre

You will learn about:

..... **1** **What is Sexuality?**

..... **2** **What is Sex?**

..... **3** **Making Decisions About Sex**

..... **4** **Safe Sex**

..... **5** **Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)**

..... **6** **Pregnancy**

..... **R** **Resources**



Deciding what you feel comfortable doing or “how far” you want to go is a personal choice that you have to make each and every time you become physically or emotionally involved with another person.

- Calgary Sexual Health Centre

1

What is Sexuality?

Sexuality [sex-u-al-it-ee] is not just sex.

It is also how you feel about your-self, how you feel about others, and how you feel about sex itself.

Like every-one, you are a sexual [sex-u-al] person. But that does not mean every-one has sex and you must too.

▶ Sexuality includes how you feel about your-self, others, and sex

▶ Sex should happen when it is right for you

▶ There is no wrong sexual orientation

- You can pick if or when you want to have sex.
- You may be ready to have sex now or you may want to wait.
- Sex can be good, but only if it is the right time for you.

Sexual Orientation

Your sexuality includes who you are sexually [sex-u-al-ee] attracted [a-track-ted] to. This is your sexual orientation [or-ee-en-tay-shun].

You may like people who are the opposite sex than you.

- This is called being “straight” or “hetero-sexual” [het-er-oh-sex-u-al]

You may like people who are the same sex as you.

- This is called being “gay” or “lesbian” or “homo-sexual” [homo-sex-u-al]



You may like people from both sexes.

- This is called being “bi-sexual” [by-sex-u-al].

There is no wrong sexual orientation.

Sexuality Is Your Right

Like every-body, you have a right to:

- Have your sexual orientation respected
- Learn about sexuality
- Express your sexuality
- Have sexual feelings
- Have a boy-friend or girl-friend
- Live with your boy-friend or girl-friend
- Get married



2

What is Sex?

There are a lot of different kinds of sexual activity.

Sexual activity

Any sexual touching that you choose to have, with or with-out some-one.



Sexual activity can be:

- Kissing
- Hand jobs
- Oral sex
- Vaginal [vag-in-ull] sex
- Anal sex
- Masturbation [ma-stir-bay-shun]

What About Sex and My Disability?

Some people with disabilities may find it hard to have sex.

If you have this problem, talk to your doctor or call one of the places listed at the end of this brochure [bro-shur]. They may be able to tell you ways to make it easier.

If you have a support staff, or live in a group home, it may be hard to be alone with some-one.

Tell the people around you that you want to be alone. Ask them not to come into your room.



3 Making Decisions About Sex



There are a lot of things to think about before you choose to have sex.

- Are you ready to have sex?
- Do you want to have sex?
- Do you want to have sex with this person?
- Do you have safe sex?
- Do you need to talk to some-one about safe sex?
- Do you know the health risks of having sex?

▶ When having sex there are a lot of things to think about

▶ Always use protection. It protects against pregnancy and STIs.

It is a big decision.

You should not feel scared to talk to your partner before you have sex.

You need to talk about things like:

- If you are both ready to have sex. Even if you love some-one it is ok to say no to sex if you are not ready.
- If you have a sexually transmitted [trans-mitt-ed] infection [in-feck-shun]. We will use STI for sexually transmitted infection. STI is easier for some people to read.
- What kind of protection [pro-teck-shun] you will use.



Protection

When it comes to sex, protection is some-thing that you and your partner use so you do not get pregnant or an STI.



4 Safe Sex

When you choose to have sex, you need to think about safe sex.

You can get pregnant or get an STI from having sex **only one time**.

It is important to be safe **every time** you have sex.

But there are ways to protect your-self when you do have sex.

There are different kinds of protection [pro-teck-shun]. Most kinds of protection are for women to use, but both men and women need to make sure that they have safe sex.

You should talk to your partner about what you would like to use.

Be honest. If either of you are not ok with a kind of protection, tell your partner.

Some kinds of protection will lower the chance that a woman will get pregnant, but will not lower the chance that some-one will get an STI.

Some are like medication and control a woman's hormones so that she can not get pregnant.

It is normal to talk to a doctor when you choose what kind of protection to use.

- ▶ When you chose to have sex, think about safe sex
- ▶ Always use protection and be honest with your partner
- ▶ There are many kinds of protection. Chose the one that is best for you



What Kind of Protection Can Men Use?

1. Male condom

Male condom

A very thin rubber tube that fits over the erect penis.

Condoms can help protect against pregnancy and STIs.

They are good protection.
They work 97% of the time when used perfectly, and 85% of the time with typical use.

Even when used right condoms can break, slip, or leak.

You should never re-use a condom.

2. Vasectomy

Vasectomy [va-sec-toe-me]

An operation that will block the tubes that carry sperm.

A vasectomy protects against pregnancy, but not STIs. It works 99.9% of the time.

A vasectomy is usually forever.
You need to know that you never want to have kids before you have one.
Vasectomy's can be reversed.
But it may not work. You still may not be able to have kids if you have it reversed.



What Kind of Protection Can Women Use?

1. Female condom



Female condom

A soft rubber tube that is put inside the vagina.

It protects against pregnancy and STIs.

They work 95% of the time when used perfectly, and 79% of the time with average use.

They can be hard to use.
They can cost a lot of money.

2. Birth control pill



Birth control pill

A small pill that has hormones.

Most of them have two hormones, but some only have one. These hormones can make it harder for the sperm to reach the egg. Or they can stop a woman's body from ovulating [ah-view-late-ing].

Ovulating

When an egg is released from a woman's ovary. If sperm gets to the egg and the egg is fertilized, the woman will get pregnant.

The birth control pill protects against pregnancy, but not STIs.

It works 99.7% of the time when used perfectly, and 92% of the time with typical use.

3. Birth control patch

Birth control patch

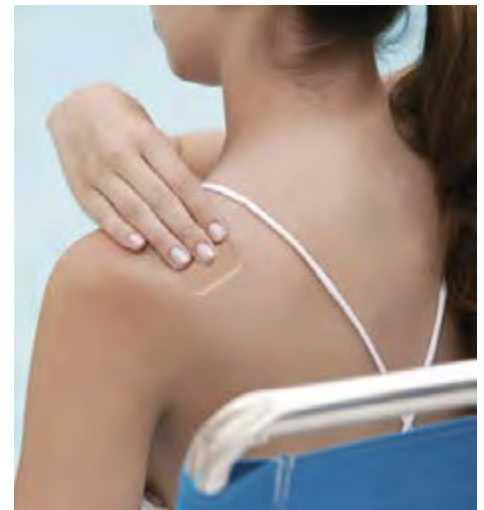
It is a patch that looks like a band-aid. It has hormones like the birth control pill.

The patch has two hormones. It is put on the skin and the hormones enter a woman's body through her skin.

A woman wears it for 3 weeks, and then does not wear it for 1 week.

It protects against pregnancy, but not STIs.

It works 99.7% of the time when used perfectly, and 92% of the time with typical use.



4. Birth control shot



Birth control shot

A needle that is given by a doctor every 8 to 12 weeks.

It has one hormone.

Half of the women who get the shot will stop having their period.

It protects against pregnancy, but not STIs.

It works 99.7% of the time when used perfectly, and 97% of the time with typical use.

5. Birth control ring

Birth control ring

A flexible ring that goes in the vagina.



When it is used it stays in for 3 weeks, and then is out for one.

Some women have trouble using the ring. A doctor can help and show you how it is done.

It has two hormones.

It protects against pregnancy, but not STIs.

It works 99.7% of the time when used perfectly, and 92% of the time with typical use.

6. Cap or diaphragm

Cap or diaphragm [die-ah-fram]

It is rubber and shaped like a dome. It fits inside the vagina and covers the cervix [sir-vicks].

Cervix

The cervix is the neck of the womb [woom] that leads into the vagina.



A cap needs to be fitted by your doctor or at a clinic.

You need to use it with spermicide [sperm-iss-ide].

Spermicide

Spermicide is a cream or gel that kills sperm.

It can be hard to use.

It needs to be cleaned well or there is a risk of infection.

It protects against pregnancy, but not STIs.

It works 94% of the time when used perfectly, and 84% of the time with typical use.



7. Intra-uterine device (IUD)



Intra-uterine [in-tra-you-ter-in] device

A small plastic item that has one hormone. Or a copper item that does not have any hormones. The copper is what protects against pregnancy.

An IUD is put inside a woman's womb by a doctor.

It can last for 5-10 years.

The IUD protects against pregnancy, but not STIs.

It works 99% of the time.



8. Tubal ligation

**Tubal [tube-ull]
ligation
[lie-gay-shun]**

This is an operation that blocks the fallopian tubes.

**Fallopian
[fah-lope-ee-an]
tubes**

The tubes that carry the egg from the ovary to the womb.

This means a woman can not get pregnant.

It is usually forever. You need to know that you never want to have kids before you choose to have this operation.

A tubal ligation can be reversed. But it may not work. You still may not be able to have kids if you get it reversed.

It protects against pregnancy, but not STIs.

It works 99.5% of the time.



9. Emergency contraception

Emergency contraception [con-tra-sep-shun]

A pill a woman takes that uses hormones to stop a woman's body from getting pregnant.



Emergency contraception is also called the morning after pill.

A woman can take it to try to stop getting pregnant if she had sex with-out a condom or had sex with a condom and it broke.

You can get it at a drug store. It is kept behind the counter so you will have to ask for it.

You must take it with-in 5 days of having sex with no protection. The sooner it is taken, the better it will work.

It does not protect against STIs.



Oral and Anal Sex Protection

Even if you can not get pregnant from oral or anal sex it is still important to be safe from STIs.

Always use a condom if you have anal sex.

Always use a condom, a dental dam, or a cut-open condom if you have oral sex.

1. Dental dam

A dental dam is a square piece of latex.

It can be put over the woman's vagina to stop body fluids from being passed to another person while having oral sex.

2. Cut-open condom

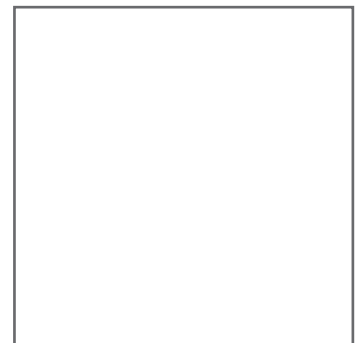
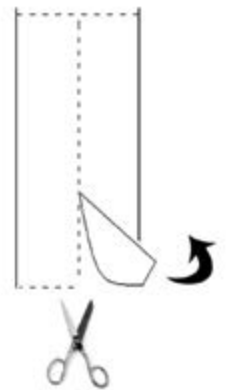
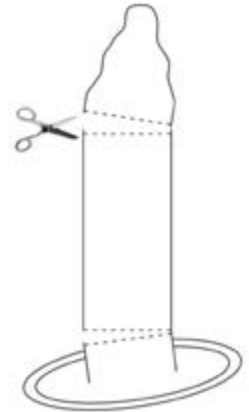
If the oral sex is on a man a normal condom can be used for protection.

If the oral sex is on a woman you can use a cut open condom for protection.

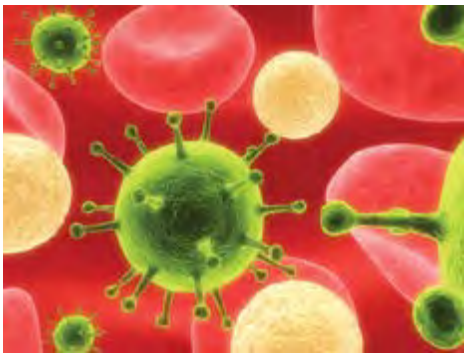
To do this:

1. Cut the ends off the condom.
2. Cut the condom up one side so that it opens into a square.

This square can be put over the woman's vagina to stop body fluids from being passed to the other person during oral sex.



⑤ Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)



Sexually transmitted infection (STI)

STIs are infections that you can get through sexual contact.

How Do You Get STIs?

You can get STIs from 3 kinds of sex:

1. Vaginal sex
2. Anal sex
3. Oral sex

If you know what STIs are and you make good choices about sex, you will be less likely to get an STI.

You can get STIs from 2 kinds of contact:

1. Body fluids
2. Skin contact



Body Fluids

You can get STIs from 3 kinds of body fluids:

1. Semen [see-men]
2. Vaginal fluid (the wetness in the vagina)
3. Blood

If your partner has an STI and you are exposed to their body fluids, you can get their STI.

Some STIs you can get from body fluids are:

- Gonorrhea
- Chlamydia
- Syphilis
- Trichomoniasis
- HIV
- Hepatitis



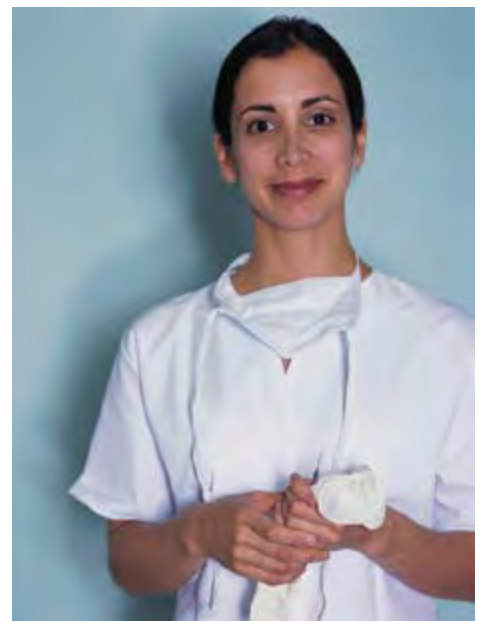
Skin to Skin Contact

You can get STIs from skin to skin contact.

These STIs can not be passed by hugging or shaking some-one's hand.

They usually only occur around the genitals.

This means that even if you use a condom you could still get the STI!



Some STIs you can get from skin to skin contact are:

- Genital warts
- Human Papillomavirus [Papi-low-mah-virus] or HPV
- Herpes
- Scabies
- Pubic lice

The best ways to not get an STI are to:

- Not have sex.
- Make sure that the person you have sex with does not have an STI. You will know you both do not have an STI if you get tested before you have sex. People can lie, but medical tests do not.
- Have safe sex and always use protection.



What Happens if You Get an STI?

Different things can happen with different kinds of STIs.

Some STIs:

- Are easy to treat if you get tested and catch it early, like Chlamydia
- There is no cure, and you have it for life, like Herpes
- Can cause cancer, like HPV
- Can make you very sick or kill you, like HIV

How Can You Protect Your-self from Getting an STI?

If you use protection, like a condom, it can lower your chances of getting an STI.

If you are having sex, you should go to the doctor and get tested for STIs at least once a year.

Some STIs have no symptoms [simp-toms] but you can still pass it to some-one else.



Symptoms

Signs that you have an infection.

You need to know if you have an STI so that you do not infect some-one else.

There is another option too.
Abstinence [Ab-stin-en-ss].



Abstinence

You choose not to have sex.

Abstinence is the only way to be 100% safe against STIs.

Get Tested

If you are sexually active, you should get tested by your doctor for STIs.

Some STIs do not have any symptoms.

You and your partner should get tested once a year.

This will help you stay healthy.

It will also make sure your partner stays healthy.

If an STI is not treated it can cause permanent [perm-an-ent] damage.



6 Pregnancy

One thing to think about when you have sex is pregnancy [preg-nan-see].

Only women can get pregnant [preg-nant], but men are also responsible [ree-spawn-sa-bull] if a woman he has sex with gets pregnant.

If you want to have a child, then you and your partner need to make that decision together.

If you do not want to have a child, then you need to use protection every time you have sex.

Abstinence is the only way to be 100% safe against pregnancy.

You can only get pregnant from vaginal sex.

That does not mean that there is no risk with the other types of sexual activity.

You can get more info from the brochure "**Having a Baby.**" You can get the brochure on Vecova's website at:

<http://vecova.ca/research/knowledge-centre/>

Info

We will use info for information [in-for-may-shun]. Info is easier for some people to read.



**People must get tested
to know for sure if they do
or don't have an STI.
The key is in knowing if
you have one. Testing helps
you keep yourself healthy and
your partners protected.**
- Calgary Sexual Health Centre

Resources



Places in Calgary you Can Get Help

Here is a list of some of the places in Calgary that can help you if you have questions about sexual health.

AIDS Calgary

- Address: 110 — 1603, 10 Ave SW
- Phone: 403-508-2500
- Web-site: www.aidscalgary.org
- Email: info@aidscalgary.org

They can help you if you have HIV or AIDS and would like a support group.

Alberta Health Services: Sexual and Reproductive Health Clinics

- Downtown Clinic
 - Address: 5th Floor — 1213, 4th St SW
 - Phone: 403-955-6500
- Sunridge Clinic
 - Address: 406 — 2675, 36th St NE, Sunridge Professional Building
 - Phone: 403-944-7666
- South Calgary Health Centre
 - Address: 31 Sunpark Plaza SE
 - Phone: 403-943-9510



They can test you for STIs.
You can also get tested at your doctor's office
or at any walk-in clinic.

Calgary Communities Against Sexual Abuse

- Address: 7th Floor — 320, 5th Avenue SE, YWCA Mary Dover Building
- 24-hour support and info line: 403-237-5888
- 24-hour toll free support and info line: 1-877-237-5888

If you have been sexually abused [ah-bu-sed] they can help you. You can get free counseling here if you are older than 11 and have been abused. You can get counseling if you are a support person for some-one who has been abused.

Calgary Sexual Health Centre

- Address: 304, 301 14 Street NW
- Phone: 403-283-5580
- Web-site: www.calgarysexualhealth.ca
- Email: generalmail@calgarysexualhealth.ca

You can go to The Calgary Sexual Health Centre for free. They can give private STI counseling [cown-sell-ing].

They can give you support if you choose to have sex. The web-site has a lot of info on sexual health.

Calgary Sexually Transmitted Disease Clinic

- Address: Sheldon M. Chumir Health Centre, 5th Floor — 1213, 4th Street SW
- Phone: 403-955-6700

This place will test you for STIs. The clinic will keep your test private. You do not need an Alberta Health Care number.

Health Link Alberta

- Toll free phone: 1-866-408-5465

Health Link Alberta gives health advice 24 hours every day.



Web-sites

These web-sites have more info on every-thing we talked about in this brochure. They have a lot of different kinds of info on sexual health.

Canadian Federation for Sexual Health

- Web-site: www.cfsh.ca

They have info on things like:

- Pregnancy
- Emergency contraception
- STIs

The Emergency Contraception Website

- Web-site: www.not-2-late.com

They have info on emergency contraception.

Like it is.org

- Web-site: www.likeitis.org

They have info on things like:

- Sex
- Teenage pregnancy
- STIs
- Birth control
- And other sexual health topics

Options for Sexual Health

- Web-site: www.optionsforsexualhealth.org

They have info on things like:

- Birth control
- Pregnancy
- And other sexual health topics

The Planned Parenthood Federation of America

- Web-site: www.teenwire.com

They have info on things like:

- Sex
- Pregnancy
- And other sexual health topics

Sex, etc.

- Web-site: www.sexetc.org

They have info on things like:

- Body image
- Sex
- Getting tested for STIs or pregnancy



Sex Info Online

- Web-site: www.soc.ucsb.edu/sexinfo

They have info on things like:

- Birth control
- Pregnancy
- STIs
- Relationships
- And other sexual health topics

Sexuality and U.ca

- Web-site: www.sexualityandu.ca

They have info on things like:

- Birth control
- STIs
- Sexuality
- And other sexual health topics



Please think of the environment when printing this workbook.

Please print double sided.

Sexual Health is an information brochure for adults with low English literacy created by Vecova, located in Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

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