Owner's Manual

The Gay Men's Sexual Health
Gay pride is not only about being proud of your sexual orientation, it's about being proud of everything that makes you, "YOU". This booklet is designed to provide you with tips on how to stay on top of your sexual health.

Do You Have a Healthcare Provider?
It's a good idea to see a healthcare provider regularly. If you're over 40, you should consider going at least once a year. If you're HIV positive, you should consider seeing a healthcare provider on a regular schedule, typically every three months. If you don't have health insurance, contact a community health clinic for help.

Selecting and Coming Out to a Healthcare Provider.
You may decide you want a healthcare provider who's gay (or gay-friendly). Ask your medical group or health organization if they have a list of gay or gay-friendly healthcare providers. The Gay and Lesbian Medical Association also has a list of providers at www.glma.org.

Coming out to your healthcare provider gives you the opportunity to have an open and honest discussion about ways to improve your health. Healthcare providers are required to keep your information private, so tell them about yourself so they can best serve you.

Let's Talk About Sex
There are many things to consider to maintain your sexual health.

Anal Sex - Having anal sex without a condom is the easiest way to spread HIV. If you're negative, bottoming without a condom is the easiest way to get HIV. If you're positive, topping without a condom is the easiest way to spread HIV. Knowing and sharing your status and encouraging your partner to do the same is important. Aside from HIV, you can also get many STDs, some even if you use a condom.

Oral Sex - It's really difficult to say exactly how safe oral sex is in terms of spreading HIV, but research shows that it's low risk. While oral sex may be lower risk for HIV, there is still risk of getting one of many STDs, including chlamydia, gonorrhea, hepatitis, herpes, parasites, and syphilis.

Rimming - The risk for spreading HIV from rimming is very low. However, rimming can put you at risk for giving and getting STDs, including chlamydia, gonorrhea, hepatitis A, herpes, intestinal parasites and shigella.
HIV & STDs

There are two main types of STDs, those caused by bacteria and those caused by viruses. Bacterial STDs are often cured with antibiotics. Viral STDs have no cure. However, many of their symptoms can be treated. You can also come in contact with parasites (crabs/pubic lice and scabies), which can be cured with topical creams/lotions. STDs can cause symptoms but sometimes do not, so you might not know whether you have an STD unless you get tested.

Viral STDs

Hepatitis - Hepatitis A, B, and C are liver infections caused by different viruses. Symptoms may include fatigue, poor appetite, fever, nausea, vomiting, and jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes), and are potentially very serious. Hepatitis can be transmitted sexually. There are vaccines for hepatitis A and B.

Herpes - Herpes is a very common viral infection that causes itching, tingling, redness, pain, blisters, and ulcers, usually around the penis, anus, and mouth. Herpes is transmitted by skin-to-skin contact, so avoid the area of an outbreak on a partner who has herpes. Condoms reduce risk, but do not eliminate it. It's possible to spread herpes even if sores are not present. Talk to your healthcare provider about managing outbreaks and treatments to suppress the virus. Suppressing the virus can reduce the chance of getting an outbreak or passing herpes to your partner.

HIV - HIV is the virus that causes AIDS. Having anal sex, specifically bottoming without a condom is the most common way to get HIV. However, both tops and bottoms can get it. Aside from not having sex, using a condom and lots of lubricant is an important way to prevent getting infected with HIV. There is no cure, but there are a number of treatments which have improved the health of people living with HIV/AIDS. Keep in mind that they don’t work for everyone, nor can everyone tolerate the side effect.

Bacterial STDs

Chlamydia - Chlamydia is caused by a bacterial infection in the penis, anus, or throat. You may or may not have symptoms, which include a clear or white drip from the penis/anus or a burning feeling when urinating. Condoms help reduce risk of transmission.

Gonorrhea - Gonorrhea is a bacterial infection that may or may not cause symptoms: burning when urinating, thick discharge (puss) from the penis or anus, a sore throat, or pain during bowel movements. You may also carry it and not know it. The bacteria can be passed by oral and anal sex. Condoms can help reduce risk of transmission.

Shigella - Shigella is caused by a bacterial infection and acquired by being exposed to feces for example, by rimming. Its symptoms include stomach cramps, bloody diarrhea, and fever. Shigella is present in feces and you can get it even if your partner looks clean. It can help to wash with soap and water before and after sex.

Syphilis - Syphilis has become more common in the gay and bi community. It can cause a painless sores on the penis or in the mouth or anus, which goes away and later becomes a body rash, often on the palms of the hands, soles of the feet and the chest or back. Syphilis is transmitted through direct physical contact with the sore or rash. Condoms can help reduce, but do not eliminate risk.

Parasites

Parasites - Parasites, such as giardia and amoeba, can cause upset stomach and diarrhea with bleeding. Exposure to feces (poop) through rimming is a common way to be exposed.

Warts - Warts are typically visible, painless bumps on the penis or around the anus or mouth. Certain viruses cause warts or bumps so small you can’t see them; others are visible and painless. Warts are transmitted through skin-to-skin contact and are very common. Using condoms reduces, but doesn’t eliminate risk. Mention any bumps you or your partner notice to your healthcare provider.
Getting Checked

If you’re sexually active, it’s important to get tested for STDs. If you’re HIV negative or don’t know your status, getting tested for STDs regularly might reduce your risk of getting HIV. If you’re HIV positive, having other STDs can increase your viral load, which can increase your chances of spreading HIV.

Tests To Consider Getting Every 3 - 6 Months:
• HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus), if you are unaware of your HIV status
• Syphilis
• Gonorrhea (your throat, anus, penis)
• Chlamydia (your throat, anus, penis)

Consider Discussing These Tests With Your Doctor:
• Hepatitis B
• Hepatitis C
• Anal cancer, if you are HIV positive

Consider Getting These Vaccines:
• Hepatitis A
• Hepatitis B

Vaccination schedule for hepatitis B:
- First Shot – Anytime
- Second Shot – At least one month after the first dose
- Third Shot – At least 6 months after the first dose

Consider Signing Up for Testing Reminders:
Sign up at www.WeAllTest.com to get emails or text messages every 3 - 6 months to remind you to get tested.

Drugs and Alcohol

It’s easier to do things outside of your comfort zone when you’ve had too much to drink or high on drugs. If your life becomes unmanageable, you might want to consider discussing your drug and alcohol use with your healthcare providers or contact one of the agencies listed below.

Family Health Centers of San Diego
Risk reduction counseling, testing and treatment (specializing in Gay Men & Transgender services)
3544 30th St, San Diego, Ca 92104
(619) 515-2449

LGBT Outpatient Alcohol & Substance Use Treatment Program
Orientations every Tuesday at 10am
4040 30th Street, San Diego, CA 92104
(619) 876-4463

The LGBT Center
Counseling and therapy for the LGBT community members
3909 Centre St, San Diego, CA 9210
(619) 692-2077

County of San Diego Alcohol and Drug Services
Drug prevention, interventions, treatment, and recovery services
(888) 724-7240
Listed in this section are some common drugs and their associated risks.

**Alcohol** - Alcohol is the most commonly used and abused drug. It’s very easy to forget to use a condom when you’ve been drinking. Heavy drinking can cause permanent damage to your brain, heart, and liver.

**Cocaine** - Cocaine can lead to risky sex and can be very addictive. When snorted or injected, cocaine can seriously damage the heart or cause a stroke.

**Crystal Methamphetamine (Meth)** - Crystal use is still very much a part of the gay community. Its use is directly tied to an increase in STD and HIV infections. It’s difficult to make good decisions about sexual risk while you’re using meth. Repeated use can cause permanent damage to the brain and the comedown “crash” can leave you severely depressed for many days. Injecting meth may result in additional risk if you are sharing needles/equipment.

**Ecstasy (X)** - Like meth, ecstasy can cause brain damage, and it causes the same crash when you come down off the drug. It can lower inhibitions and put you at risk for unsafe sex.

**GHB** - It’s hard to determine how much is too much when using GHB. If you take the wrong amount you could put yourself at risk for an overdose. In addition, GHB should never be taken when drinking alcohol. The combination of the two drugs may cause you to stop breathing.

**Heroin** - Heroin is not frequently used during sex because it often makes the user sleepy and makes it difficult to ejaculate. Heroin is extremely addictive and fatal overdoses are not unusual. Injecting heroin offers additional risk if you are sharing needles/equipment.

**Ketamine (K)** - The risk of overdosing is very high; too much and you won’t be able to function, sexually or otherwise.

**Marijuana** - It’s hard to think straight when you’re high. When you smoke marijuana, you may be less inhibited and have more risky sex.

**Poppers (amyl nitrates)** - Scientists have shown that poppers can depress the immune system and make it easier to get HIV. Using poppers with drugs such as Viagra may drop your blood pressure and cause strokes or heart attacks.

**HIV Medications and Drugs**

HIV medications can increase the potency of many other drugs to dangerous levels. Using drugs while taking HIV medications increases your risk of overdose. Make sure you don’t miss a dose of your HIV medication.
HIV/STD Testing in San Diego

**HIV/STD Testing in North County San Diego**

**North Coastal Public Health Center**
104 South Barnes St, Oceanside, CA 92054
(760) 967-4401
Wednesday: 12:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

**Vista Community Clinic**
1000 Vale Terrace, Vista, CA 92084
(760) 631-5000 x 7777
Monday - Thursday 9:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Friday 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Saturday 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

**HIV/STD Testing in Central San Diego**

**County Health Services Complex**
3851 Rosecrans St, San Diego, CA 92110
(619) 692-8550
Monday, Tuesday, Friday: 7:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Wednesday: 11:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.
Thursday: 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

**Central Region Public Health Center**
5202 University Ave, San Diego, CA 92105
(619) 229-5400
Tuesday: 1:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.
Friday: 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

**Family Health Centers of San Diego**

**Tuesday/Thursday Night Clinic (TNC2)**
3544 30th St, San Diego, CA 92104
(619) 515-2449
Tuesdays and Thursdays: 5:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

**San Ysidro Health Center - Our Place**
286 Euclid Avenue, Suite 309, San Diego, CA 92114
(619) 527-7390
Monday - Friday: 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

**HIV/STD Testing in South San Diego**

**South Region Public Health Center**
690 Oxford St, Chula Vista, CA 91911
(619) 409-3110
Thursday: 12:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

**San Ysidro Health Center - Main Clinic**
4004 Beyer Blvd., San Diego, CA 92173
(619) 662-4161
Monday, Wednesday, Friday: 9:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

**County Mobile Unit HIV Testing Location**

**San Diego LGBT Community Center**
3909 Center St, San Diego, CA 92103
(619) 692-2077
Monday and Wednesday: 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

For more information, please visit [www.STDSanDiego.org](http://www.STDSanDiego.org)

For more information on HIV Mobile Testing locations, call 619-296-2120.

**HIV Education and Prevention Services**

These organizations provide services to help you reduce your risk of getting or giving HIV and improve your overall health. They also offer information, support and assist in telling your partner about your HIV status.

**Vista Community Clinic**
Services in the North Coastal and North Inland Regions
1000 Vale Terrace, Vista, CA 92084
(760) 631-5000 x 7000
[www.vistacommunityclinic.org](http://www.vistacommunityclinic.org)
[www.ncsdconnection.com](http://www.ncsdconnection.com)

**Family Health Centers of San Diego**
Services in Central, North Central and East Regions
4040 30th St., San Diego, CA 92104
(619) 515-2446
[www.fhcsd.org](http://www.fhcsd.org)
[www.gaymenshealth.org](http://www.gaymenshealth.org)

**San Ysidro Health Center - CASA**
Services in the South / Central Region
3045 Beyer Blvd., Ste. D101, San Ysidro, CA 92173
(619) 662-4161
[www.syhc.org](http://www.syhc.org)
[www.casasouthbay.com](http://www.casasouthbay.com)
Partner Services
A free and confidential service that provides a safe way for HIV positive people to tell their sexual or needle-sharing partners that they may have been exposed to HIV.
call 619-692-8501 or visit www.KnowAndDisclose.com

My Online Sexual Health Assessment
An interactive online resource that assesses your sexual risk and provides useful tips on keeping yourself and your community healthy.
www.MyOnlineSexualHealth.com

WeAllTest
A system that allows you to sign up for text and/or e-mailreminders to get tested regularly.
www.WeAllTest.com

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention
Provides up to date information on a variety of health issues.
www.cdc.gov/hiv or www.cdc.gov/std

The Body
Comprehensive health information focusing on HIV positive individuals.
http://www.thebody.com/content/art2282.html