

The States YOU'RE IN



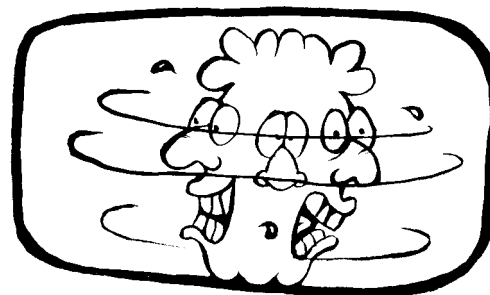
A booklet for gay men in country and regional Australia about health & safety at home & away

ARCHIVED

Some information
may be out of date

Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| The States You're In | 1 |
| Young? Like Other Guys | 3 |
| Sex And The Country | 4 |
| The Holiday Spirit | 9 |
| A Different State | 11 |
| Age of Consent Laws in Australia | 12 |
| Post Exposure What? | 15 |
| Sex And The City | 16 |
| Travelling with HIV/AIDS | 20 |
| Getting The Most From Health Services | 22 |
| STIs - Sexually Transmitted Infections | 25 |
| STIs Table | 28 |
| Home Is Where The Heart Is | 34 |
| Glossary Of Terms | 36 |
| Useful Contacts | 38 |
| Other Useful Print Resources | 44 |



The States You're In

This booklet is for gay men who live in country and regional Australia. It has been produced because there are things particular to country life that can affect our physical and mental health – things which aren't addressed in existing AIDS Council resources. One of the most serious health concerns for gay men in the country is homophobia and the stress associated with isolation and/or hiding your sexuality. At the end of this booklet is a list of relevant services to help you find supports and social networks close to home.



Other things in this booklet are:

- ▲ information about travelling and 'cruising' in the larger cities
- ▲ tips for staying safe at beats
- ▲ some information on how the law might affect you
- ▲ things for HIV positive guys to think about when planning a trip away
- ▲ information on HIV and STIs (sexually transmitted infections) and advice on safe sex.

While we think you'll find this booklet useful, we realise there are some sections which may not be relevant to your life. 'The States You're In' is not a guide for every gay man in the country on 'how to live your life'. It's more a reflection of the experiences and ideas of the men we talked to when we researched this booklet. While the name and homestate of each man quoted in the booklet are made up, the quotes are real, as is the HIV status attributed to each man.

The legal information presented here is intended as a general guide only and is not meant to substitute for professional legal advice under any circumstances. A list of other print resources you may wish to read is included at the end of the booklet.

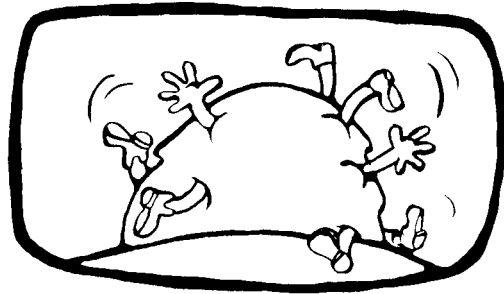


Young? Like Other Guys?

If you're young and gay or bisexual, the country can be a lonely place. You might feel like you're 'the only one'. But remember: it's widely accepted that one in ten guys is attracted to other guys. There are plenty of free and confidential services around for you to talk to, and plenty of places where you can meet guys who feel the same way as you. You don't have to go to the larger cities to find them either. For example a network of young rural gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people – OUTLINK – was established in 1999 to help reduce isolation. Check out the list of services at the end of this booklet for phone numbers and web addresses for OUTLINK and other services. You can also visit one of the many gay chat rooms on the internet and talk anonymously with other gay/bi guys.

Everyone has questions about sex and sexuality. Talking to someone in private can help you sort through any confusion and help you decide what you want to do – if anything – about your feelings. The services we've listed are especially helpful because you'll be able to talk to someone who's been through similar stuff. They can share their experience and advice – for example how their family or friends reacted to them coming out.





Sex And The Country

An advantage of country life is it can be healthier – physically and mentally. Lots of gay men living in the country have lived in a large city before and know how true this is and a lot of us have made the move to the country in order to get healthy. But looking after your health isn't just a matter of where you live – it's what you **do** that counts, no matter what state you're in.

**“At home I’m more sexually restrained.
Home and away are two separate things”
(Anton, Qld, HIV-)**

In a small community, everyone knows everyone – at least they think they do – and news can travel fast. For this reason, you might only let a select few people



know that you're gay, or HIV positive. When it comes to sex, you might be less active or adventurous than you'd like to be, not only because of the small number of guys to choose from, but also to avoid becoming the subject of gossip.

Guys in relationships can feel just as isolated as single men. If you don't have support networks around, your relationship can become stale and conflict can be harder to work out.

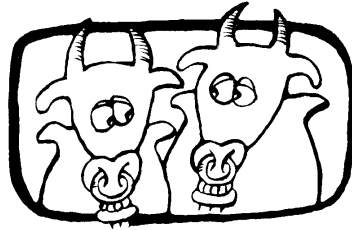
Whether you are single or in a relationship, however, feeling like you have to hide your sexuality – from family, friends, workmates etc – can be very stressful. Remember, you're not the only one. Local gay and lesbian social/support groups are places where you can be open and where you can meet other gay men in your area. Call the nearest AIDS Council or Gay & Lesbian Telephone Counselling Service (listed at the back of this booklet) to find out about groups near you. If there aren't any, you might try talking to a group elsewhere about how to get one started in your area.

**“At home I would definitely be more
guarded, more careful” (Mark, Qld, HIV+)**

Doing beats is one way a lot of guys in the country meet other guys (for sex and/or socialising). When



they're happening, beats can be great. But, sadly, there are dangers associated with beats – like gay bashers.



Whenever you do the beat, keep your guard up and be aware of who's around. If you can, let someone know you're going to the beat. Some things you can do to protect yourself are:

- ▲ Do the beat only when you're not drunk or on drugs. If you're out of it and horny, call a chat line, Internet chatroom, or an escort instead.
- ▲ Leave your wallet and valuables at home. Attacks at beats may involve theft. You don't need anyone finding your ID either.
- ▲ Wear clothes and shoes you can run in if need be.
- ▲ Park your car in a discreet place.
- ▲ Know the surroundings – eg. you may need exits, escape routes, and/or well lit areas if you need to escape danger quickly.
- ▲ Don't wear a personal stereo – you need to be able to hear what's going on around you.
- ▲ Take condoms and water-based lube with you and



use them for anal sex. You never know that the guy you meet has the same HIV status as you, or that he even knows his HIV status.

- ▲ Be aware of the legal consequences of sex in public (all states/territories have laws that can be used to prosecute people for having sex in public). Know your rights and what you would and wouldn't say if you were ever questioned. As a rule, many people are convicted of offences because they admit to them during police questioning. We recommend seeking professional legal advice before answering any questions, wherever possible. (See the contacts list at the end of this booklet).
- ▲ Stay away from anyone you think is suspicious – even if they look like your 'type'. Be especially wary of groups of people. If threatened, run away (if you can) and try to attract help by shouting "FIRE!" Or, if you see anyone being hassled, call the police or yell. Take a note of their details (appearance, car rego etc) so you can identify them later.
- ▲ If you want to go somewhere with someone you meet at the beat, talk with them first, eg. to find out whether they have knowledge about things to do with the gay community.
- ▲ Consider learning self-defence. Better still arrange a self-defence course for gay men and lesbians in your area.



If you are ever attacked, you can speak to people about it. Get support. Find out about your rights and how justice might be done. Gay bashing is the act of homophobic, violent people who are probably bored. Some bashers even see it as a kind of 'sport' – something to do with their mates when the pub's closed. A lot of bashers plan their attacks. They may even pretend to be gay to give you a false sense of security.

Violence hurts more if you do nothing about it. If you're in NSW, the Lesbian & Gay Anti-Violence Project (AVP) is an excellent service for anyone who's been attacked, and the staff can assist communities with strategies to prevent violence. Also, in NSW, there might be a Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officer (GLLO) in your local police service. While, sadly, some police can be homophobic, a GLLO should be more interested in doing something about the violence than in your sex life. Unfortunately, similar services don't exist in other states or territories – yet. However, your state/territory AIDS Council or Telephone Counselling Service or local Community Legal Centre should be able to help. These services are listed at the end of this booklet.

Remember – no-one asks to be attacked. It's not your fault. It's not because you were out at a beat. And it's not because you're gay. Your attacker/s are to blame.



The Holiday Spirit

Most people living in the country or regional areas of Australia spend a lot of time away from home, or have lives evenly divided between city and country. For gay men, meeting other men almost always involves some sort of journey – to a large city, overseas, to the gay and lesbian group in town, or perhaps just to the local beat. Sometimes sex is the main reason for travelling, but even when travelling is for another purpose – work, holiday, visiting friends/family, doctor's appointment, or going out on the gay scene – the opportunity to meet guys for friendship or for sex is an added bonus.



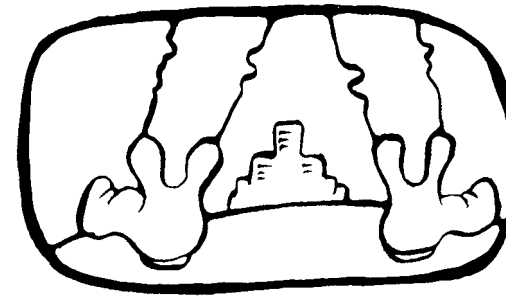
“When I’m away from home, I tend to play up a bit” (Greg, NSW, HIV-)

Travelling puts you in a different state of mind – the ‘holiday spirit’. You’re free from the daily routine and more likely to try new things. Consider how that freedom affects your attitude and your actions. For example:

- ▲ Do you feel safer wandering around city streets than you do at the beat in your hometown?
- ▲ Do you think a move to the city will solve your problems by putting an end to small town gossip and discrimination?
- ▲ Do you see the anonymity of a large city as a chance to be less responsible when it comes to using condoms?
- ▲ Does being in a large city mean you drink or use other drugs? And does that affect your sex life and whether or not you use condoms?

What does the freedom of being a country boy away from home mean for your health and the health of your sexual partners, in the short and long term?

Better to recognise the holiday spirit before you leave, plan ahead, and return with good memories. The only kind of ache we want you to bring home is the pleasurable kind.



A Different State

So you’ve packed your toothbrush, your condoms and lube, your gay magazines and travel guide, and any medication you need. You’ve gotten away from it all for a while. You’re in a place where you can forget about the routine – and maybe the boyfriend, too. You can be who you want to be – and maybe do who you want to do, too.

“I suppose when I travel I become more predatory” (Alan, NSW, HIV+)

You might have more sex than usual when you’re away, or you might do things you don’t usually do – like visit saunas, hire an escort or have anal sex – just because you can. Be aware that the laws around



homosexuality, age of consent, sex in public, HIV, and buying/selling sex are different in each state and territory – and in other countries. The box below

Age of Consent Laws in Australia

Sources: *The AFAO HIV/AIDS Legal Guide (2nd Ed)*, *Godwin et al 1993; HIV/AIDS Legal Link (AFAO newsletter); the HIV/AIDS Legal Centre (NSW).*

ACT 16 for gay, straight and lesbian sex

NSW 18 for gay sex, 16 for straight and lesbian sex

NT 18 for gay sex, 16 for straight and lesbian sex

QLD 16 for gay, lesbian and straight sex (except for anal intercourse you must be 18)

SA 17 for gay, lesbian and straight sex, except where both partners are under 17 the age of consent is 16

TAS 17 for gay, lesbian and straight sex

VIC 16 for gay, lesbian and straight sex. (Also, sex is legal for people aged 10-16 if there is no more than two years age difference between partners).

WA 21 for gay sex, 16 for straight and lesbian sex.



outlines the current laws regarding age of consent in Australia. To get information on other laws affecting homosexuality and/or living with HIV/AIDS contact one of the relevant services listed in this booklet.

“Bingo! I’m free. I’m free” (Scott NT, HIV-)

In the state you're in you might be tempted to have unsafe sex, especially if you've been partying or if other guys don't seem to be bothered about condoms. Don't lose your head – or your health. It's a fact that a lot of gay men become infected with HIV or other STIs when they're away from home.

Getting an STI can really ruin your time away - and have serious long-term consequences in your life. Guys in relationships, for example, usually have an agreement or understanding that all sex outside the relationship is going to be safe. Some guys talk openly with their partners about 'extramarital' sex, while others prefer not to talk about it with each other. Regardless, if you do pick up an STI, it might mean you and your partner have some talking to do. It will also mean making sure you don't pass the STI on to him.

In addition, for HIV positive guys, other STIs can compromise your immune system and increase viral load. And for HIV negative guys, some STIs increase



your chances of being infected with HIV (eg. by causing damage to the penis or lining of the arse).

HIV/AIDS has had a huge impact on the gay community in the last fifteen years or so. In the larger cities especially there are a lot of guys living with the virus, and many gay men have lost a number of friends. There are guys who want to forget about it or who are 'over' it – you might know this feeling yourself. Safe sex can sometimes be an unwanted reminder of the reality of AIDS. For some guys condoms simply 'spoil the mood'. Add alcohol or drugs to the scene and it can be easy to forget about the reality of HIV/AIDS and the need to have safe sex.

HIV/AIDS doesn't just affect a certain group of gay men – it affects people of all ages and backgrounds, all around Australia and the world. We have to acknowledge this and educate each other, and factor it into the kind of sex we have – and who we have it with.

No matter what state you're in, do safe sex and enjoy your stay.



Post Exposure What?

If you think you may have been exposed to HIV, due to having unprotected sex, or as a result of a broken condom during fucking, or sharing a needle when injecting, there is a treatment available that may reduce the risk of becoming HIV positive. The treatment is known as post exposure prophylaxis or PEP. PEP is a combination of at least two, sometimes three, anti HIV drugs that are used to treat people with HIV infection. It is best to start this treatment no later than 72 hours after possible exposure to HIV, as it may reduce the risk of the person becoming infected with HIV. The earlier PEP treatment is commenced, the more likely it is at being effective. PEP is usually taken for four weeks and it can have similar unpleasant side effects that are sometimes experienced by people with HIV who are on long term HIV therapy. As with other HIV therapy PEP must be taken at strict times of the day as prescribed. At the time of writing this resource PEP is only available in New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory, Queensland and Victoria. If you believe you may have been exposed to HIV you should contact your doctor or sexual health centre as soon as possible and ask about PEP. If it is after hours you should contact your nearest Accident and Emergency room.



Sex And The City

For some of us, one of the best things about getting away to the city is being a new face and having a lot of different guys to 'cruise' or to socialise with. In the larger cities different venues cater to different types of men. Finding the right venue – and the right kind of men – is usually pretty easy.

“Some city guys don’t understand why a gay man would want to live in a country town” (Marco, HIV+, NSW)

A lot of city guys make assumptions about country guys (and vice versa). Their image of us might be based on porn movies – the sun-kissed, straight acting, out in the fields, naïve cowboy type (if only!) – rather than the reality. The ideal of the healthy country boy might lead some guys to assume that you're HIV negative, too.

Feeling free to explore different aspects of your personality when you're away, and playing with stereotypes (like the cowboy) can add to sex. The question is, how do you make sure you enjoy new experiences without compromising your health and the health of your sexual partners (including partners back home)?



What assumptions do you make about gay men in the city? What assumptions do they make about you? Who's responsible for your health? Your notion of safe sex can change depending on where you are and what state you're in. Negotiating sex and safe sex is a part of all sexual encounters. HIV and STIs aren't the only risks of unsafe sex – some guys will get very pissed off if you suggest sex without condoms.

“There’s a temptation to participate in unprotected sex and think ‘Oh well, no-one knows me – I can do this and get away with it’” (Douglas, HIV+, Tas)

You might be in a sauna and see guys fucking without condoms or you might pick someone up in a bar or at a beat and he doesn't want to use condoms. Don't assume they know what they're doing. They might be thinking “We're both negative. He'd tell me if he was positive.” Or one of them might be HIV positive and thinking, “He must be positive too. If he were negative he would have asked me to use a condom.” Or they might not be thinking at all.

“I said I didn’t want to use a condom because I was enjoying myself too much” (Neil, HIV-, Vic)



You might also observe a difference in the amount and type of drugs available on the gay scene of larger cities, compared to home. Sometimes in larger cities, drugs may be easily available and more obvious, both on the street and in some social situations. But regardless of their availability, there are things about drugs and their use that are worth thinking about. Drugs and alcohol can have an effect on the ways guys 'cruise' for sex. Being 'out of it' can make some people more open to emotional and physical intimacy – though this will only be a temporary state. It can also make you less ready to use condoms or to insist your partners use them. A lot of country guys experiment with drinking and illicit drugs in the city. Just be aware that for some people it's had bad consequences. Before you travel, think about what you would do if drugs were offered to you. And remember, you can never be sure what you're taking, especially when you don't know the person giving them to you.

Also, protecting yourself from attacks is just as important in the city as it is at home. Being surrounded by other gay men and lesbians out and about on the gay scene can make you feel safe. However, violence against gays and lesbians is very common in the city, and a lot of bashers will go to known gay areas and beats to find their victims. Being in a large city doesn't protect you from racism or gossip either.



Whenever possible don't go out alone and always let a friend know where you are and who you're with. If you pick up a stranger in a pub make sure someone – even the barman – gets a look at him before you leave. A potential basher will be less likely to try something on if he can be identified later. (See also the earlier section Sex And The Country for tips on how to protect yourself from attacks.)

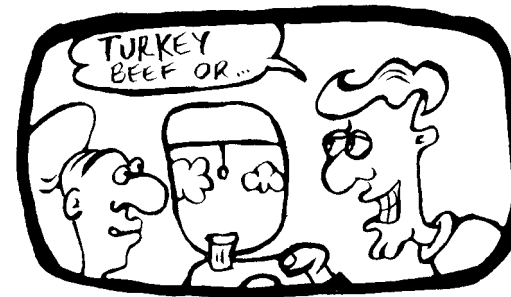


Travelling with HIV/AIDS

"Treatment issues have always come up when I travel. When I travelled overseas I did my homework and found out what the situation was with the supply of medication, etc" (Tranh, HIV+, WA)

For positive gay men, issues around sex, treatments and compliance (your ability to take treatments as prescribed) can affect where, why and how you travel. If you plan ahead, HIV has less chance to interrupt your time away. Some things to consider are:

- ▲ What is the health system like where you're going? Are the treatments you're on available/legal there?
- ▲ If you need to see a doctor or go to hospital when you're away, what sort of treatment can you expect? How much is it likely to cost?
- ▲ How will travelling affect your compliance? For example, will you be crossing time zones, and will this affect when you eat and/or take your treatments?
- ▲ Do your drugs need to be refrigerated? Do you need a supply for the whole time you're away?



- ▲ Can you take a break from your treatments? What effect would that have?

"If I'm going to the cities I tend to think I'm more likely to meet other HIV+ people – it has a bearing on my sexual activity" (William, HIV+, SA)

- ▲ What are the laws regarding homosexuality and age of consent in the state or country you're going to? What about buying and selling sex?
- ▲ Does having HIV affect your chances of being allowed into the countries you plan to visit? (For example, the US has a law which prohibits entry to positive people, although it is enforced inconsistently. While many people with HIV visit the US without



any problems, there have been some cases of refused entry).

- ▲ What are the laws regarding transmission of HIV in the state or country you're going to?

"I always pack my medications in my hand luggage, in their original bottles, with copies of the prescriptions and a letter from my doctor, just in case I get questioned at customs" (Erik, HIV+, NSW)

Information on travel for HIV positive people is on the Aegis website: www.aegis.com

People at your local AIDS Council or PLWHA group can also help.

Getting The Most From Health Services

Regular HIV and STI checks are a good idea for all gay men. Finding gay-friendly doctors and services is important. When someone's making decisions about your health or treatment options, you need to be able to discuss things openly with them. You want a service



you can trust – someone you can see time and again. If you need to access services when you're travelling in Australia, call the relevant AIDS Council or PLWHA group.

"Sometimes I have to educate my doctor" (Tom, HIV+, Vic)

While we recommend regular check-ups, it's completely up to you as to which tests you have done – and when. It's not up to anyone – professional or otherwise – to talk you into having a test you don't want. Some guys have been talked into taking the HIV test when they weren't ready. The results of any STI test – especially an HIV test - are significant. An HIV positive result will change your life. Are you or your partner/s ready for that kind of information? Who could you tell? Do you have supports in place to help you through?

It's also your right to have both your sexuality and your confidentiality respected, and to receive the best possible treatment. If a health service refuses you services because you are gay or HIV+, or if they tell someone else your sexual orientation or HIV status, they may be breaking the law. If this happens to you, talk to your local AIDS Council, PLWHA group or the Health Department/Commission in your state/territory for advice on what you can do. (To find



the relevant service in your state/territory, see the Government listings in the White Pages).

A lot of gay men see two doctors – one for 'regular' stuff and one for stuff to do with sex or HIV. Some guys in the country choose to use services away from their local area. Community health centres and sexual health centres in both urban and rural areas are generally gay-friendly. Most provide free confidential screening for STIs/HIV – or can put you in touch with a service that does. Shop around – talk to other gay



men and groups and see who they recommend.

If you are HIV positive, it is advisable to monitor the activity of the virus. This involves having your doctor take blood from you regularly, to check your CD4 count and your viral load. (CD4 counts indicate how



well your immune system is and viral load measures the amount of HIV virus in your blood). Also discuss treatment options with your doctor, with other positive people, and with your AIDS council. The treatments which are currently available have to be taken regularly for them to be effective, so you need to take your lifestyle into account when deciding which ones are best for you. Taking a break from treatments – even for a day or two – should be discussed with your doctor as it may cause problems. Contact your local AIDS council or PLWHA group for more information, or to get a copy of the booklet HIV Tests and Treatments.

STIs – Sexually Transmitted Infections

There is a host of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) that gay men need to be aware of. Some are simply annoying – like crabs – while some can be life changing or life threatening – like HIV. For some infections – Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B – vaccinations are available (either for free or very cheaply). Ask your doctor or sexual health centre about getting vaccinated.



If you experience any symptoms, see your doctor as soon as possible. Signs and symptoms that you've caught an STI might be:

- ▲ a sore throat
- ▲ pain when urinating (pissing)
- ▲ unusual colouring or spots on the genitals, anus or mouth
- ▲ jaundice (yellow eyes or skin)
- ▲ unusual marks or stains in your underwear (eg from a discharge or a parasite)
- ▲ rashes
- ▲ itching
- ▲ discharge from the penis or anus
- ▲ loss of appetite or energy.

It's easy to pick up an STI and not know it. (You won't always experience these symptoms and, besides, a lot of STIs don't have obvious symptoms). So if you're sexually active it's a good idea to have regular checkups, every three to six months.

STIs are usually diagnosed from a swab taken from the throat, anus or penis, or using a blood test or urine test. Many are easily treated with antibiotics – sometimes one pill is all you need – while others involve more complicated treatments. If they are not diagnosed, and are left untreated, some STIs can lead



to chronic illness and/or infertility (in you and in your partners). Some STIs – eg. HIV and herpes – are not curable. However, there are treatments available to reduce the impact they have on your life.

For HIV negative people, some STIs make it easier for you to be exposed to HIV. For example, herpes can damage the lining of your penis or anus (arse) meaning the HIV virus has an easy way in to your body.

For people with HIV, other STIs can have serious implications – eg.

- ▲ they can compromise your immune system
- ▲ they can make therapies less effective
- ▲ they can make HIV easier to pass on to your partners
- ▲ they can be harder to treat than in HIV negative people.



COMMON STIs

| NAME | DESCRIPTION | COMMENTS | RISK REDUCTION |
|----------------------------------|---|--|--|
| HIV | Retrovirus that can cause AIDS | Around 85% of all HIV positive people in Australia are gay men. | Safe sex and safe injecting always. This means using condoms for both anal and vaginal sex with partners of a different or unknown HIV status, and/or negotiating with partners of the same status about whether or not to use condoms. For positive couples this requires discussing risk of infection with other HIV strains and STIs; for negative couples this requires a series of discussions and blood tests over time – talk to your local AIDS council for advice. Oral sex is regarded as safe sex as long as ejaculation into the mouth is avoided. Safe injecting means never sharing injecting equipment. |
| NSU (non-specific urethritis) | Infection inside the penis that may be caused by a number of different organisms. Symptoms usually include pain when urinating and soreness /dis-colouration around the eye of the penis. | If untreated can lead to problems with fertility, especially in women. | NSU can be transmitted from the mouth to the penis. Condoms for anal, vaginal and oral sex. |

Remember: while safe sex (and safe injecting) prevent HIV being passed on, there are some STIs that can be passed on even when you use condoms and water-based lube for fucking (anal sex). Most can also be passed on during oral sex.

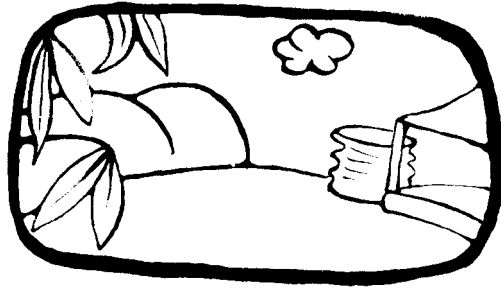


| NAME | DESCRIPTION | COMMENTS | RISK REDUCTION |
|--------------------|--|--|--|
| Hepatitis A | Virus which causes acute hepatitis (liver disease). Symptoms include jaundice, lack of energy, loss of appetite and changes in the colour of urine (piss) and faeces (shit). | Outbreaks amongst gay men are common. Spread by contact with contaminated food, water and utensils. Also by rimming (oral/anal contact). | Get vaccinated. Use barrier (dental dam or glad wrap) for rimming. |
| Hepatitis B | Virus that causes liver disease. It may become a chronic (long-term, persistent) condition. | Outbreaks amongst gay men are common. Spread in similar ways to HIV, though it is transmitted more easily than HIV. | Get vaccinated. Safe sex reduces the risk of Hepatitis B transmission as the virus is present in bodily fluids, including semen, of an infected person. Hepatitis B can also be transmitted via saliva therefore kissing should be avoided with an infected partner. |
| Hepatitis C | Virus that causes liver disease. It is more likely than Hep B to become a chronic (long-term, persistent) condition. | Spread through blood to blood contact – eg. through sharing injecting equipment. Is a hardy virus making transmission a lot easier than HIV. Hep C infection is widespread in Australia. | No vaccine is available. Stop transmission by never sharing any injecting equipment – fits, spoons, water, tourniquets etc, and other equipment that may have blood on it – razors, toothbrushes etc. Condoms for anal sex are also advised if there is bleeding. |



| NAME | DESCRIPTION | COMMENTS | RISK REDUCTION |
|---------------------------------|--|---|---|
| Herpes | 'The coldsore virus'. Virus that lives in the affected nerve and may cause outbreaks of painful sores, eg. on the penis. Sores may come and go. | Very common amongst sexually active Australians, including gay men. | Avoid contact with sores. Safe sex doesn't necessarily protect against transmission. |
| Syphilis | Bacteria that can cause three stages of infection over time. The first is characterised by a chancre (sore) usually in the genital region. | | Use condoms for anal/vaginal intercourse. Early detection and treatment is important. |
| Gonorrhoea | A common bacterial STI that can occur in the throat, penis or anus and sometimes, but not always, causes itching, pain when urinating and/or a discharge from penis and/or anus. | Fairly common amongst gay men. Regular screening is recommended for those who are sexually active. | Condoms reduce the risk of transmitting gonorrhoea during anal or oral sex. Early detection and treatment is important. Gonorrhoea can increase the risk of HIV transmission. |
| Genital/Anal Warts | Warts that can occur in the anus, vagina or genital area. Caused by a family of viruses – the Human Papilloma Viruses (HPV). | Associated with anal and vaginal cancer. Warts are quite common amongst gay men. | Avoid contact. Condoms do not eliminate transmission risk. |
| Crabs/Lice & Scabies | Annoying parasites that cause itching. Crabs like hairy parts of the body. Scabies burrow under the skin and may leave marks like cat scratches. | Very common – especially in warmer months. Can be passed on through body contact, but also from clothing, toilet seats, soap etc. | Avoid direct contact with anyone who has them, or with their personal items like clothing. Always have a supply of treatment lotion (eg. Quellada, or Lyban) in your bathroom cabinet and travel bag. |





Home Is Where The Heart Is

While being away from home can be liberating and provides great opportunities to explore your sexuality, what you do on holiday can have a lasting impact on your life and relationships back home. Even picking up a simple dose of crabs might mean there's some explaining to do with your boyfriend.

Alternatively, you might have semi-regular sex with someone in the city – 'whenever you're in town' – a fuck buddy or an ex-boyfriend, for example. In between visits, things might change for you, for him, or for both of you. For example, he might have been single last time you saw him; next time he might be in a

committed relationship. He might have been HIV negative before but has since had unsafe sex or has seroconverted. These kinds of things will have an effect on your emotional state, on the issues you have to face, and on the kind of sex you have.

Whatever state you're in, look after your physical, emotional and sexual health – and that of your partners – as best you can. Enjoy yourself – at home or away – and come back for more.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS:

AIDS: Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. AIDS is characterised by a number of illnesses and infections which can lead to death. AIDS only affects HIV positive people and usually in advanced stages of infection. (People whose immune systems aren't compromised may experience many of these infections without serious illness.)

Beat: Any public place where men seek out one another, usually for sexual contact – eg. public toilets, parks.

Compliance: Taking medicines according to how they are prescribed (eg. with food, at certain times of the day etc). Also called 'adherence' or 'concordance'.

Cruise/cruising: searching for and communicating your willingness to have sex with someone, eg. through eye contact, body language etc.

Discharge: secretion/fluid flowing from the penis, vagina or anus (arse) – sometimes appears like pus.

Fits: widely used term for needles and syringes.



HIV: Human Immunodeficiency Virus. HIV Infection can damage the immune system and can lead to AIDS.

Infertility: the inability to conceive children, eg. due to low sperm count.

Jaundice: yellowing of the eyes and/or skin, commonly associated with inflammation of the liver (hepatitis).

Rimming: oral/anal contact also known as arse licking.

Seroconvert: after HIV has been transmitted to someone it can take time (days, weeks) before that person's blood cells become hosts to the virus. This point is known as seroconversion and may be accompanied by illness (eg. flu-like symptoms or a rash). Before seroconverting, a person having an HIV test will return a negative result.

STI/STIs: sexually transmitted infection/s. Any of a number of bacterial, viral or parasitic infections passed on during sexual contact. Also known as sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) or venereal disease (VD).



Useful Contacts

We trust this booklet has given you some helpful information and food for thought. The final pages list organisations you can contact for further information and assistance. There's also a list of other pamphlets you may wish to order from your AIDS Council.

Free gay/lesbian newspapers and newsletters are produced in most capital cities. Most have extensive listings of useful services. You can subscribe to many of them and have them mailed to you. Many of the organisations listed here also produce regular publications, which you can subscribe to.

Telephone numbers that begin with **1800** are free calls from anywhere within that state/territory.

Young People's Services

OUTLINK (National network of young rural gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people):
web: <http://outlink.trump.net.au>
tel: (03) 6224 3556

AFAO (Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations) - Young Gay/Bi Men's Campaign:
web: www.afao.org.au/gayguys



Also, all of the services listed below are able to provide quality services to young people. In particular, AIDS Councils usually have staff and/or projects dedicated to young gay and bisexual guys.

Community Based Organisations Working in HIV/AIDS:

AFAO (Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations):

web: www.afao.org.au

This website has links to most AIDS Councils in Australia, and their branches. It also has links to the national organisations of people living with HIV/AIDS groups, of sex worker rights groups, and of injecting drug users groups.

AIDS Councils Education and support services for people living with and/or affected by HIV/AIDS. AIDS Councils work closely with gay communities and have information relevant to you, including health information, legal information and information about social and support groups in your area. Some have staff and/or branches dedicated to rural and regional work.

Go to your local AIDS Council's website by visiting www.afao.org.au and following the relevant links.



AACACT

AIDS Action Council of ACT
tel: (02) 6257 2855

WAAC

Western Australian AIDS Council
tel: (08) 9429 9900

ACOCA

AIDS Council of Central Australia
tel: (08) 8953 1118
1800 624 794

ACON

AIDS Council of NSW

ACON Sydney
tel: (02) 9206 2000
1800 063 060

ACON Western Sydney
tel: (02) 9204 2400

ACON Hunter
tel: (02) 4927 6808

ACON Illawarra
tel: (02) 4226 1163

ACON Northern Rivers
tel: (02) 6622 1555
1800 633 637

ACON Mid North Coast
tel: (02) 6584 0943
1300 658 878

TASCARD

*Tasmanian Council on AIDS
and Related Diseases*

tel: (03) 6234 1242
infoline: 1800 005 900

NTAC

Northern Territory AIDS Council
tel: (08) 8941 1711
Mensline: 1800 181 888

QuAC

Queensland AIDS Council

QuAC (Brisbane)
tel: (07) 3017 1777
1800 177 434

QuAC Cairns
tel: (07) 4051 1028

QuAC Townsville
tel: (07) 4721 1384

QuAC Gold Coast
tel: (07) 5575 6966

QuAC Sunshine Coast:
tel: (07) 5441 1222

ACSA

AIDS Council of South Australia

tel: (08) 8362 1611
Country Men's Project
1800 671 582

VAC/GMHC

*Victorian AIDS Council/Gay
Men's Health Centre*

tel: (03) 9865 6700
1800 134 840

Also, Country AIDS

Network (Victoria)
tel: (03) 5443 8355

PLWHA groups

(Information, support and
advocacy for people living
with HIV/AIDS):

Friends NT call
NT AIDS Council:
(08) 8941 1711, or
mobile: 0417 083 887

PLWHA (WA)

tel: (08) 9429 9900

PLWHA (SA)

tel: (08) 8293 3700

PLWHA (Vic)

tel: (03) 9865 6772

PLWHA (ACT)

email:
aidsact@webone.com.au

PLWHA (NSW)

tel: (02) 9361 6011

Also, Blue Mountains
(02) 4787 5550

In Tasmania, call the Care
and Support Officer,

TASCARD (*Tasmanian
Council on AIDS and Related
Diseases*)

tel: (03) 6234 1242

**QPP (Queensland
Positive People)**

QPP (Brisbane)
tel: (07) 3846 3939
1800 177 434

QPP Cairns
tel: (07) 4041 3061

QPP Townsville
tel: (07) 4721 5003

QPP Gold Coast
tel: (07) 5575 6966

QPP Sunshine Coast
tel: (07) 5441 1222

QPP Mackay
tel: (07) 4953 5071

QPP Rockhampton
tel: (07) 4926 6690



Sexual Health Services:

Find the nearest Sexual Health Centre or Community Health Centre in the White Pages.

Telephone Counselling Services

Information, counselling and support for gays and lesbians. These services know of social and support groups in country, regional, and metropolitan areas.:

Mensline (NT)

(info, support and referrals for gay and bi guys in NT)
tel: 1800 181 888

Gay and Lesbian Counselling Service of WA

tel: (08) 9486 9855

Gay and Bisexual Support and Information Line (Tas)

tel: 1800 633 900

Counselling Service of SA

tel: (08) 8362 3223
email: glcssa@glcssa.org.au

Gay and Lesbian Counselling Service of NSW

tel: (02) 9206 2888
1800 805 379

email: glcs@bigpond.com

Gay and Lesbian Switchboard (Vic)

tel: (03) 9510 5488
1800 631 493

email: glswitch@vicnet.net.au

GLWA Gay & Lesbian Welfare Association (Qld)

tel: (07) 3891 7377
1800 249 377



Dealing with violence:

NSW: Lesbian & Gay Anti-Violence Project (AVP)

tel: (02) 9360 6687
1800 637 360

web: www.kbdnet.net.au/avp
email: avp@kbdnet.net.au

NSW Police Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officers (GLLO's)

tel: (02) 9281 0000

web: www.eagles.com.au/~gllos

Outside NSW, call the relevant telephone counselling service or AIDS council listed above, or contact your nearest Community Legal Centre (listed in the White Pages).

Issues relating to legal matters:

AIDS Councils (listed above) can provide information relating to issues such as:

- ▲ age of consent
- ▲ public health/HIV transmission
- ▲ international travel
- ▲ injecting drug use/needle exchange
- ▲ health care complaints
- ▲ sex industry laws.



They can also refer you to the local sex workers' rights organisation, injecting drug users' organisation, or other services as required.

You can also contact your nearest community legal centre (listed in the White Pages).

Information on travel for HIV positive people can also be found by visiting the Aegis website:

www.aegis.com

Useful Print Resources

(contact your local AIDS Council to order a copy)

Home and Away: Overseas travel guide for gay men

HIV Tests and Treatments

Talking, Testing, Testing, Trusting

Out There

HIV+ Gay Sex

Do Choose Enjoy

HIV/AIDS and Your Rights

PLWHA (NSW) Travel Guide

ACON Sex On Premises Venues Guide

Visit the AFAO website: www.afao.org.au for additional listings.



Written and Produced by:

Keith Gilbert (tel: 0417 696 630)
on behalf of the Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations (AFAO) and National Association of People with HIV/AIDS (NAPWA) Education Team (ANET).

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Sue Wicks (0413 711 452)
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Layout/Design:

Karen Vance (krvt3@bigpond.com)

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Gay men in rural and regional Australia:
The health and safety of you and your
partner/s could depend on
The States You're In.

ISBN 1 876469 13 7



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