

Information about
HIV & AIDS

Safe

Sex



TAPV

Turkish Family Health and Planning Foundation

Sexuality is a normal and healthy part of life. Experiencing sexuality is entirely your own free choice. Regardless of this choice, being informed about your sexual health will help you adopt responsible and protective behaviors and enable you to live a happy, safe, and healthy life. Sexual health is a state of well-being that ensures not only a person's physical integrity but also their mental and social well-being; it positively enriches and enhances personality development, communication, and the sharing of love.

As in many areas of life, remember that protecting your sexual health involves both rights and responsibilities that come with those rights.

Safe sexuality means maintaining one's sexual life while being protected from unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections, without coercion, violence, or discrimination, and without emotional or social harm. Being informed about sexually transmitted infections and developing protective attitudes is an important step you will take toward a safe and fulfilling sexual life.



It is your right to:

- Access comprehensive and accurate information about sexual health,
- Experience your sexuality freely in harmony with your own values and boundaries,
- Protect yourself from unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs),
- Say “No” to sex without a condom,
- Have a happy and satisfying sexual life,
- Not feel pressured because of your relationship boundaries, choices, or decisions,
- Say “No” to unwanted sexual behaviors and not be exposed to them.

In Safe Sexual Relationships, Partners:

- Express their desires and boundaries clearly and without pressure.
- Respect each other’s bodies, emotions, and boundaries.
- Communicate openly, honestly, and respectfully.
- Care about each other’s physical and emotional well-being.
- Act based on mutual consent.
- Value protection against sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancies.
- Know that protection is both a shared and an individual responsibility.



Only “yes” means yes!

Consent: Consent means that a person clearly and freely agrees to a specific behavior through their own free will. A person always has the right to withdraw consent, even if they have previously agreed to one or more actions.

It should not be forgotten that consent can be withdrawn at any time, and consent given in the past does not mean it is valid in the future.

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS (STIs)

Sexually transmitted infections are infections passed from one person to another through sexual contact. These infections are commonly referred to as 'Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)'. However, in this publication, the term 'Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)' has been replaced with 'Sexually Transmitted/Transferred Infections' to support the use of non-stigmatizing language. The most common STIs include gonorrhea, chlamydial infections, syphilis, trichomoniasis, chancroid, genital herpes, genital warts, HPV infection, HIV infection, hepatitis B, and hepatitis C.

How are they transmitted?

Disease-causing agents can be found in blood, vaginal secretions, semen, pre-ejaculatory fluids, and breast milk. They can spread through sexual contact, blood transmission, or from mother to baby.

For STI transmission to occur during sexual intercourse, there must be contact with blood, sexual fluids, or sexual organs. Sexual fluids include all fluids coming from the penis and vagina during and after sexual activity. For transmission to occur, infected fluid must be transferred to another person's body.

STIs can be transmitted through:

- Untested blood and blood products
- Mother-to-baby transmission (during pregnancy, childbirth, or breastfeeding)
- Sharing needles, razors, scissors, and toothbrushes
- Using non-sterile manicure and pedicure equipment
- Unprotected vaginal, oral, or anal sex

STIs are NOT transmitted through:

- Animal bites, bee stings, mosquito or insect bites
- Kissing, touching, caressing, handshakes, hugging, or cuddling
- Saliva, sputum, tears, sweat, coughing, or sneezing
- Sharing living spaces, living in the same house or room, or using the same toilet

Unsafe Sexual Behaviors

The greatest risk occurs when blood or sexual fluids come into contact with the vagina, tip of the penis, the anus, mouth or nose.

- Unprotected oral sex
- Unprotected vaginal sex
- Unprotected anal sex
- Unprotected genital rubbing

Safe Sexual Behaviors

- Kissing
- Hugging / caressing
- Massage
- Masturbation
- Vaginal, oral, and anal sex with condom use

Symptoms of Sexually Transmitted Infections

- Unusual discharge from the vagina, the penis, or the anus with changes in color, consistency, or odor, and itching in these areas
- Pain or bleeding during or after sexual intercourse
- Sores, blisters, warts, swelling, or lumps on or around the genitals, anus, or mouth
- Pain or tenderness in the lower abdomen
- Frequent urination or pain or burning during urination
- Irregular menstrual bleeding and unexplained miscarriages
- Fever, weakness, fatigue, nausea, and other general symptoms of illness

Most STIs are treatable infections. However, some infections may progress without symptoms. Therefore, regular medical check-ups, seeking medical attention promptly if symptoms occur, completing prescribed treatment, and undergoing treatment together with a spouse/partner are important steps in managing infections.

HIV and AIDS

HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) is a virus that affects the immune system. If left untreated, it weakens the immune system and prevents it from functioning properly.

AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) is the most advanced stage of HIV infection, during when the immune system is severely weakened.

Not every HIV-positive individual develops AIDS.

After entering the body, HIV may remain without symptoms for many years depending on the person's immune condition. Without treatment, HIV may progress to AIDS after approximately 10 years or more.

Thanks to early diagnosis and regular treatment, people living with HIV can live long and healthy lives without progressing to AIDS.

Even individuals diagnosed late and already in the AIDS stage may regain health through medication.

**Discrimination against people
living with HIV is a violation
of human rights.**



Tests

There are various tests used to detect HIV transmission after unprotected and risky sexual contact. These tests check whether HIV antibodies or antigens are present in the blood. The testing process and interpretation of results should always be carried out under expert guidance.

ELISA Test: A first-line screening test performed on a venous blood sample collected from the forearm to detect the presence of HIV antigen and/or antibodies against HIV. The window period is 18–45 days. A negative result obtained 45 days after risky contact is considered reliable.

Rapid Test: Performed using a finger-prick blood sample, with results available in approximately 20 minutes. Voluntary Counseling and Testing Centers (VCTCs) use HIV Combo rapid tests that detect both HIV antigen and antibodies against HIV. The window period is 18–90 days. A negative result obtained 3 months after risky contact is considered reliable.

Confirmatory Tests: Performed in reference laboratories to confirm the diagnosis when an HIV screening test is positive.

There Are Centers Where You Can Receive Free HIV Testing Without Providing Your Name or Identity Information

In Türkiye, HIV testing is available at state and university hospitals, private hospitals, Family Health Centers, Migrant Health Centers, and private laboratories. Free and anonymous HIV testing and counseling are also available at Voluntary Counseling and Testing Centers (VCTCs). The number of VCTCs continues to grow. Scan the QR code at the end of this brochure to access VCTC contact information.

STIs are conditions that must be reported to the Turkish Ministry of Health. However, the purpose of this reporting is not to collect personal information, but to generate nationwide statistics and monitor the overall situation. Therefore, tests performed in hospitals are included within the reporting system. Reporting is carried out through coding methods without using names or identity information, and the information is shared only with the Ministry of Health.

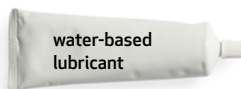
PROTECTION FROM SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS

- Young people may be at increased risk of HIV and other sexually acquired infections due to biological, social, and behavioral factors. The risk of infection increases with high-risk behaviors, such as unprotected sexual contact.
- Protection can be achieved through vaccination against HPV and Hepatitis B.
- Syringes, needles, tattoo equipment, acupuncture needles, piercing needles, manicure-pedicure tools, razors, and similar sharp instruments must be disinfected before reuse, or disposable materials should be preferred. It should also be ensured that such procedures are carried out under sterile conditions.
- Sharp tools such as scissors, razors, nail files, and nail clippers should not be shared.
- Avoid direct contact between bare skin and blood.
- Using condoms is one of the most reliable methods of protection against HIV during sexual intercourse. Protection is highest when condoms are used correctly during every type of sexual intercourse (vaginal, anal, oral).
- A water-based lubricant, when used with a condom, helps reduce the risk of condom breakage.
- Individuals carrying STIs and undergoing treatment should also use condoms.
- Early diagnosis and treatment help both recovery and prevention of transmission.



Penis condoms

Vaccination against HPV and
Hepatitis B

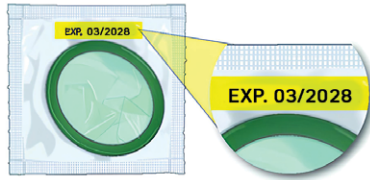


water-based
lubricant



Vaginal condom

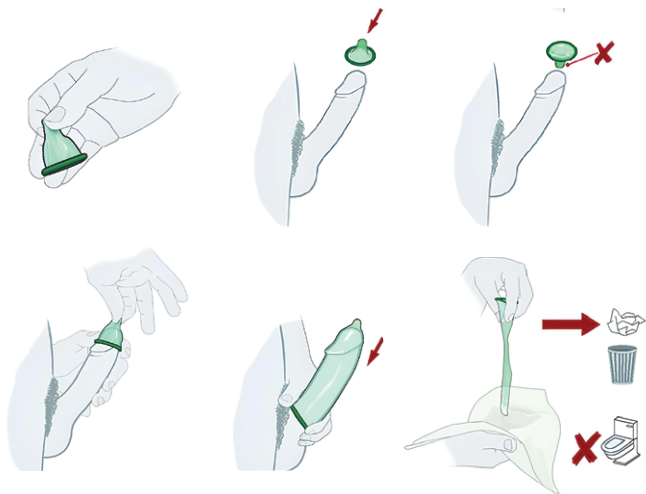
Condom Use



- Use a condom during every sexual intercourse.
- Never reuse condoms.
- Protect condoms from sunlight, heat, and moisture.
- Check the expiration date. Do not use expired condoms.
- Use water-based lubricants; avoid petroleum jelly, baby oil, or lotion based lubricants as they may damage condoms.
- Do not use sharp objects when opening the package and avoid damaging the condom with your fingernails.
- The condom should be put on at the very beginning of sexual intercourse, before sexual fluids come into contact and when the penis is fully erect.
- Replace the condom immediately if it becomes damaged during intercourse.

Penis Condom (Male Condom)

A penis condom should be used during vaginal, oral, and anal intercourse.



- After the penis becomes erect, squeeze the tip of the condom between your thumb and index finger while ensuring that no air remains inside. This helps prevent air from being trapped inside the condom and allows semen to collect properly after ejaculation.
- Unroll the condom down to the base of the penis, ensuring that it completely covers the penis.
- After ejaculation, withdraw the penis before losing the erection. Avoid touching the secretions and fluids remaining on the outer surface of the condom with bare hands. It is safer if the person removing the condom is the owner of the bodily fluids.
- Remove the condom by holding it from the base.
- Dispose of the used condom in the trash.

Misconceptions About Condoms

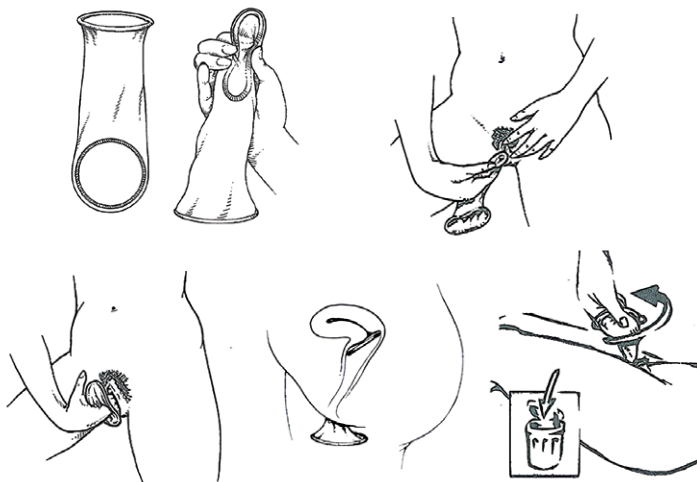
There are common beliefs that condoms reduce sexual pleasure or cause erectile problems. However, research shows that when used correctly and in the appropriate size, condoms do not significantly reduce sexual pleasure. Water-based lubricants can increase comfort. Condoms also reduce anxiety by protecting against unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, making sexual experiences safer.

**“I got rid of my prejudice
and put
the condom on”**



Vaginal Condom (Female Condom)

A vaginal condom is used during vaginal and anal intercourse.



- Squeeze the flexible inner ring using your thumb, index finger, and middle finger. (This narrows the condom and makes insertion into the vagina easier.)
- With your other hand, separate the labia and locate the vaginal opening, then insert the condom into the vagina and push it further inside.
- Insert your index and middle fingers into the vagina and push the inner ring as far in as possible. If you cannot feel the inner ring, the condom is positioned correctly.
- The larger outer ring remains outside the vagina, covering the inner and outer labia around the vaginal opening.
- After intercourse, hold the outer ring and twist it while removing the condom. To prevent spillage, remove the condom before standing up.

PREVENTING MOTHER-TO-BABY HIV TRANSMISSION

When people living with HIV receive regular and effective antiretroviral treatment during pregnancy, the risk of transmission to the baby can fall below 1%. With proper medical follow-up and treatment after birth, transmission risk can be minimized.

Thanks to effective preventive measures, people living with HIV can have HIV-negative babies.



U = U : (Undetectable = Untransmittable)

"Undetectable = Untransmittable (U = U)" means that people living with HIV who have taken their HIV medication regularly for at least six months and have achieved viral suppression cannot transmit the virus through sexual intercourse.

The scientific evidence supporting this message and the concept of "Undetectable=Untransmittable" have been recognized by authorities such as the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the World Health Organization (WHO).

U = U is a major scientific milestone for HIV treatment and the prevention of new cases. It is also an important social message that supports the reduction of stigma and discrimination faced by people living with HIV.

For the U = U concept to remain valid and sustainable, individuals receiving HIV treatment must achieve and maintain an undetectable viral load.

Although the risk of HIV transmission is eliminated under the Undetectable = Untransmittable (U = U) principle, the risk of other sexually acquired infections remains. Therefore, condoms should continue to be used to promote safer sexual practices.

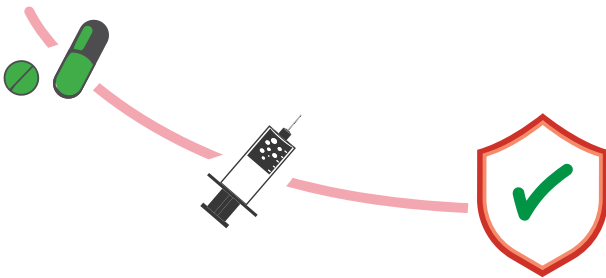
**U=U**

PrEP: (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis)

PrEP is a preventive treatment used before sexual exposure to reduce the risk of HIV transmission. It is prescribed to individuals who consider themselves at high risk for HIV, with the approval of an infectious diseases physician, and is maintained under medical supervision with regular testing. This is important because making this decision independently may result in unnecessary medication use, inappropriate dosing, and unplanned side effects.

Currently, PrEP is prescribed free of charge in several countries around the world; however, in Türkiye, it is not provided free of charge. Individuals may still use PrEP by covering the cost of the medication themselves. Before using any medication, you should always consult your doctor.

There are numerous scientific studies demonstrating that PrEP is highly effective in preventing HIV transmission. However, it should be remembered that PrEP does not provide protection against other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Therefore, "dual protection" (PrEP + condom use) is considered the safest approach.



TasP : (Treatment as Prevention)

TasP is a treatment approach based on the effectiveness of antiretroviral therapy (ART) in preventing new HIV transmissions. Starting ART as soon as possible after an HIV diagnosis and maintaining consistent treatment allow people living with HIV to achieve an undetectable viral load. In accordance with the U=U (Undetectable = Untransmittable) principle, this prevents the sexual transmission of HIV.

PEP: (Post-Exposure Prophylaxis)

PEP is a preventive treatment used after potential HIV exposure to prevent HIV transmission. Also known as emergency HIV treatment, PEP should be initiated within **the first 72 hours** after a risky exposure and continued without interruption for 28 days. The earlier treatment is started, the more effective it is in preventing the virus from establishing a permanent infection in the body. Ideally, the first dose should be taken within the first 24 hours after exposure.

The decision to initiate PEP and the assessment of exposure risk should be made by a healthcare professional, and the treatment should continue under medical supervision. In Türkiye, individuals seeking access to PEP should apply to the infectious diseases departments of hospitals.

The effectiveness of PEP in preventing HIV transmission reaches its highest level depending on several factors, including the degree of exposure risk, how quickly treatment is initiated, and adherence to the treatment regimen.



DID YOU KNOW?

Today, HIV infection can be effectively controlled. Thanks to powerful and effective treatments, people living with HIV can maintain a high quality of life for many years and, if they wish, can get married and have children.

- In HIV treatment, once-daily single-tablet regimens have been used since 2006. In Türkiye, HIV medications and treatment services are provided free of charge within the social security system.
- A significant proportion of new HIV cases worldwide are observed among young people, particularly in the 15–24 age group.
- In Türkiye, 55% of young people in this age group report that they have never heard of HIV.

You can receive HIV counseling services and undergo free and anonymous HIV testing at Voluntary Counseling and Testing Centers (VCTCs) without providing your identity information.

Information about Voluntary Counseling and Testing Centers (VCTCs) can be accessed through TAPV Academy, under the “Contact > Institutions Providing Support” section on the TAPV website, or via the QR code below.



- Think about a healthy and safe sexual life.
- Set your boundaries and share them with your partner.
- Use condoms during vaginal, oral, and anal sex.
- Avoid direct contact with sexual fluids, blood, and blood products.
- Do not share sharp or piercing tools.

You can protect yourself and your partner from sexually transmitted infections.

Understanding risky behaviors and taking precautions is enough.



**Do not hesitate to seek information
about what you are curious about!**

TAPV ACADEMY akademi.tapv.org.tr
TAP Foundation Sexual Health Information Hotline:
+90 212 444 65 39 (Weekdays 09:00-18:00 [GMT+3])



The English translation of the brochure was prepared by Youth Project volunteers Atakan Özkut and Kübra Sarıkaplan.

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akademi.tapv.org.tr

instagram.com/tapvakfi/

Ahmet Adnan Saygun Cad. Kltr Mah. Gzel Konutlar Sitesi A Blok
D: 3-4 34340 Beřiktař / İřtanbul

T: +90 212 257 79 41 - F: +90 212 257 79 43