



safer sex

for young gay and bisexual men

Québec 

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ou are a young man and you are attracted to other guys. Maybe you have had sexual relations or fallen in love with someone of the same sex. If that is the case, you are not alone. Thousands of men share their love and sex lives with other men, in good health and happiness.

Perhaps you are attracted to both girls and guys. Maybe you are not sure yet of your sexual orientation. What is important is that you feel good about your emotional life and comfortable with your sexuality.

Your sexuality is your business. But today HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, and sexually transmitted infections (STI) are also part of reality. AIDS is not a disease that only affects gay men. But in actual fact, many young and not so young gay and bisexual men live with HIV or AIDS. Therefore, it is important that you protect yourself all the time, no matter who your partners are.

Here is a brochure that might answer some of your questions about HIV and safer sex. It was written especially for you by young gay or bisexual men.





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A blue-tinted photograph of a group of people laughing and smiling together. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The text "feeling different" is centered in white.

feeling different

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i! My name is Stéphan and I'm 19 years old. Although I've had sex with girls before, I've always been attracted to guys.

For a while, I felt I was different from other people. I had a girlfriend that I liked a lot, but my attraction to men and the desire to have a relationship with a guy was still there. I couldn't talk to anyone about it or even admit it to myself because I kept hearing bad jokes and I was afraid that people would call me a "fag" or "faggot," or would reject me.

Then one day, I'd had enough of feeling alone. I talked to someone I trust about my attraction to guys: my grandmother.

Anyway, she had her suspicions. It often happens that people close to us guess. It felt really good to talk to my grandmother; she helped me feel confident again. I slowly managed to assert myself and accept myself as I am.

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Today, I understand that I didn't choose to be attracted to guys. It's just like that. That's all. What I did choose, however, is to acknowledge this attraction, to express it and experience it, and so to feel good about myself.



living your
sexuality

the fact that I have accepted myself for who I am means that I now feel better about myself, and I'm more comfortable about meeting another guy and having a relationship with him. Over time, I realised that there were a lot more guys than I thought going through the same thing as I was.

Whether for love or pleasure, everyone lives their sexuality in their own way:

- with a guy or with a girl;
- two or more people together;
- for a night, a month, or a lifetime;
- in the car, the woods or in bed;
- with or without accessories.

In fact, anything is possible.

No matter what we choose, how often we have sexual relations, or the number of partners we have, we should always respect each other and protect ourselves against HIV and STI.



HIV and AIDS

a year ago, I met Carlo at a party and he was charming: big beautiful brown eyes and a smile that lights up a room. We got really close in a very short time. Actually, we fell in love. Since our relationship was going well and we trusted each other, Carlo felt comfortable enough to tell me he was seropositive.

What a shock! I have to admit that I was really upset because I didn't know what it meant. I thought he had AIDS and that he would die soon. And yet, he wasn't even sick. I didn't know the difference between "being seropositive" and "having AIDS". Carlo took me in his arms and reassured me; he told me that people who get HIV can live a very long time. Thanks to the medications that he takes everyday, he feels fine and his health is quite stable. Since I was asking many questions about HIV, Carlo suggested I talk to his doctor, who gave me a lot of information.



what is HIV

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he doctor explained that HIV means “human immunodeficiency virus”. This virus attacks the immune system, which normally protects the human body against infections. A person whose immune system is weakened by HIV can develop certain serious diseases or infections that he wouldn’t get otherwise. All these diseases together are called AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome).

Someone who catches HIV is said to be “seropositive”. You can live with HIV longer and longer now before developing AIDS. But when someone gets HIV, he or she has it forever.

Because they have no symptoms, many people have contracted HIV without knowing it and without it being apparent. However, since they are carriers of HIV, they can also spread the virus to other people.

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You can’t tell if someone has HIV by looking at them. So it’s better to protect yourself all the time. Even when both partners are seropositive, they should protect themselves to avoid getting new infections.



how does HIV
spread?

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IV lives in a seropositive person's body fluids such as blood, sperm (including pre-ejaculatory fluid), menstrual blood or vaginal secretions. Therefore, HIV spreads when one of these fluids penetrates directly into another person's blood stream. Unprotected sexual activities, sharing previously used equipment for injecting drugs, and mother-to-child transmission are the main ways that HIV is transmitted.

during unprotected sexual activity

HIV can be transmitted through anal or vaginal penetration if condoms aren't used. In fact, small cuts that are often painless and invisible to the naked eye form on the lining of the anus or vagina and on the tip of the penis during sex with penetration. These lesions are caused by rubbing and are normal. However, HIV can enter through the cuts and make its way into the blood system.

So any situation where sperm, vaginal secretions or blood can come into direct contact with the lining of the anus or vagina, or the tip of the penis should be avoided. This also applies to sharing sex objects such as dildos, vibrators, etc.

The same precautions have to be taken when there are visible lesions on other parts of the body, for example a fresh cut or a lesion in the mouth.

when sharing injection equipment

HIV and hepatitis B and C can spread through the shared use of drug injection equipment. This equipment can contain a previous user's infected blood so it is important to always use new equipment and to never share it. You can get equipment from syringe exchange programmes, pharmacies, CLSCs, hospitals, clinics and other places where you see this sign.



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from mother to child

HIV can be transmitted from a mother to her child during pregnancy, when giving birth and, more rarely, when breastfeeding. HIV screening and treatment during pregnancy greatly reduces the risk of transmission.

other modes of HIV transmission

I also asked Carlo's doctor if HIV can spread through saliva, tears, mosquitoes or even pets, for example. We hear so many things that I wanted it to be clear in my own mind.

The doctor explained that researchers have detected HIV in saliva, tears and urine, but usually in quantities that are too small to transmit the virus. However, the risk of transmission is higher if there is blood in these fluids.

Furthermore, there is no proof that HIV can be transmitted by mosquitoes or domestic animals.


On the other hand, equipment used for tattooing or piercing can involve a risk of transmission. You have to make sure that the equipment used for this purpose is either disposable or that it is sterilised after every use.

everyday activities

Sharing a meal, drinking out of the same glass and hugging somebody are all part of everyday activities and contacts. None of these things can transmit HIV, and you can enjoy these moments without worry.



the HIV test



If you're worried or have questions about your behaviours, talk to a doctor or health professional at your CLSC. Then you'll be able to better evaluate your risks and decide if you want to get tested. To find out if someone has contracted HIV, a blood sample has to be taken.

However, we should specify that generally, HIV antibodies don't appear until three months after a person has come into contact with the virus. That means that you have to wait at least three months after having unprotected sex before getting tested.

You can have sex during this period but you absolutely have to protect yourself and your partners by practicing safer sex. We can only know if a person is seronegative (he or she does not have the virus) or seropositive (the virus has made its way into his or her body) once test results are back from the laboratory, about four weeks after having the test.

But no matter the result, it is a good time to integrate safer sex into your love life, and, if you inject drugs, to decide never to share equipment. An HIV screening test does not replace safer practices!

If the test result is positive, see a doctor that you trust. Several medications can slow down the progression of the disease. Community groups can also provide help and support, and direct you to the appropriate resources.

Other STI can be asymptomatic. Currently, syphilis and gonorrhoea are increasing significantly among men who have sex with men. These STI are easy to treat if they are detected quickly.

where can you get tested?

HIV and other STI screening tests are free throughout Québec.

20 To find the screening service closest to you, call the Info-Santé CLSC telephone service in your neighbourhood. Several other medical clinics also offer screening tests. In all of these places, the service is free and confidential. Anonymous HIV tests are also available in CLSCs.

safer sex

Safer sex is more than a way of protecting yourself against HIV and STI; it's become a way for people to assert themselves and live their sexuality.

You can never tell if a partner is seronegative or seropositive. Therefore, Carlo might not have known that he is seropositive; that's why we've always practiced safer sex from the very beginning of our relationship.

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Carlo told me how things were for him before he practised safer sex all the time. He said that he was constantly struggling with himself: on the one hand, he wanted to have protected sexual relations all the time; on the other hand, he had the impression that he couldn't. He told me that when he didn't protect himself, he felt guilty. In fact, he's never talked a lot about it because for him, unprotected sex is a thing of the past.

Today, Carlo is seropositive but thanks to him, I've discovered that safer sex is not only simple but also exciting.



We have basic rules to prevent HIV transmission. These are:

- use a new condom whenever there is penetration;
- avoid ejaculating in the other person's mouth;
- to each his own toy; or else, put a new condom on it for each user;
- keep it exciting.

If you follow these basic rules, it'll be easier for you to always practice safer sex, even when you've used alcohol or drugs.

Like Carlo's doctor said, the risk of HIV transmission is low during oral sex. However, this practice is at higher risk for the transmission of other STI. So to be as safe as possible, you can protect yourself when you have oral sex by using a non-lubricated or flavoured latex condom.

Then, we let our imaginations go. There is much more than penetration in our sex life!

A purple-tinted photograph of a couple in a shower. The man is on the left, looking down, and the woman is on the right, looking up. The background shows a shower door with a grid pattern. The text "condoms and lubricant" is overlaid in white, centered in the image.

condoms and
lubricant

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t first, I was a bit uncomfortable using a condom, even though I knew that when used properly, it is the best way to prevent the spread of HIV and other STI. With practice and Carlo's good advice, condom use has become second nature. I also learnt how to choose condoms since they come in different styles and different quality. A good condom has to be:

- made of latex;
- have a lot number;
- used before the expiry date;
- kept away from heat and cold;
- always used with a water-based lubricant (like "K-Y", "Taro Gel", etc.) for anal penetration to avoid breaking the condom;
- used without oil or grease like "Crisco" or "Vaseline" to prevent the condom from tearing;
- made of non-lubricated latex for oral sex.

Since condoms are available in different sizes, thicknesses, textures and flavours, I had fun trying out several models; that way, I was able to discover which condoms suited me the most

A blue-tinted photograph of a smiling couple in bed. The man is on the right, leaning over the woman on the left. They are both smiling and looking at each other. The woman is holding a small object, possibly a condom, in her hand. The text "how to use condoms" is overlaid in white, centered on the image.

how to use condoms

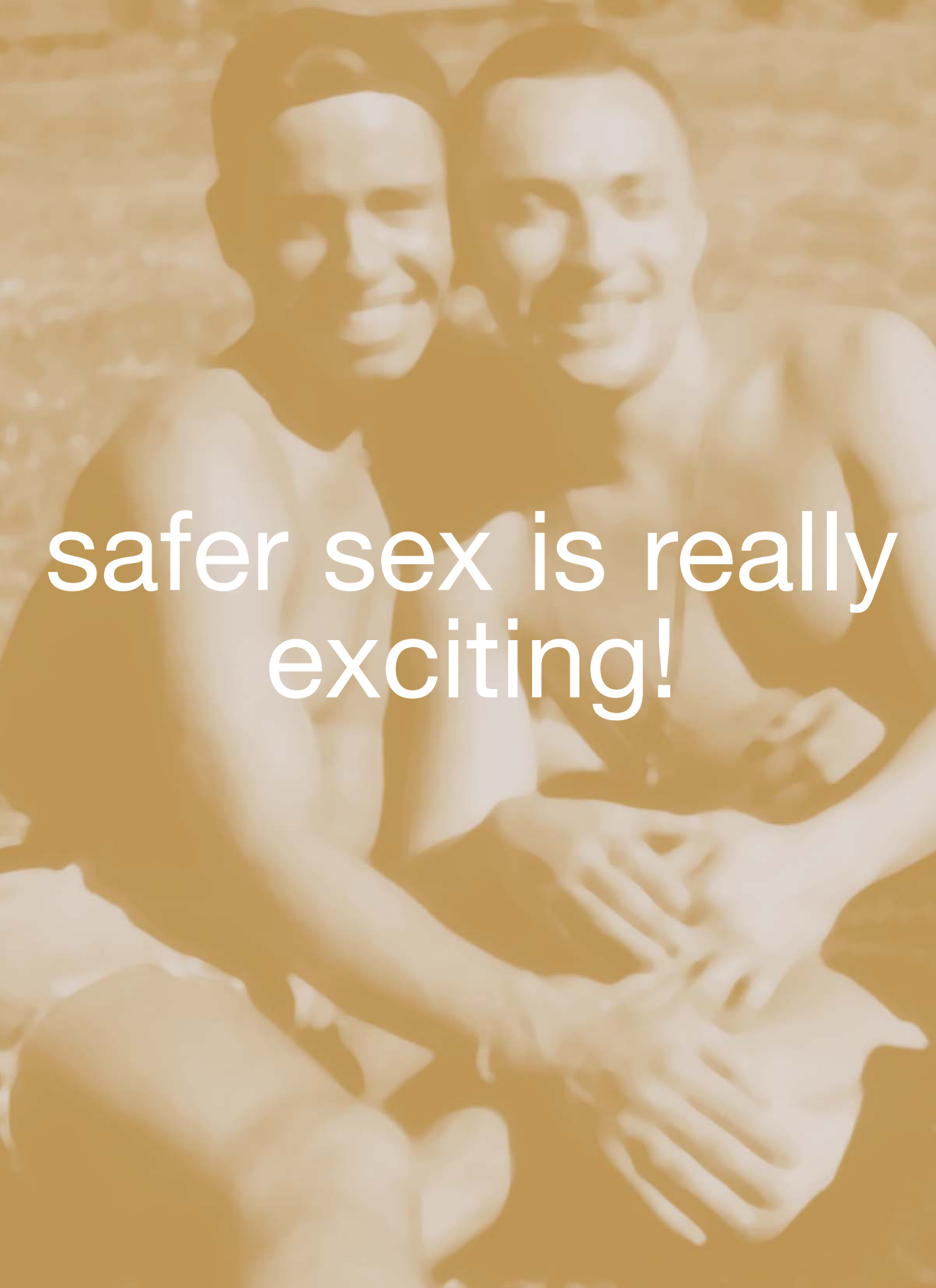


One night, Carlo surprised me. He had lit candles all around and put condoms and lots of lubricant next to them. I quickly guessed what he had in mind!

We started kissing and touching each other. When we both got very excited, Carlo looked me in the eyes, picked up a condom, unwrapped it gently, put a few drops of lubricant on the tip of his penis to improve the sensation and increase his pleasure.

I took the condom from his hands and put it on the head of his penis while pinching the tip of the condom. Then, I unrolled the condom completely to the base of his penis. Once the condom was in place, I lubricated it well to increase my pleasure! While I was unrolling the condom, Carlo was lubricating me and slowly, he penetrated me ...

He pulled out after ejaculating, the whole time firmly holding the condom at the base of the his penis to make sure that it would not come off while it was still in me. Then, he took it off gently and threw it out. While he was doing that, I was unwrapping a new condom... it was my turn!



safer sex is really
exciting!

W

ith safer sex, we can let our imaginations go without being afraid. The fact that Carlo is seropositive doesn't change anything. He needs affection, tenderness and love, just like anyone else, and ... I love him a lot, you know.

That's it. In this brochure, I have shared part of my life with you. I hope it'll help you practice safer sex in your sex life and your love life.

Bye!

Stéphan

helpful resources

General information on HIV-AIDS and STI:

Info-Santé CLSC

Community resources:

For information about AIDS community resources in Québec or about HIV-AIDS and help or support, contact:

La Coalition des organismes communautaires québécois de lutte contre le sida (COCQ-Sida)

(514) 844-2477

www.cocqsida.com

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Information and help line:

GAY LINE

Montréal: (514) 866-0103

Elsewhere in Québec:

1 888 505-1010

www.gai-ecoute.qc.ca

Support group for young gay men,
bisexuals and lesbians aged 14 to 25:

Projet 10

(514) 989-4585

www.p10.qc.ca

Tel-jeunes

Montréal: (514) 288-2266

Outside Montréal: 1 800 263-2266

www.teljeunes.com

A.C.C.M.

(Aids Community Care Montreal)

Telephone: (514) 527-0928

Fax: (514) 527-0701

Email: info@accmontreal.org

ACTION SÉRO-ZÉRO (Montréal)

Telephone: (514) 521-7778

Fax: (514) 521-7665

Email: direction@sero-zero.qc.ca

COALITION SIDA DES SOURDS DU QUÉBEC (Montréal)

Telephone: Dial 1 800 855-0511

and ask for the following number:

(514) 521-1780

Fax: (514) 521-1137

Email: cssq@qc.aira.com

GAP - VIES (Montréal)

Telephone: (514) 722-5655

Fax: (514) 722-0063

Email: infogapvies@qc.aira.com

ACTIONS SIDA CÔTE-NORD

Telephone: (418) 962-6211

Fax: (418) 962-6401

Email: actionsAIDS@bbsi.net

BLITS (Victoriaville)

Telephone: (819) 758-2662
Fax: (819) 758-8270
Email: blits@cdcbf@qc.ca

BRAS (Outaouais)

Telephone: (819) 776-2727
Fax: (819) 776-2001
Email: b.r.a.s@videotron.ca

ÉMISS-ÈRE (Montérégie)

Telephone: (450) 651-9229
Toll free: 1 888 227-7432
Fax: (450) 651-3420
Email: info@emiss-ere.ca

**CENTRE DES R.O.S.É.S.
(Rouyn-Noranda)**

Telephone: (819) 764-9111
Fax: (819) 762-8403
Email: centre-r.o.s.e.s@cablevision.qc.ca

CENTRE SIDA AMITIÉ (Laurentides)

Telephone: (450) 431-7432
Fax: (450) 431-6536
Email: csa1@qc.aira.com

IRIS (Estrie)

Telephone: (819) 823-6704
Fax: (819) 823-5537
Email: iris.estrie@videotron.ca

MAINS (Bas-Saint-Laurent)

Telephone: (418) 722-7432
Fax: (418) 722-7847
Email: mainsbsl@hotmail.com

MIELS - QUÉBEC

Telephone: (418) 649-1720
AIDS info line: (418) 649-0788
Fax: (418) 649-1256
Email: miels@miels.org

MIENS (Chicoutimi)

Telephone: (418) 693-8983
Fax: (418) 693-0409
Email: lemiens@cybernaute.com

SIDACTION TROIS-RIVIÈRES

Telephone: (819) 374-5740
Fax: (819) 374-5932
Email: AIDScion.tr@tr.cgocable.ca

SIDA-VIE LAVAL

Telephone: (450) 669-3099
Fax: (450) 669-3421
Email: AIDSVie@lavalnet.qc.ca

SIPE (Lanaudière)

Telephone: (450) 752-4004
Fax: (450) 752-4224
Email: sipe@sympatico.ca

for medical or psychosocial
information or services:
contact your local CLSC.