

sex & drugs

playing safe guide for gay & bi men

Tips for playing safe

Drugs and alcohol can certainly enhance sex, but it can be a dangerous business if we're poorly informed. And statistically, gay and bisexual men use drugs and alcohol to facilitate sex more than others. Particularly with the newer trends of Crystal Meth and GHB/GBL, and the sexualised use that is so prevalent at present, especially in London.

Drugs and alcohol dis-inhibit us, so we can use poorer judgement than we might sober. They can make us feel more confident, sexier, butcher, friendlier, more active or more passive, more like a porn star – if we sometimes feel not “worthy” of the people we'd like to have sex with, drugs and alcohol can facilitate encounters that make our fantasies more likely.

Set boundaries

Yet they do impair our judgement. That's why it's a good idea to figure out while we're sober, just what we're into, what we'd like our sex to be like, who we'd like it to be with, how far we're prepared to go and where we want to draw the line. This allows us to be confident and prepared to set those boundaries and to express them confidently. Then, when we're under the influence, and aware that our judgement is impaired (hopefully!), we can refer to those boundaries while high.

Antidote does see many people who are horrified, even traumatised by their own behaviour while in the grip of a powerful drug high. We see many others who become infected with HIV or Hep C because they forgot (or didn't care at the time) to impose their normal boundaries while having sex on drugs.

An Antidote worker at London Friend can help you set some boundaries around what you will and won't do sexually, to protect yourself and still have fun.

Manage your profile

Managing your profiles on sex-networking sites is another way to set some boundaries. Be clear and confident about what you're into, what you're NOT into. Don't be afraid to be vulnerable in your profile – too many profiles boast of sexual prowess, being “sorted” and “not into fats or fems”.

We can sometimes be intimidated by online hooking-up, and frightened to say we want intimacy, or to get to know someone over a coffee before jumping in the sack. And if you're trying to re-discover sober sex, or give drugs a break, be clear about this in your profile or in communication – many of our clients report of arranging an encounter, and someone arrives under the influence or even offering drugs. So be boundaried and clear in your profile and in your communication.



Sexual health

Drugs are about immediate gratification, and we often forget about the consequences. A moment of passion right now might seem like the most important thing in the world, and drugs DO make us oblivious to the consequences. Using condoms and lube, and communicating your boundaries are important because damage to your body, abuse and sexually transmitted infections/HIV/Hep C are consequences we are unlikely to prioritise while experiencing passion on drugs.

Many HIV + men find disclosing their HIV status to be complicated and frightening. Fear of rejection which can trigger feelings of being “diseased”, “slutty” or “sinful”... things that ignorant people can often accuse positive people of being. Many men are using the bare-back sites and crystal sex-party scene as a place that seems safe from having to disclose their status, where HIV is never discussed. But it’s not a safe place – Antidote and London Friend receive referrals daily from sexual health clinics of newly diagnosed people, people who’s life becomes a series of anonymous and lonely sexual encounters, STI’s and unmanageable comedowns.

Another risk is HIV+ men who forget to take their HIV medicines as regularly and punctually as they should because of the chaotic lifestyle that can sometimes accompany drug use. Antidote can help you find comfortable and safe ways to be at peace with, and disclose your status, as well as managing adherence to your HIV meds.

Remember that for longer or rougher sexual encounters, lube should be used plentifully, because drugs can dehydrate us, and impair the mucous in the arse which protects the lining. “Booty bumps”, or putting drugs up the arse also damages the lining, making us more prone to infections including HIV and Hep C. Condoms ought to be checked regularly for splits and changed every half hour.

Remember too, that exhausting long sex sessions can lower our immune system which can make us more vulnerable to catching STI’s and jeopardise your health if you are HIV. Passing out on GHB/GBL is something that, unfortunately, a lot of users consider to be a normal “recreational” hazard. Being aware of what you’re doing and what’s being done to you while high on G is very important.

If you fear you have had unsafe sex with someone who may have been HIV positive, there is a treatment called PEP (Post-Exposure Prophylaxis) which can protect you if you begin this course of medicines ASAP (up to 3 days) after the incident; the sooner, the more effective. PEP can be prescribed for you by most GUM clinics, and if necessary, by the Accident and Emergency department of your local hospital. Some drugs also interfere with the effectiveness of HIV medicines – to find out more [Click here](#), or speak with your HIV doctor or pharmacy at your HIV clinic.

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