

Safe Sex & Healthy Relationships Information & Tips during COVID-19

Coronavirus (COVID-19) has meant we've had to make some changes to how we can socialise and interact right now. This includes when and with who it's safe to be physically intimate and/or have sex with. In order to keep ourselves and others around us safe, the current advice is to **only have sexual contact with someone if they live within the same household and don't have symptoms**. Close contact with anyone living anywhere else, including a regular partner or a casual hook-up, is not advised. We want to protect ourselves, as well as the most vulnerable in society, against COVID-19. It's understandable that we look to sex for pleasure, fun, stress relief or simply to pass the time, so, **here are some ways to do this whilst sticking to the 'Stay at home' advice:**

Contraception: If you are socially isolating with someone and having sex, condoms are the best way to avoid sexually transmitted infections and also pregnancy. If you need condoms contact Dhiverse through social media or to enquiries@dhiverse.org.uk and we can pop some in the post to you, free of charge! Your GP can still prescribe contraception if you need it. For those who are take oral contraception, continue your regular routine. If your long term acting contraception, such as a coil or implant, is due to be replaced, speak to your GP or sexual health clinic because some brands have been licenced to be relied on for longer than usual - but make sure you check!

Ending a pregnancy: Services are still being provided but some initial appointments with clinics or GPs may be over video or telephone. Speak to your GP or sexual health clinic if you need help with ending a pregnancy.

Masturbation: Sex with yourself i.e. Masturbation / "wanking" is good for your physical and mental wellbeing. Masturbation will not spread COVID-19, especially if you wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before and after. If you use a shared computer, phone or touch screen whilst masturbating be sure to disinfect these devices thoroughly.

Safe & Respectful Messaging: Whether it's through text messaging, sending pictures or live video chats, virtual sex can be an effective way to keep up sexual intimacy without transmitting the virus. However, It's important to take into consideration the **law, privacy concerns and to make sure all participants are on-board - consent is key!** Never share pictures or videos onwards without that person's permission.

Virtual Dates: Perhaps you've found yourself self-isolating separately from your partner, perhaps you're looking to meet new people whilst social distancing. Virtual dates can be a great way to feel close or get to know one another. There are lots of apps and websites to help you do this. If you aren't confident with using new apps or websites, we recommend looking up a **YouTube** tutorial. You might want to check out our **'Date Nights' Factsheet**.

Porn: Many people, especially if they find themselves at home with more time on their hands than usual, are using pornography more, or even for the first time, as a way to relieve stress and keep distracted. It's important to be aware and have a clear understanding of the laws around porn. If you are worried about your use of porn, there are many places where you can get confidential support. You might want to check out our **'Porn during Covid' Factsheet**.

Useful Links:

More information about sex and Coronavirus - <https://www.bashh.org/covid-19-resources/>

Dhiverse - Information, education, support and counselling www.dhiverse.org.uk

iCaSH - Sexual Health clinics: <https://www.icash.nhs.uk/>

British HIV Association: <https://www.bhiva.org/>

Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) <https://www.theelmssarc.org/>

Internet Watch Foundation - report child abuse imagery <https://www.iwf.org.uk/>

Stop It Now— confidential help to stop accessing child abuse imagery <https://www.stopitnow.org.uk/>