

Conditions favourable to sexual health *These strategies do not have a direct impact on HIV transmission, but include different practices and contexts that promote good sexual health and contribute to putting other strategies in place.*



COMMUNICATING IN A PROACTIVE WAY WITH YOUR PARTNERS

Discussing your HIV status or the strategies that need to be put in place with sexual partners, prior to having sex

Description

- Simply stated, sexual communication refers to the process by which discuss aspects of their sex life.¹ More specifically, it involves "the ability to make your preferences known and express your desires, wants, limitations, and needs."²
- By their very nature, safer sex practices require active communication and cooperation between sexual partners.³ In other words, communication is the basis for the vast majority of HIV and STI protection strategies.
- It's possible to communicate openly and proactively with your partners about a range of subjects before you have sex, such as:
 - which prevention strategies to use during sex
 - your HIV status or the presence of other STIs
 - your sexual preferences and the things you want to do with them
 - your limits and the things you don't like to do.
- For many reasons, it can be difficult to discuss sex with your partners (e.g. difficulties expressing emotions, fear of upsetting your partners, fear of judgment). There are different things you can do to make communication easier:²
 - establish a climate that will facilitate dialogue, i.e. make sure the conditions are right or wait for a good place and time to have this discussion
 - let your partner follow their own pace and keep the discussion in context
 - listen actively to the other person and show an interest in what they say
 - discover new things about the other person by asking open questions
 - speak clearly, concisely, and honestly to help ensure you are properly understood
 - speak in the first person ("I") so as to communicate to the other person that your needs deserve to be met.
- Sexual communication differs from negotiated safety in that it does not necessarily involve making a formal agreement in the context of a regular or stable relationship.

Effectiveness

- The results of a meta-analysis suggest that communicating about "safer sex" (i.e. discussing condom use or other safer sex practices or activities) with sexual partners is an important determinant of safer sexual behaviour. Moreover, the intention to discuss "safer sex" is associated with condom use.³
- The results of a study of sexual behaviour among HIV-positive men indicate that, compared to participants who disclosed HIV-positive status but did not discuss "safer sex" with partners, those who disclosed their status and also discussed "safer sex" were more likely to practice safer sex.⁴

References

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