

Hello from the Dhiverse Team

We would like to offer you all the support we can at this time through our adapted service provision, as well as keeping you updated on current sexual health National guidelines and sexual health information and service updates in Cambridgeshire & Peterborough.

This newsletter includes:

1. FAQ's & General Advice on COVID-19 & Sexual Contact
2. HIV and COVID-19
3. Links to other information and services
4. Dhiverse services during COVID-19

1. FAQ's & General Advice on COVID-19 & Sexual Contact

Can I have sex?

While COVID-19 is not sexually transmitted, sex and close physical contact are risks for transmission. In line with the latest Government advice, people should only have sexual contact - including with their regular partner - if they live within the same household.

It is important to remember that whilst you might think that COVID-19 is not much of a risk to you, it may well be a much bigger risk to the health of any sexual partners you come into contact with, as well as other people you may both later interact with. It is strongly advised that you do not come into contact with previous or new sexual partners outside of your household.

It is important that you avoid sex and especially kissing if you or your partner is not feeling well and is experiencing the symptoms of COVID-19. Please phone your doctor or 111 for further advice.

What is a safe form of sex right now?

Condoms

Condoms are the only type of contraception that can both prevent pregnancy and protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Dhiverse is offering a free condom delivery service, for more information [please visit our website](#).

Masturbation

Sex with yourself i.e. Masturbation is excellent for your physical and mental well-being. Masturbation will not spread COVID-19, especially if you wash your hands (and any sex toys) with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before and after sex. If you use a shared computer, phone or touch screen whilst masturbating, please make sure that you disinfect these devices thoroughly, before and after sex.

What if I need to get tested for an STI?

iCaSH have reduced their face-to-face appointments and will only be able to see emergency or urgent cases. For any urgent or emergency support, please do not go directly to the clinic, please contact them on **0300 300 3030**. If you need treatment, rest assured you will still be able to access this.

Please check the iCaSH website regularly as it's continually updated with pieces of vital information. You can still request a free home sampling kit from [the iCaSH website](#) but as kits tend to go quickly it's probably worth checking the website regularly first thing in the morning.

Another paid-for service option is [Fettle.health](#), who offer testing, treatment and contraception by post.

2. HIV and COVID-19

There is **no current** evidence to suggest that those living with HIV are more at risk of catching COVID-19, or if they do catch it, that they are more likely to become seriously ill.

For people living with HIV, your treatment will continue. If you have an upcoming appointment you will be contacted and informed when to pick up your medication. This is also true for people who are in treatment for hepatitis.

However, it is important to remember that if you have any other conditions (apart from HIV) which might make you more vulnerable, e.g. chronic lung disease, if you are newly diagnosed with HIV or you have just started on treatment, you should get advice from your HIV clinic on how effectively the treatments are working and whether you might need to take specific precautions.

If you are having any problems with taking your anti-HIV medication, it is important for you to talk to your HIV doctor. Although clinics may be closed to personal visits, you should be able to organize a consultation by phone. Please contact us on 01223 508805 or enquiries@dhiverse.org.uk if you need any help with this.

3. Links to other information and services

[BHIVA \(British HIV Association\) website](#)

[BASHH \(British Association for Sexual Health & HIV\) Sex, Social Distancing and COVID-19 Guidance](#)

[iCaSH \(integrated Contraception and Sexual Health\) service](#)

[24-hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline](#) 0808 200 0247

[NSPCC Helpline](#) 0808 800 5000

[CHILDLINE](#) 0800 1111

SAFEGUARDING: For local safeguarding information please visit this link on our website <https://www.dhiverse.org.uk/general-sexual-health/safeguarding/>

4. What services are Dhiverse offering during the COVID situation?

If you are unsure how to access the service you need please go to: www.dhiverse.org.uk or contact 01223 508805 or enquiries@dhiverse.org.uk
PLEASE NOTE: Our HIV Insti-Testing and Chlamydia Screening services are suspended until further notice. Please see previous page for testing info.

HIV Support Service

We are continuing to take referrals. We can provide the same level of support as usual but this will be by telephone, video call or email. Many people will have questions around their benefits, employment etc. during this time and we can help with these. We also realize this will be an anxious time for many people and we can provide regular emotional support. If you think speaking to someone in a similar situation to you would help, we can arrange peer support chats for you.

Counselling service

Although the service is very busy, we are continuing to take referrals. Counselling sessions will be provided by telephone or video call.

Our 'ABC Project 'and our 'SLIP Programme'

Groups and 1-1 support will not be delivered in person by our staff until further notice but we will provide sessions by telephone and video call.

Due to an increase in online activity during the COVID pandemic we have seen an increase in referrals to our SLIP Programme for young people needing support and information around the importance of keeping safe online. This may result in a slightly longer than average waiting time for support.

Relationships & Sex Education (RSE) and Training for Professionals

Workshops, Trainings and Groups will not be delivered in person by our staff until further notice but we can provide these sessions by Skype or Zoom if that's a viable option for everyone involved. We can also provide 1-1 support for young people and adults, around sexual health, relationships and sex by telephone, video call and email. We will have a series of **RSE factsheets** on our website from next week!

Staying at home is a good opportunity for anyone to access our training and upskill around sex, relationships and sexual health!

INTERACT Group

Face to face group meetings are suspended until further notice but Graham Lewis, the group facilitator, will be hosting the group online for the foreseeable future and he will also be available to provide 1-1 and group support for gay and bisexual men by telephone, video call or Skype. Please check out our website for the INTERACT ONLINE dates and please email us at enquiries@dhiverse.org.uk if you would like Graham to contact you for 1-1 support.

Condoms

You can request FREE condoms by email to enquiries@dhiverse.org.uk and we will arrange for these to be posted out to you.