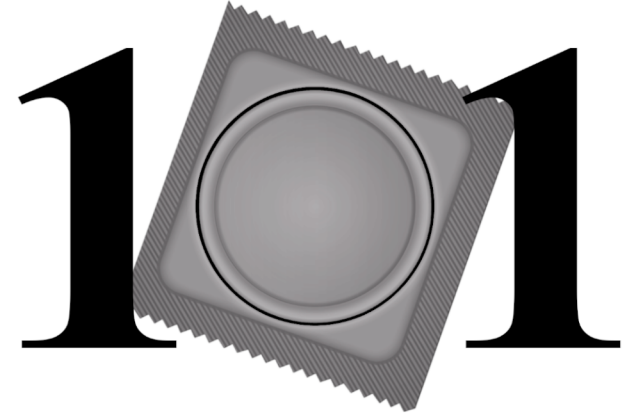


SAFER SEX



BY KIM ADAMSKI

Note: This zine is the absolute basics of sex education. There are SO many topics that fall under comprehensive sex ed, from abortion, to racism in reproductive care, to sexual abuse and rape prevention, to fertility, and more.

It's impossible to cover everything in a single zine!

This zine is open to updates and criticisms, so please don't hesitate to DM Kim at @smalltdgothgf with questions or comments.

OTHER RESOURCES!

scarleteen.org

plannedparenthood.org

sexetc.org

goaskalice.columbia.edu

Trans Bodies, Trans Selves by Laura Erickson-Schroth

The Every Body Book by Rachel E. Simon

THANKS FOR READING!

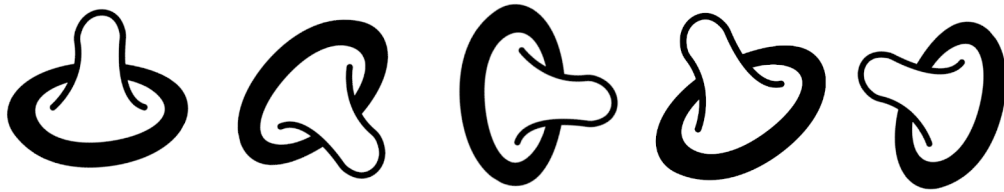
Share what you learned with a friend!

Did you receive sex ed in school? No? Yes? If you did - was it inclusive? realistic? comprehensive? accurate?

Sex education in the United States is at best, basic, and at worst, nonexistent (or sexist and shaming). Puritanical ideas held over from hundreds of years ago linger even today. We've all heard the horrifying stories - women's sexuality compared to candies that have fallen on a dirty floor; men considered nothing more than hedonistic animals with no self control; LGBTQ+ folks ignored, or worse, demonized as degenerates. This is NOT a good environment to foster healthy sexual development and attitudes. Many people carry these negative attitudes into adulthood, whether we realize or not.

This zine is written by a sex educator and aims to give you accurate, inclusive information on some basic safer sex strategies, without judgment.

WHAT IS SAFER SEX?



Safer sex is anything you do during sexual activity to lower your risk of STDs (and pregnancy, if that applies to you).

A lot of people think of safer sex as just condoms but there are a lot of ways to lower your risk, with different pros and cons.

It's important to learn about all your options when it comes to personal safety so that you can choose which, if any, might work for you.

You can also experiment with different ways to stay safe. This zine will list the pros and cons of each so that you can make an informed decision on risk, accessibility, and what works for you.

A WORD ON CONSENT

WHAT IS CONSENT?

Consent is
AFFIRMATIVE, INFORMED, AND ENTHUSIASTIC.
What does that mean?

Affirmative: there is a clearly stated YES. This is usually in the form of a verbal "yes," or other clear agreement (i.e. hell yeah, let's fuck, I'd love to, etc). There is also such a thing as nonverbal consent, through body language; this is best reserved for ongoing relationships in which all parties know each other well enough to interpret the others' body language. Verbal consent is the clearest way to get and give consent.

Informed: All parties are aware of exactly what they are consenting to. Things like condom use, what acts are OK, and boundaries should be communicated. Checking in is the best way to make sure boundaries aren't being violated. For example, if a person consents to oral sex, that doesn't necessarily mean they want to have vaginal sex as well. Before starting a different sexual act, ask. "Can I go down on you?" "is this OK?" and "Can we keep going?" are all great ways to check in to see how your partner(s) is/are doing.

Enthusiastic: Everyone involved not only says "yes" but they mean it. Saying "yes" after being asked repeatedly and badgered is NOT enthusiastic consent. Not saying "no" is not consent. "I guess," "I'm not sure," or "fine if you really want to" are not enthusiastic consent.

SYPHILIS - This STD is less common but increasing in the US. It has three stages - the first is a painless sore called a chancre, the second is a rash, and the third can lead to organ and brain damage. It can be cured at any stage with antibiotics, but the earlier the better because treatment cannot fix organ or brain damage from the infection.

HERPES - 1 in 6 Americans have herpes, which is a virus that can cause genital warts. Not everyone gets symptoms, and some folks get symptoms so mildly that they don't notice; others can have larger, uncomfortable outbreaks of warts. Herpes is not curable, but can be treated, and has no long-term health effects besides the risk of outbreaks. It's still a good idea to avoid transmitting it by using condoms and dental dams.

HIV - HIV was considered a death sentence at one time, but now most people with HIV live long health lives with the help of medications. However, it is still a chronic disease that can lead to complications, so it's very important to protect yourself against it. Condoms work well for this, as well as a medication called PrEP. Getting tested regularly can help you get treatment immediately if you do contract the virus, and protect your partner(s).

TERMS TO KNOW

First and foremost: it's important to note that "sex" can refer to any kind of sexual activities. Many people think of sex as only when a penis enters a vagina, but that isn't the case. What "counts" as sex can be subjective. Some people may consider kissing to be sex; some people feel that anal sex isn't sex. For the purpose of this zine, any activity where sexual fluids (semen, vaginal secretions, anal fluid) are exchanged.

Penetrative sex: When a penis or sex toy is put inside another person, like in their vagina, butt, or mouth.

Perfect use: How effective a safer sex method is when used correctly and consistently every single time.

Average use: How effective a safer sex method is on average when used in the real world by real people.

Sexually active: if you are doing anything where someone's body fluids (i.e. semen, vaginal secretions, etc) come into contact with any part of your body. Some sexual activities have more risk than others.

CONDOMS

Can't hurt to start with the basics. Condoms are a latex (or sometimes polyurethane, another type of plastic) that covers the penis, or a sex toy, during penetrative sex (sex in the vagina, butt, or mouth). They also prevent pregnancy.

Perfect use: 98% effective. **Average use:** 85%.

Pros: Easy to get; cheap or free; prevents pregnancy and STDs; no side effects; no prescription needed; can be used with birth control to make it more effective.

Cons: Can change the sensation; you have to remember them.

DENTAL DAMS

A dental dam is a thin sheet of latex used as a barrier between the mouth and the vagina or anus during oral sex. You can buy dental dams at adult stores, or you can use a sheet of plastic wrap. You can put lube on either or both sides - flavored is great here!

Pros: easy to use, easy to get if you use plastic wrap.

Cons: not everyone likes how they feel.

COMMON STD'S

STD'S ARE ON THE RISE!

note: this list is NOT comprehensive, but covers the most common STD's in the United States.

HPV the most common STD in the U.S. Most cases go away on their own and don't have symptoms. Some strains can cause genital warts and sometimes cancers. Condoms and the Gardasil vaccine can prevent HPV; regular Pap testing can catch pre-cancer and cancer early and save your life.

CHLAMYDIA - another very common STD, and the most common bacterial STD. It can be treated with antibiotics, and prevented by using condoms. Symptoms can include burning when peeing, unusual discharge from the penis or vagina, and pain in the testicles or during intercourse. Not everyone gets symptoms.

GONORRHEA - Most people who get gonorrhea don't get symptoms, but if it's not treated it can eventually lead to major health problems. It can be prevented by using condoms; treatment can be complicated because some strains are antibiotic resistant.

GETTING TESTED

If you're sexually active, it's a good idea to get an STD test every 6-12 months for most people. You should also get tested if you think you've been exposed to an STD or have symptoms.

STD testing normally checks for chlamydia, syphilis, gonorrhea, and HIV, using a urine test and blood test. It's a good idea to get a Pap test if you have a cervix. If you're having oral or anal sex, be sure to get throat and anal swabs. You can usually request to get tested for herpes and hepatitis as well.

You can get tested for STDs at most departments of health, sexual health clinics like Planned Parenthood, LGBTQ+ health centers, or through lab orders from your primary physician. Be sure to ask about what insurance they take before you go if you have insurance, or how much it costs if you do not.

Folks who are in a trusting, closed relationship where everyone's been tested often choose not to get tested regularly. As long as there is no sex outside the closed relationship, there is no risk of STD transmission.

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INTERNAL CONDOMS

There's a good chance you haven't heard of these, or if you have, you aren't quite sure what they are. Internal condoms (also called female condoms, but they can be used by any gender) are worn **INSIDE** the vagina or anus during penetrative sex. They are available by prescription, but many clinics have them available for free as well. Internal condoms prevent STDs and pregnancy.

Perfect use: 95% effective. **Average use:** 79%.

Pros: Safe if you have a latex allergy; can be inserted 8 hours before sex

Cons: Harder to get; can be more expensive; may change how sex feels.

STILL CONFUSED?

Check out the how-to
on the next page.

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USING AN INTERNAL CONDOM



Carefully open and remove internal condom from package to prevent tearing.



The thick, inner ring with closed end is used for placing in the vagina and holds condom in place. The thin, outer ring remains outside of body, covering vaginal opening.



Find a comfortable position. While holding outside of condom at closed end, squeeze sides of inner ring together with your thumb and forefinger and insert into vagina. It is similar to inserting a tampon.



Using your finger, push inner ring as far up as it will go until it rests against cervix. The condom will expand naturally and you may not feel it.



Be sure condom is not twisted. The thin, outer ring should remain outside vagina.



Guide partner's penis into opening of condom. Stop intercourse if you feel penis slip between condom and walls of vagina or if outer ring is pushed into vagina.



To remove, gently twist outer ring and pull condom out of vagina.



Throw away condom in trash after using it one time. Do not reuse.

Because the FDA has only approved the internal condom for use in the vagina, the official instructions (above) only mention vaginal use, but the condom can ALSO be used anally by removing the inner ring and inserting just as you would put it in the vagina. Just like with external condoms, the internal condom can also be used with sex toys.

PREP AND PEP

PrEP and PEP are relatively new medications that prevent HIV. PEP stands for post-exposure prophylaxis, which means you take it AFTER you're exposed to HIV (for example, broken condom or needle stick) to keep you from getting it. PrEP stands for PRE-exposure prophylaxis, which means you take it daily to prevent getting HIV. It can reduce your chance of getting HIV through sex by over 90%, and it's even more effective paired with condoms.

Pros: covered by insurance, very effective.

Cons: some people experience side effects, have to get regular blood tests, by prescription, ONLY prevents HIV (not other STDs).

STD TESTING

STD testing can't PREVENT STD's, but it can tell you if you have an STD so you can get treated. Getting treated is important to avoid giving it to a partner and protect your body from being damaged by the STD. Not everyone gets symptoms, which is why you should get tested every 6-12 months if you're sexually active, or when you have a new partner, have symptoms, or think you may have been exposed. If you're having oral or anal sex, make sure you get throat/anal swabs at your test.