



Empower your sexual health

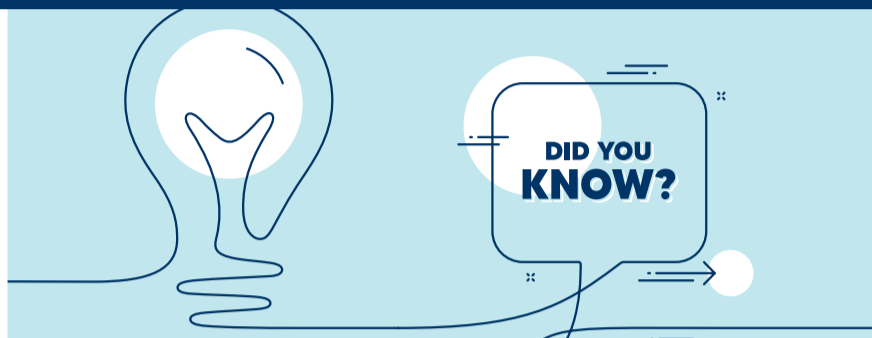
In the month of love, it's worth remembering that moments of passion may have long-lasting consequences. So, take action to keep yourself safe when you have sex.

Sexually transmitted infections or diseases (STIs or STDs) are an uncomfortable fact of life. But we are not powerless against them. By being responsible and practising safer sexual behaviours, like condom use, we protect ourselves and others.

If you want to feel the love – not the pain of an STI – take these steps towards safer sex.

Face facts

South Africa has one of the world's highest STI infection rates, partly because we simply won't face facts and discuss safe sex. The first step to empowerment is acknowledging that you are at risk if you're sexually active.



Learn more



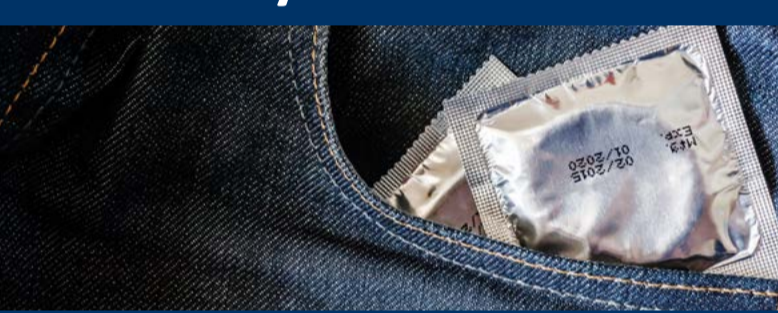
Knowledge = power. Learning about sexual health, safer sex practices, contraceptive methods and STIs is easy these days. Your local primary health clinic or GP are also reliable resources of facts, not myths. Remember, any sexual contact can pass on an STI.

Keep talking

The more we talk openly, the sooner the risk will reduce. Yes, it's awkward, but talk to your partner(s) about your shared sexual health. Discuss protection before having sex. Many South African women still find it challenging to convince their male partners to discuss sexual health and wear condoms.



Check your condom use



Condoms play a crucial role in stopping STIs from being passed on. Free condoms are available at all government clinics – but they'll only work if you use them correctly. That means using each condom only once, making sure the condom isn't expired or damaged, and applying it properly.

Be responsible

Get tested annually if you're sexually active, even if you feel fine (remember, not all STIs have symptoms). Avoid sex when you've had alcohol or drugs. Limit sexual partners or, ideally, stay faithful to one partner. Of course, if you're sexually active, always carry a condom and use it when needed.



What if you have an STI?



Seek medical help immediately. While not all STIs can be cured, symptoms can be managed with medication.

If an STI is confirmed, take the following steps to stop spreading it to others:

- Follow your doctor's treatment plan carefully.
- Communicate with your partner(s) so they can get tested and treated and protect themselves.
- Avoid sex until the infection clears. (If it's incurable, discuss options with your doctor.)
- Be kind to yourself and focus on the positive steps you're taking to deal with the STI.

Accurate knowledge, effective preventatives, and speedy testing help stop the spread of STIs. You have the opportunity to take charge of your sexual health and live a safer, healthier life. Seize it!

Let's review your sexual health check

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are an uncomfortable fact of life. Here's your action plan for safer sex.

1. Face facts – if you're sexually active, you're at risk.
2. Knowledge is power, so learn how STIs spread through sexual contact.
3. Talk to your partner(s) about protection. Condoms safeguard you against STIs.
4. Check the condom's expiry date, apply it properly and use it only once.
5. Be responsible – always use condoms and get tested for STIs annually.

If you have an STI, seek medical help ASAP. Follow the treatment plan and inform your partner(s).

For support with STIs, contact the Employee Health and Wellness Programme.

References

Healthline
National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD)
Networking HIV & AIDS Community of South Africa NPC (NACOSA)

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*Let us stay mindful of caring for
one another and ourselves*