

## THE TOY BOX

If you are using sex toys, there are a few things to know and remember. You need to have good information about your toys. What are they made of? Silicone, hard plastic, rubber (the three most popular kinds)? If you are in the market, go for silicone, as they are the easiest to clean and care for. You'll probably pay a little more for them, but they last longer.

## USING YOUR TOYS

If you plan to use your toys with you partner, be sure that they are thoroughly cleaned before and after use. You should use a condom as well. When using toys for anal penetration, do not switch from the anus to the vagina without cleaning and changing the condom.

## CLEANING YOUR TOYS

To clean silicone sex toys, you can boil it for 10 minutes, pop in the top rack of your dishwasher (yes, sex toys can be dishwasher safe!), or wash with mild soap and water. Boiling most thoroughly disinfects. You cannot use silicone based lube with silicone sex toys, as it will destroy the toy. To clean hard plastic, wash with mild soap and water. Rubber sex toys (usually the least expensive) are made of soft, porous material, which cannot be disinfected, so you should use condoms every time you use them. You cannot use oil based lubes near rubber sex toys as one component is latex. To clean, wash with mild soap and warm water, and store in cool, dry place away from other objects preferably in a plastic bag (they really attract lint). In cleaning any sex toy, make sure that the soap you use is mild, antibacterial, and does not contain moisturizers.

## LOCAL HIV TEST CENTERS:

Fairfeild Department of Health (Lancaster)  
Confidential Free  
Mon.-Fri., 8am-4pm.

Planned Parenthood of Southeast Ohio  
Anonymous \$20  
Mon.-Fri., 8:30am-5pm; every other Sat.,  
10am-2pm.

Columbus AIDS Task Force  
Confid/Anony Free  
Walk-ins: T-3:30pm-7:30pm; W-10am-2pm

Hudson Health Center  
Confid/Anony \$10  
Walk-ins: Mon-Wed & Fri.: 8am-4:30; Thurs.:  
9am-4:30pm

## FOR MORE INFORMATION:

*Our Bodies, Our Selves*  
*The Whole Lesbian Sex Book*  
*Good Vibrations Guide to Sex*  
*The Idiots Guide to Amazing Sex*

[www.undercovercondoms.com](http://www.undercovercondoms.com)  
[www.goodvibes.com](http://www.goodvibes.com)  
[www.talksexwithsue.com](http://www.talksexwithsue.com)

# SAFER SEX FOR WOMEN WHO HAVE SEX WITH WOMEN

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## WHAT GETS YOU GOING

The first and most important step to having safer sex centers on self-knowledge and self-awareness. This is about self-discovery but also about setting limits with which you are comfortable. Here are some questions you should think about before engaging in a sexual relationship with someone:

- How do you feel about your body, and in what ways do you like to be touched?
- What does sex mean to you emotionally? (Are casual encounters and one night stands ok? Do you need an emotional relationship to have a physical one? Do you need monogamy and/or commitment? What do you think about cheating? Do you want to be faithful? Do you want someone to be faithful to you? How might a sexual relationship change preexisting relationships?)
- What kinds of experiences do you have in your past that may affect your sexual relationships? How might they affect those relationships?
- What do you need in order to feel safe and positive about your sexual experiences?
- When it comes to sex what is ok for you, your comfort level, and your body? (What are your boundaries? Do you like to take it slow? Do you like to try new and different things? What is off-limits on your body? What types of sex do you like to have?)

## TALK DIRTY TO ME

Ok, so you now have a general understanding of yourself as a sexual being, and it's time to be sexual with another sexual being. Before the nakedness though, there must be communication. They say talk is cheap, and maybe that's because if there's communication upfront it can save hassle, headaches, time, and scary doctor's visits—not to mention the fact that it will help you with the all important climatic moment if you can talk to your partner about what you like and about your boundaries (thus saving you from the awkward "oops, it slipped" moment). To start use the questions about self-discovery, as they are probably the things you'd want to know about your partner's sexual ideals. But you can't stop there, so here are a few more questions to ask:

- What is your sexual history? (How many partners, relationships, etc.?)
- Have you been or will you get tested for sexually

transmitted diseases and infections? Have you been tested for HIV?

- What kinds of protection do you or will you use? (Condoms, dams, etc.) How will you ensure someone always has protection?

Remember, if someone is unwilling to carry on conversations about these issues, perhaps you should not have a sexual relationship with them. Starting these conversations is not easy, so you have two options: take the bold come right out and say it route or take the more subtle I'll slowly bring it up through delicate hint dropping. Boldness will be the quicker route. Remember to pick the time and the place, as at a friend's birthday party or after the nakedness and arousal have already started might not be the best. Finally, don't forget all those things you learned in COMS 101: use I statements (you can sound so accusatory); be positive (Hey, be kind. Sex is already hard enough to talk about without someone saying "I hate it when you fill-in-the-blank"); and check for understanding (make sure you're on the same page before the romping begins). Always ask lots of questions and remember that there are always options, so don't forget to discuss them all.

## THE PROTECTIVE FLOODGATES

Protection from STIs comes in many different forms, but the bottom line is in order to practice safer sex your goal should be to keep your partner's bodily fluids out of your body. (Saliva is ok!) Whether it's condoms, dams, or gloves, remember they are one time use only—no reusing. If you are doing any anal play, remember do not touch the anus and then the vagina, as that can spread bacteria leading to infection, so you'll need to wash hands (or toys) or change your glove (change condom on toys).

### CONDOMS:

Ok, so you are thinking: "Why exactly do I need to have condoms, if I'm a woman having sex with a woman?" If you are using sex toys, condoms are helpful—making clean-up faster and help cut down on bodily fluid transfer. Read more in the sex toys section.

### DENTAL DAMS:

Dams are vital for vaginal-oral sex, and they are also necessary for rimming or any other anal-oral contact too. Don't worry about getting too fancy though. You don't even have to buy dams because plastic wrap works too (just

don't get the microwave kind as it has little holes that let steam escape meaning bodily fluid can go in or out too). Plus remember plastic conducts heat better than latex, so that's a bonus. If you find yourself both without dam and plastic wrap, you can use a condom (preferably non-lubricated and without spermicide as both can taste strange): remove it from the package, snip to center with scissors, unroll, and enjoy. Finally before placing the dam, use a little lube on the side that will be against your partner to help increase sensation, and if you have a little flavored lube, add it to your side.

### GLOVES:

Use fresh latex gloves for penetration of vagina or anus using fingers. If they are powdered, go ahead and give them a rinse before using it. You can also use finger cots, but the glove gives you the ability to use as many fingers as you'd like. Gloves are especially important if you engage in fisting because fingernails are dirty little things that can tear and cause the spread of infection.

## WET AND WILD: FUN WITH LUBE

What comes in many colors, flavors, and tingle sensations? Why lube of course! Whether you enjoy Sliquid's Green Apple Tart lube, the gentle warming sensation of KY Warming Gel, or Play's Tingling Lube, the important thing about lube is to use it. Lube can help increase sensation, and it cuts down on potentially painful situations. When using latex, remember you have to use water-based lube. Oil-based lubricants (such as Vaseline) break down latex and have negative effects on your rubber sex toys (read on). If you are using massage oil as part of your sex play, remember to thoroughly wash with soap and water any body part, especially hands, that will come into contact with the condom. You can use oil-based lubricants with the plastic condoms. Lube makes things slippery, which is a great thing, so don't forget lots of lube. Lube is especially important when fisting. Also if you enjoy anal penetration, you'll need lots of lube. Because the anal wall has very thin membranes, the lining of the anus tears fairly easily. Tears in the anal lining increase the transmission of STIs as well as other bacteria, and since the anus (anal sphincter) is not elastic, lube makes things go a little more smoothly.