Sexual health for men
We enjoy sex and feel good about our relationships most of the time, but at some point in our life we may find ourselves facing difficulties or problems about our sexual health. Most men do.

Staying sexually healthy is about dealing with sexual problems as they happen and avoiding problems in the first place.

Please do not ignore any symptoms you may have and hope they will go away. You and your partner may be at risk if you avoid health checks.

This leaflet is full of useful tips on sexual health checks, warning signs to look out for, and where to get more information and advice.

Stay healthy!
1 Your prostate gland produces a fluid which is part of your semen (the liquid which appears when you ejaculate or 'come').

2 Your seminal vesicles are at the back of your prostate gland; they produce the thick milky fluid of your semen.

3 Your vas deferens is the tube that carries sperm from your testicles to your urethra.

4 Your scrotum is the sac that holds your testicles.

5 Your urethra is the tube that carries urine from your bladder, and semen (including sperm) through your penis.

6 Your penis is made up of spongy tissue that fills with blood when you have an erection.

7 Your foreskin covers your glans and can be pulled back for cleaning; this is removed if you are circumcised.

8 Your glans is the helmet-shaped head of your penis.

9 Your epididymis is the area where sperm are stored in your testicles.

10 Your testicles produce sperm and your sex hormone testosterone.

It's important to wash thoroughly around your genitals, your anus and pubic hair daily. Clean the area behind the foreskin, if you haven't been circumcised. This helps to prevent infection. Any itching or a smell under the foreskin could be a sign of infection.
Testicular cancer is the most common cancer for men under 35, though it is still rare. If it is found early, you can be treated successfully by surgery, radiation or chemotherapy.

Please carry out the following examination regularly, so that you can spot any slight changes. It's best to do this after a bath or shower, when the scrotum is soft.

- Hold your scrotum in the palm of your hand, and look for changes in the heaviness, shape or size of your testicles. It's normal for one testicle to hang lower than the other.
- Examine each of your testicles, using your hands to roll them between your thumbs and fingers. They should feel smooth.
- Look for any lumps, swellings or hard areas. One lump should be there — the epididymis. It is at the top and back of each of your testicles. You should still look for other lumps.
- Compare each of your testicles with the other. If you find something unusual, you are not likely to find it in both of your testicles, so check if there are any differences between the two.
- Other signs you can watch for are, a dull ache in your abdomen or groin, heaviness in your scrotum or a pain in your testicle.

Cancer isn’t the only cause of lumps and bumps, they could be a sign of cysts. If you notice anything, please get it checked out straight away. You won’t be wasting anybody’s time.

If you are young, prostate problems are rare. However, if you are over 50, the problem becomes more common.

The gland grows around the base of your bladder, and can cause problems when you urinate. In many cases this is caused by Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia (BPH). Sometimes the swelling can be a sign of prostate cancer. If you are worried, please ask your doctor or nurse for advice.

Watch out for:
- problems when you pass urine;
- wanting to urinate more often; and
- blood in your urine, or pain when you pass urine.

If you notice anything, please get it checked out straight away.
What's safer sex?

Enjoy sex

Having safer sex means that you and your partner can enjoy sex and reduce the risk of sexually transmitted infections (including HIV) or unplanned pregnancy.

Safer sex doesn’t allow an infected partner’s blood, semen or fluid from the vagina to get inside the other partner’s body.

To have safer sex, remember the following.

- Always use a condom when you have vaginal or anal sex and consider using one for oral sex.
- Get used to putting on a condom. They can be a part of your foreplay. Please read the instructions on the packet carefully.
- There’s a female condom, which fits inside the vagina. You can get it from most chemists.
- You can enjoy foreplay, and sex without penetration, such as kissing, masturbation, stroking or massage.
- Consider using a condom for oral sex so that you have a barrier between the penis and the mouth. You could try a flavoured or non-lubricated condom.
- When you have oral sex with a woman you can use a dental dam (a thin latex square). If you hold this in place over the genital area, there will be a barrier between the genitals and the mouth. You can get dental dams from some sexual health clinics, chemists and some mail-order agencies. If you want more information, please call the National AIDS Helpline free on 0800 567 123.
- If you are having anal sex, use plenty of water-based lubricant.
- If you are going to share a sex toy such as a dildo or vibrator, put a condom over it. You must wash the sex toy between your activities and put on a new condom for each partner and activity. Please don’t use the same condom for vaginal sex after you have used it in the anal area, as you could pass on bacteria that could cause an infection.

You should plan ahead. In the heat of the moment, it can be very difficult to talk to your partner about safer sex.