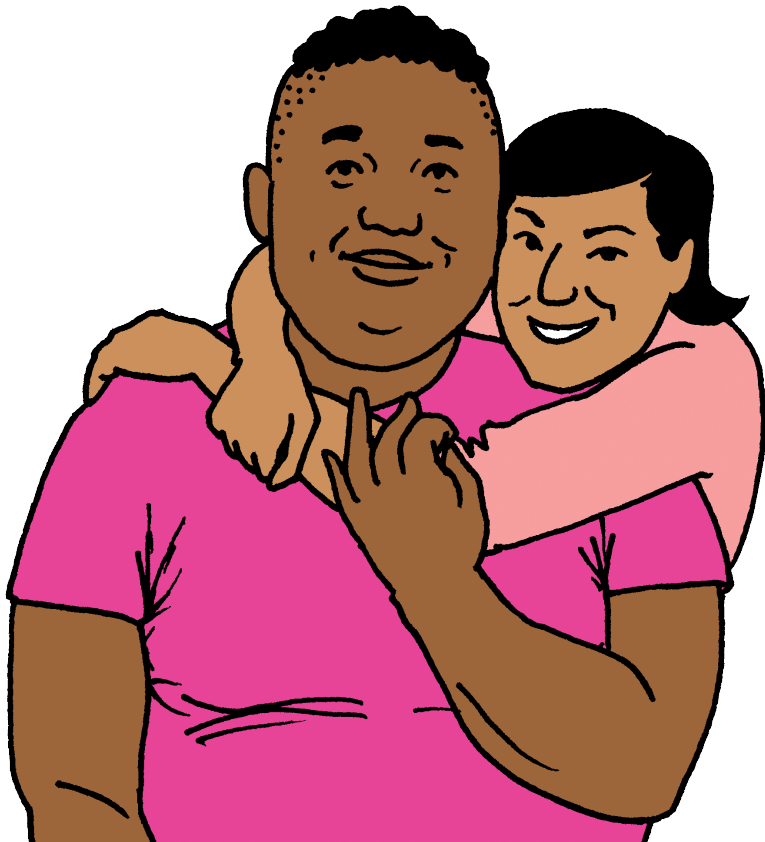


# SEXUAL HEALTH AND RIGHTS IN SWEDEN



Publisher: RFSL  
Layout: Andreas Eriksson  
Illustrations: Bitte Andersson  
Print: Åtta 45  
Stockholm, 2016

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# Introduction

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Sexual health is an important part of most people's lives and you need to know what healthcare services are available, and how you can protect yourself and others from HIV and sexually transmitted diseases (also called STD:s). This brochure is a guide for you who are newly arrived in Sweden and identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans or queer (LGBTQ).

## RFSL

RFSL is the Swedish Federation for LGBTQ Rights. We're a non-governmental organisation with the goal of a society where everyone, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, will have the same rights.

## GLOSSARY

Have a look at the glossary at the end. Words in the text that lean *like this*, can be found there.

# Health care and Sexual Rights in Sweden

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## AGE OF CONSENT

In Sweden, anyone who is 15 years old or older can agree to have sex. This is called *consenting* to sexual acts. There is no law against same sex sexual practises.

## ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

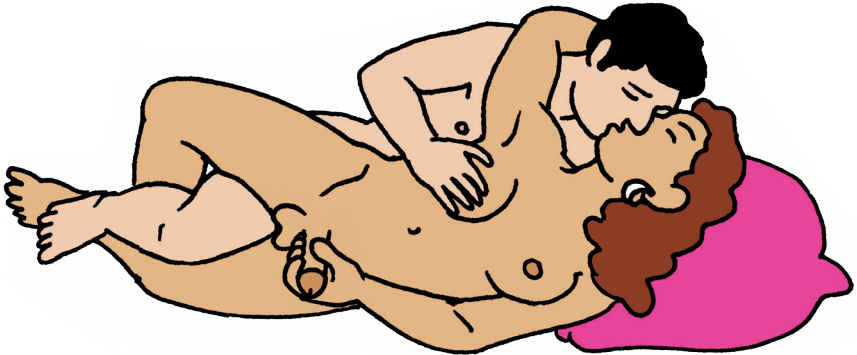
A hospital or healthcare centre (Vårdcentral) can help with most things regarding health, or help you get in touch with someone that can.

Those who are 25 years or younger can visit a youth guidance centre (Ungdomsmottagning) for guidance on sexual health, free condoms, *contraception*, questions about gender and other forms of counselling. In the larger cities there are clinics that specialize in sexual health for adults.

## GET TESTED

You can get tested for HIV and STD:s at any healthcare centre in Sweden. You have the right to an interpreter at no cost when you visit any healthcare centre.

As an asylum seeker or undocumented migrant, you can get emergency healthcare. This costs around 200 SEK. Testing and treatment for HIV and other STD:s, abortion and pregnancy care is always free of charge. All children under the age of 18 have the right to full health and dental care.



## FREE HEALTH CHECK-UP FOR NEWLY ARRIVED

The healthcare system offers a free general health check-up to all asylum seekers, refugees and people who come to Sweden to live with a close relative. You will get a letter with a time and a place for the health check-up. Those who come to Sweden without register-

ing at the Migration Agency might have to contact a clinic on their own to get a check-up.

The health check-up is voluntary. During the check-up the doctor will talk about your health, take a blood test and maybe examine your body. You can ask for a doctor of a specific gender.

### DECLINING THE CHECK-UP

You can decline the check-up or parts of it. It will not affect your possibility to stay in Sweden.

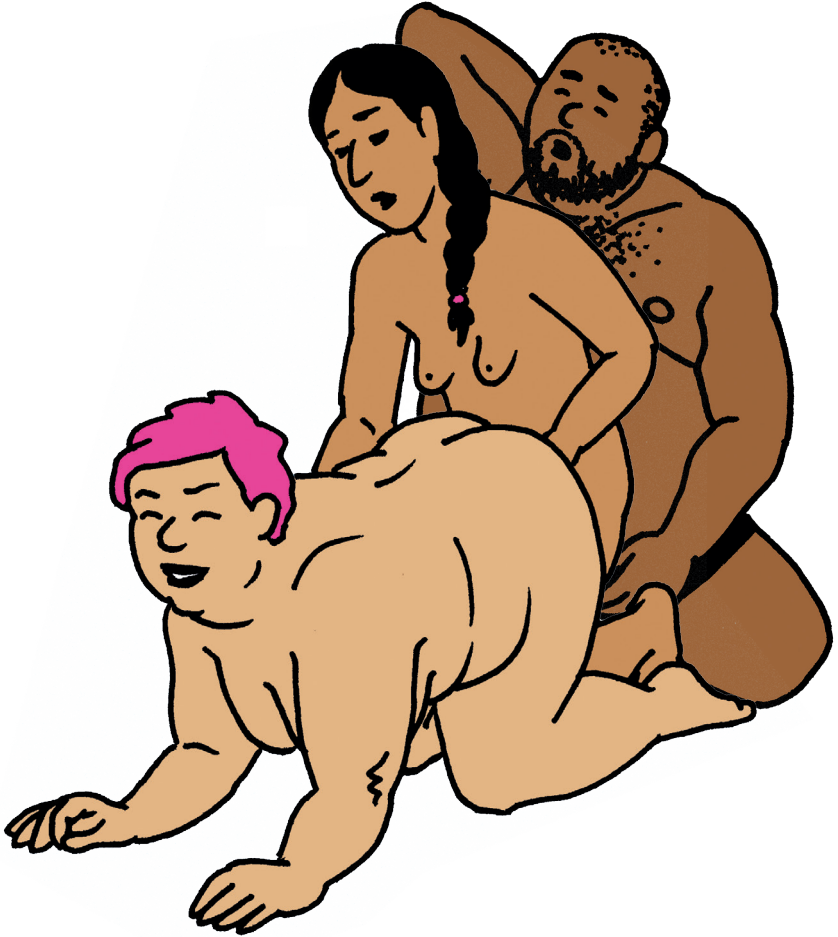
You cannot be forced to leave the country because you have HIV or any other infection.

### TRANS HEALTH CARE

If you are trans you can get medical help transitioning into a body that suits your gender identity. You can also change your legal gender. To get trans healthcare you often need to visit a healthcare centre and ask for a referral to a gender clinic. There are six clinics in Sweden. Stockholm and Lund have youth clinics that treat people above the age of 16.

Some transgender persons want hormone treatment. Some also want chest surgery, genital surgery and hair removal. Most of these services, like surgery and hormone treatment, cost no more than any other doctor's visit.





## FAMILY PLANNING

*Contraceptives* gives everyone control over when to have a child, and are widely available. A visit to a clinic to get advice or *prescriptions* for contraceptives is always free, but you have to pay for the contraceptive.

If you have had unprotected vaginal sex and are worried about pregnancy, you can take a “morning after” pill to prevent pregnancy. The pill is called Akut P-piller and can be bought at a pharmacy. If you are younger than 25, you can visit the nearest youth guidance centre to get this pill for free. You need to take this pill no later than 72 hours after sex.

Abortion is legal in Sweden up to the 18th week of the pregnancy, and doctors may not talk about their patients visits to someone outside the hospital. No one, not even your parents or married partner, can get information about your visits to the hospital.

## SEXUAL VIOLENCE

If you have been raped or sexually assaulted you should call the police or visit your nearest emergency unit at a hospital. It is best to go there as quickly as possible to collect evidence and get support.

Having sex with a person that is very drunk or unconscious is considered rape by law.

## RAPE

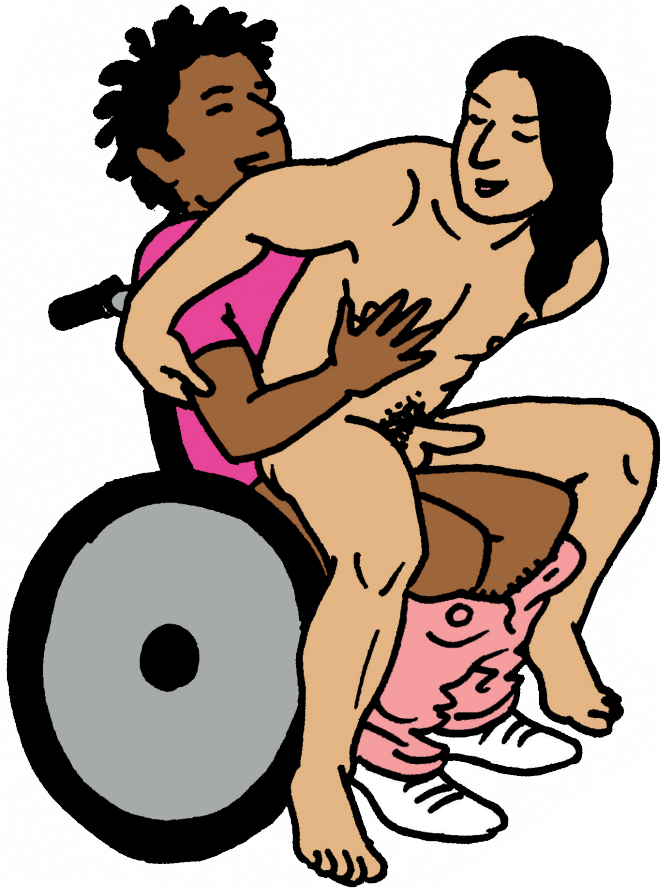
Anyone can experience rape, regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation.

## SELLING SEX

It is legal to sell sex in Sweden, but illegal to pay for sex. Helping others to sell sex is also illegal, even by giving out contact information to a sexworker. A landlord can evict somebody from their home if they're selling sex there.

## TRAFFICKING

It is a crime to force someone into having sex with others. Those who are in a situation where they are forced to have sex with others, can contact the police or the social services (Socialtjänsten) to get help. There is also MIKA *mottagning*, a clinic specialised in providing help to sexworkers and victims of trafficking. Be aware that if you are undocumented, you might be forced to leave the country if you are in contact with an authority. An undocumented migrant should instead get in touch with a non-governmental organisation such as *Ingen Människa är Illegal*.



# HIV and Sexually Transmitted diseases

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There are several Sexually Transmitted Diseases (also called STD:s). Some of them are HIV, chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis, hepatitis B, hepatitis C, herpes and HPV.

It's not possible to see if someone has an STD by looking at them. Most of the time, STD:s don't give any symptoms and many people can have an infection without knowing it. STD:s do not transmit through hugging, insect bites, sharing food, using the same toilet or swimming in the same pool.

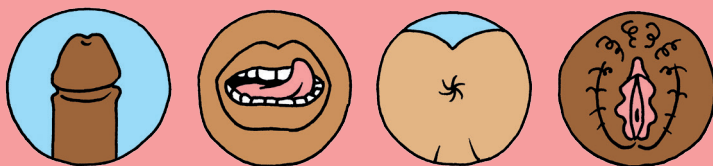
Most STD:s transmit through the soft and wet linings of your body, known as mucus membranes. They are found inside the anus, the pee-hole in the dick and below the clitoris (also called the *urethra*), inside the pussy and inside the mouth. Sexual acts that are important to make safer are:

- Anal sex (sex with dick in anus)
- Vaginal sex (sex with dick in vagina)

A good way to protect yourself and your partners from STD:s is practicing safer sex, and getting tested regularly.

The Swedish Communicable Diseases Act (Smittskyddslagen) gives you the right to get free testing and free treatment for HIV, hepatitis B and C, chlamydia, gonorrhea and syphilis.

Some STD:s stay on the organ they have infected. For example, Chlamydia and Gonorrhea can be found in the pussy, the dick, the anus and in the throat. Tell the healthcare staff what kind of sex you've had, so they can test you correctly.



## LIVING WITH HIV

If you have HIV, you have the right to free healthcare and treatment with antiretroviral drugs. Your HIV status will not affect your asylum case. RFSL works actively to ensure the rights of HIV positive persons.

## HIV

- Tested with a blood test.
- Treated with antiretroviral medication.
- Covered by the Communicable Disease Act.

HIV is a virus that attacks the body's immune system. Most people living with HIV today have long and healthy lives.

The risk of transmission depends on how high the viral load in the body is. In the beginning of the infection viral loads are high, and there is a high risk of transmission. If you have a well functioning treatment, your viral load will be very low, making the risk of transmitting HIV to someone else close to zero.

The Communicable Disease Act forces HIV-positive individuals to tell their partners about their HIV status before having sex, but a doctor can remove this rule if a person has an extremely low viral load and practises safer sex.

HIV can turn into AIDS if its not treated. When it becomes AIDS, the immune system will be very weak, and the body could get infections and diseases that can become very serious and lead to death. People with AIDS can get treatment to reduce the viral loads, and turn it into HIV.

Untreated HIV can transmit through sex by:

- sex with dick in anus (anal sex) without a condom
- sex with dick in pussy (vaginal sex) without a condom
- getting sperm in the mouth when sucking a dick

Transmission can also occur when:

- sharing needles
- a sufficient amount of HIV positive blood enters a body through wounds

HIV is more common among men having sex with men in Sweden. HIV often has no symptoms. Some people may get a high fever, rashes, and a sore throat 2–4 weeks after they get the infection. If you've had unprotected sex and feel those symptoms after a few weeks, you can get tested at a healthcare centre.

## CHLAMYDIA

- Tested with a urine test and/or a swab test.
- Treated with antibiotics.
- Covered by the Communicable Disease Act.

Chlamydia is a common STD in Sweden. Chlamydia is easily transmitted between people, especially when having unprotected anal or vaginal sex. Chlamydia is found on the body parts used in the sexual act. Those who have had sex with a dick that carries chlamydia in their mouth or in their anus, need to ask the healthcare staff to check their throat or anus for chlamydia. The infection is treated by antibiotics.

The symptoms are different depending on where the infection is located. Often there are no symptoms at all. Chlamydia in the



*urethra* can cause a burning sensation when urinating. Chlamydia in the anus can cause itching or cause bleeding during bowel movements. Chlamydia in the vagina can cause discharge, and chlamydia in the throat may in some cases cause a sore throat. Chlamydia in the eye can cause red eyes and itching. If you don't treat genital chlamydia, it can become more difficult for you to have a biological child.

## GONORRHEA

- Tested with a urine test and/or a swab test.
- Treated with antibiotics.
- Covered by the Communicable Disease Act.

Gonorrhea is a bacterial infection and not very common, but has increased among men who have sex with men in Sweden. Gonorrhea is easily transmitted between people, especially when having unprotected anal or vaginal sex. It is found on the body parts used in the sexual act, and can infect the anus and the throat. Gonorrhea is treated with antibiotics.

The symptoms are different depending on where the infection is located. Gonorrhea in the throat usually doesn't give any symptoms. If the infection is in the urethra, there can be a thick greenish or yellowish discharge. Urinating will be very painful too. Gonorrhea in the anus may cause burning pain and discharge from the anus. Gonorrhea in the pussy can cause discharge.

## HEPATITIS

- Tested with a blood test.
- Hepatitis B can be prevented by vaccination.
- Covered by the Communicable Disease Act.

There are many types of hepatitis viruses. The most commonly sexually transmitted one is hepatitis B. Most often the body will handle the infection, but it can become chronic. The infection can also become serious and need to be treated in hospital.

There are medications for hepatitis, but the best protection is to get a *vaccination* against hepatitis B. If you are a man who has sex with men, vaccinating for hepatitis B is free of charge.

Different hepatitis infections give different symptoms. Hepatitis B and C usually cause no symptoms and are discovered through blood testing.

## SYPHILIS

- Tested with a blood test.
- Treated with antibiotics.
- Covered by the Communicable Disease Act.

Syphilis is uncommon in Sweden, but is getting more common among men having sex with men. Syphilis can be transmitted through vaginal sex, anal sex, oral sex, contact between mucous

membranes and through blood. During the first year the infection can be transmitted very easily between persons.

If you are a man having sex with men, we advise you to get tested for syphilis every three, six or twelve months to be on the safe side. When you take an HIV test, ask them to test for syphilis at the same time. If you have syphilis you will be treated at hospital.

Syphilis has very few symptoms. Some people may get wounds where the bacteria have entered the body, usually on the mouth, anus, dick or pussy. Others may get fever, feel tired, feel sick or lose hair.

## HERPES

- Tested by swabbing the sores.
- A chronic infection – but one can treat the sores.
- Not covered by the Communicable Disease Act.

The herpes virus is very common, and for most people quite harmless, but the *sores* can be painful. The infection can transfer between genitals, or between the mouth and genitals. Herpes transmits very easily and there are no easy ways to protect oneself from it. There are medications to treat the sores, but the infection is chronic.

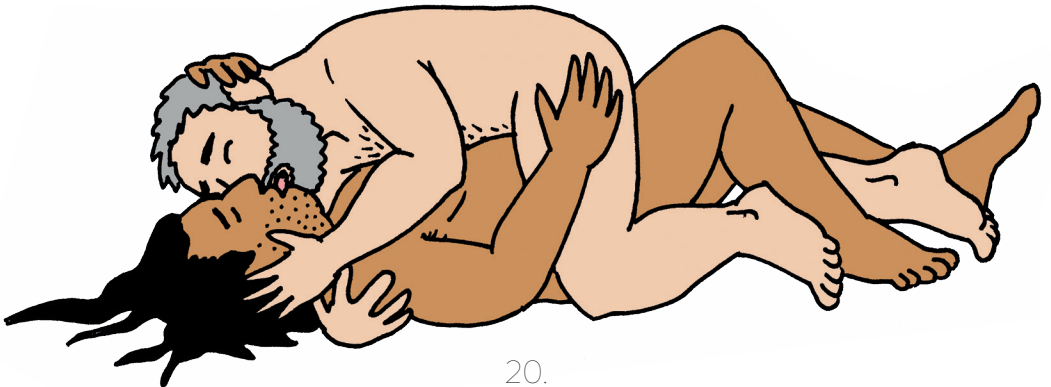
Herpes *sores* may show up only once, but can also show up at different times when the immune system is weakened.

## HPV

- Not often tested, but pap smears are used to test for abnormal cells caused by HPV.
- Warts can be treated – a vaccine is available.
- Not covered by the Communicable Disease Act.

HPV is the short name for human papilloma virus. It is a very common group of viruses and is transmitted very easily during sex. HPV can cause cervical cancer for those born with a pussy. There is a vaccination programme for women up to 27 years old that is free. Other people can pay to be vaccinated. All who are legally registered as female get a letter from the healthcare with an invitation to do a cervical pap smear at regular intervals to prevent the risk of cancer. If you have a vagina and are registered as a man in Sweden, you have to contact a healthcare centre to do regular check ups. If you have a vagina, but no cervix, you don't need pap smears.

HPV often has no symptoms. Some types of the virus cause genital or anal warts that can be treated, and they also heal by themselves after some time.



# Safer Sex

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There are many ways to be intimate and sexual with your partner or partners. Tongue kissing, hugging, rubbing your genitals and bodies against each other's and stroking or masturbating the dick and pussy is considered safer sex. There is also no need to use protection for fingering or licking a pussy or an anus. Sucking a dick, if you avoid sperm in your mouth, is also safer. Some STD:s like syphilis, chlamydia and gonorrhea can transmit by sucking a dick. A condom makes oral sex with a dick safer. It's up to you to decide your level of safety.

You can also use dental dams or gloves if you want to feel extra safe, though there is no risk of HIV-transmission when touching genitalia with your bare hands or by licking the pussy. The risk of transmitting other diseases is also fairly low, even without a dental dam or gloves.

When having "penetrative sex" with a dick, you should have two things in order to practice safer sex: condom and lube. A condom protects from STD:s and helps against unwanted pregnancies if you're having vaginal sex. Lube is a gel that reduces friction, which helps the condom stay intact. Many people like the feeling of lube on their genitals, and enjoy the sex more thanks to it.

The risk of transmitting STD:s between two pussies is fairly low. However, chlamydia, herpes and HPV can be transmitted, so getting tested for chlamydia once in a while and going for pap smears when called by healthcare services is a good idea.

Practicing safer sex is for you to stay healthy, and to protect the health of the people you're intimate with.

## TIPS FOR SAFER SEX

To take care of our sexual health, we all need to find ways to get our knowledge into action. Here are some tips that might be useful.

- Practice different ways to say to your partners that you want safer sex, and different ways to act if your partner should say no.
- Have sex in ways that are safer even without protection, like oral sex, fingering, using toys or mutual masturbation.
- Get tested for STD:s every 3, 6 or 12 months if you're sexually active.
- Drinking too much alcohol and/or taking drugs affect the judgement regarding safer sex.
- If you have a dick and like to have penetrative sex, find the right condom for you. Practice putting on a condom and masturbate with it to get to know how it feels having sex with a condom on your dick.
- Keep condoms and lube nearby, or where you may have sex.



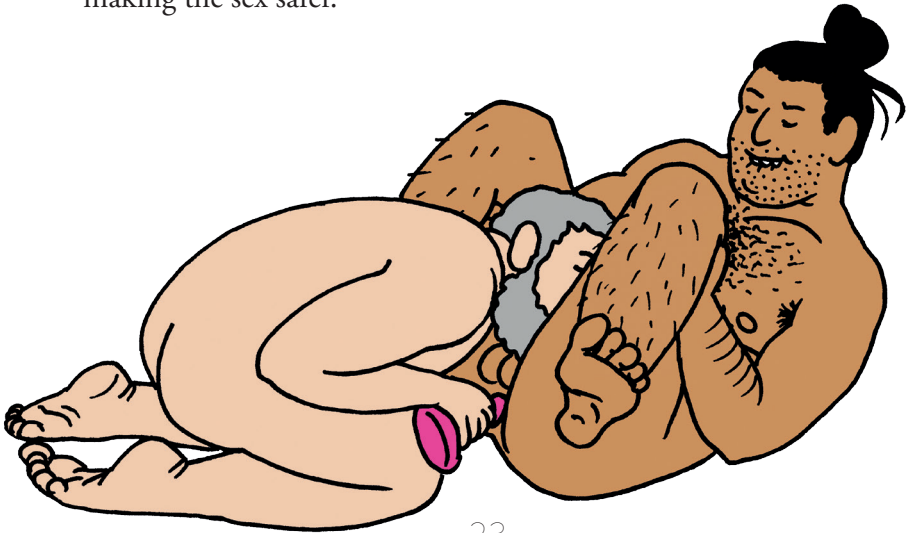
## CONDOMS AND LUBE

Some condoms are made to fit a longer dick, others are made to fit a shorter dick, some are made for a dick that is thick, and some are made to fit a thin dick.

Condoms have different shapes, they can be straight, or they can be tighter around the head, or they can be wider around top of the dick. Those with a dick should try different types and brands to see what they like and what suits them best. Most condoms are made of latex; a few condoms are made in non-latex materials. Non-latex condoms more expensive but are a good alternative if you or any of your partners are allergic to latex

There are two types of lube that you can use together with condoms: water based or silicone based lube. You should not use oil or other types of fat with condoms because they can break the condom. Lube is extra important when having anal sex, because the anus cannot lubricate itself and is generally more fragile than a vagina.

*Femidoms* can also be used. The “dome” is a bigger size condom that is inserted into the anus or pussy before having sex with a dick, making the sex safer.

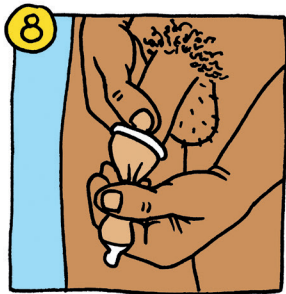
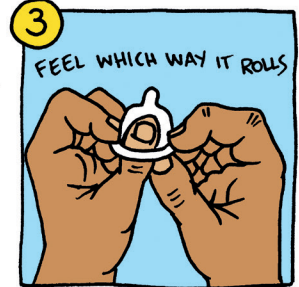
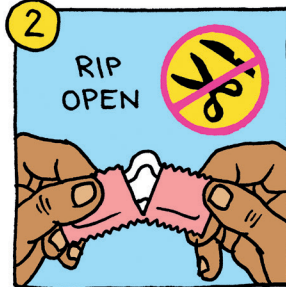
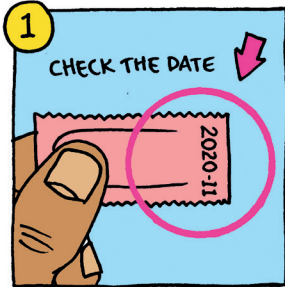


## TO USE A CONDOM SAFELY:

1. Check that the expiration date has not passed. Squeeze the package and make sure there is no air coming out of the package.
2. Open the package only with your fingers. Opening it with sharp objects might damage the condom.
3. Roll it out a little bit to make sure it rolls in the right direction.
4. If you have foreskin, pull it back. Hold the tip of the condom while you roll it down on your dick with your other hand. Try to make sure there is no air between the dick and condom.
5. Adjust the condom so it sits comfortably and not too tight or too loose.
6. Make sure the condom is rolled down the whole way to the base of your dick.
7. Apply lube and have sex!
8. Hold on to the condom when pulling out the dick from the other person's body. Pull off the condom carefully and hold it so the sperm doesn't spill out of it, if there has been ejaculation.
9. Tie a knot on the condom, and throw it in the bin.



# HOW TO USE A CONDOM



# RFSL for you

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RFSL is an organisation working for LGBTQ-peoples' rights. RFSL has local branches in many cities and towns and you can become a member. If you are an asylum seeker or undocumented the membership fee is 10 SEK, for others it is 100 SEK per year.

There are many Newcomers-groups with activities for all who are new in Sweden. There you meet other LGBTQ-people from all over the world.

If you need legal advice for your asylum case, RFSL has two lawyers working with asylum issues.

By joining RFSL you are not only supporting our political work for LGBTQ-peoples' rights, you will also get access to all the activities at the local RFSL-group where you live.

The local RFSL-groups often have a variety of activities. You can go to parties, lectures, watch movies and participate in field trips. Some RFSL-groups also have special groups for youths and seniors. There is at least one local RFSL-group in every Swedish county.



## RESOURCES AND LINKS

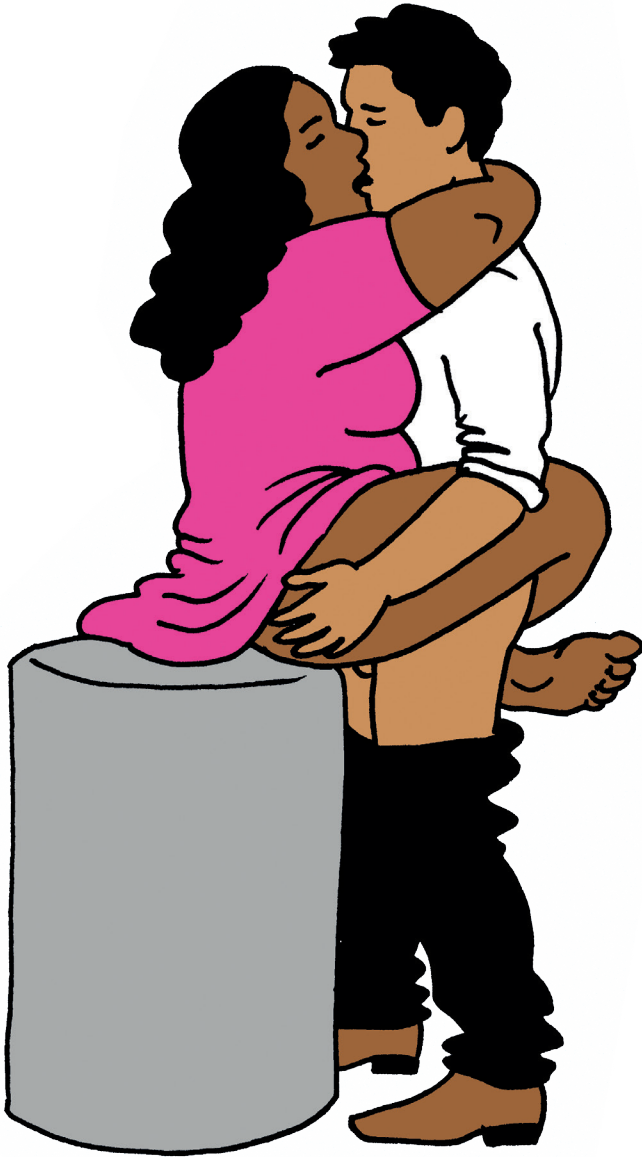
Become a member of RFSL and read more at:  
[rfsl.se](http://rfsl.se)

You can get free samples of condoms and lube at your local RFSL branch, or order them free of charge from our project The Sexperts:  
[the-sexperts.org](http://the-sexperts.org)

The Swedish emergency number is 112.

To ask questions about health, call 1177, and you can get advice from the public healthcare. They will also arrange an interpreter if you need one. You can also visit [1177.se](http://1177.se), which is available in many different languages.





# Glossary

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**Akut P-piller/”day after pill”** A pill that is taken after having vaginal sex in order to prevent pregnancy. It must be taken within 72 hours of having sex. They are also called “morning after pill” or “Akut p-pillar”. It does not protect from STD:s.

**Consenting (to sex)** Agreeing to sex. People can agree to sex in many ways, by saying it or by inviting with their body. People like different sexual practices, and it is a good thing to keep in mind that consenting to sex doesn't mean that one can't change their mind about it later.

**Contraceptives** A variety of aids that helps you from getting pregnant. There are many different types of contraceptives, however condoms and the dome are the only contraceptives that protect from pregnancy and STD transmission.

**Femidom** The “dome” is a bigger size condom that is inserted into the anus or pussy before having sex with a dick, making the sex safer.

**Foreskin** The skin covering the tip of the dick when the dick is not erect. Some don't have a foreskin due to circumcision.

**Penetrative sex** A phrase that describes dick in pussy or dick in anus sex. It can also be called “enclosing sex”, when the vagina or the anus encloses a penis.

**Prescription** Medication or pills that the doctor tells someone to take.

**STD** Sexually Transmitted Diseases.

**Sore** The sore is a small blister, a “balloon” that appear on the skin. In Herpes, these wounds usually appear on the lips or the genitalia.

**Swabbing** Swabbing is one way to test for STD:s that might have infected a certain part of the body. It is done by gently rubbing a cotton swab against those parts; mostly the throat, anus and urethra. Read more about infections in the chapter “HIV and sexually transmitted diseases”.

**Urethra** This is the place where the urine comes out.

**Vaccinate/vaccination** A medicine that prevents a disease from entering the body.



This brochure is a guide for you who are newly arrived in Sweden and identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans or queer (LGBTQ).

Read more about protecting yourself from sexually transmitted diseases, living with HIV, taking care of your sexual health and your rights in Sweden.

Welcome.

