

WHAT ABOUT AIDS?

All sexually active people need to be aware of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. Being gay does not give you AIDS, but certain sexual practices and certain drug behaviours can put you at risk for catching the virus that causes AIDS. AIDS is preventable. AIDS is not currently curable.

To reduce your risk of getting AIDS:

- Do not shoot up drugs. Sharing needles is the most dangerous behaviour in terms of getting AIDS.
- Anal intercourse transmits the virus very efficiently. If you do engage in anal sex, use a latex condom and water-based lubricant every time.
- Use condoms whenever you engage in anal or oral sex (or vaginal sex if you have sex with women). Choose latex condoms that are fresh and undamaged. Store them away from heat (your wallet is not a good place to keep them).
- Use a condom only once. The Southern NH HIV/AIDS Task Force has free condoms available, as do many health-related agencies.
- Choose sexual activities that do not involve intercourse, such as hugging, kissing, massaging or masturbating (on unbroken skin).
- Choosing not to have sex is a valid choice and a way to avoid contracting AIDS.

“Stand up for what you believe in...Stay proud and confident”
-James, age 17

This brochure was written by Kevin Cranston and Cooper Thompson, with help from members of BAGLY, Boston Area Gay and Lesbian Youth. Produced and distributed by the Campaign to End Homophobia, a network of people who work to end homophobia through information sharing and education. Revisions were completed by Outright Vermont. The current revision was completed by the PFLAG NH.

WHOM SHOULD I TELL?

“I only tell other people that I’m gay if I’ve known them for a long time and if they are accepting and tolerant. I think it is important that they know about this special part of me” Bill, age 18

More and more gay youth are learning to feel better about themselves. As you start to listen to your deepest feelings and learn more about what it means to be gay, you will begin to be comfortable with your sexuality. This is the process called *coming out*.

The first step in coming out is to tell yourself that you are gay and say, “That’s O.K.” Later you may want to tell someone else, someone you trust to be understanding and sympathetic. You might choose a friend or an adult. You will probably want to meet other gay guys for friendship or a more intimate relationship. Some youth are able to come out to their families. You need to decide whether or not to tell your family, and to choose the right time.

It is crucial to be honest with yourself. Just as self-denial costs you, coming out pays off. Most guys who accept their sexuality say they feel calmer, happier and more confident.

It is important to have someone to talk to because it’s not normal or healthy for young people to have to keep secret such an important part of their lives. Remember, Headrest has a gay-positive Teen Info Line PFLAG NH has listings of safe people with whom you may talk.

Other NH Gay-Positive Resources:

So. NH HIV/AIDS Task Force	(603) 595-8464
PFLAG NH Helpline	211
Headrest Teenline	(800) 639-6095
Youth Support Groups:	
Concord Outright	(603) 224-2407
Manchester Outright	(603) 537-7004
Seacoast Outright	seacoastoutright.org

GROWING UP GAY

A BROCHURE FOR YOUNG MEN

Information for gay youth and young men about their sexuality

Brought to you by PFLAG-NH (Parents, Friends, and Families of Lesbians and Gays), a national organization with 4 chapters in New Hampshire:

Concord • Plymouth
Keene • Seacoast

Support

To cope with an adverse society

Education

To enlighten an ill-informed public

Advocacy

To secure equal rights for all

PO Box 957
Concord, NH 03302

<http://pflagnh.org/>

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WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE GAY?

Men who call themselves gay are sexually attracted to and fall in love with other men. Their sexual feelings toward men are normal and natural for them. These feelings emerge when they are boys and the feelings continue into adulthood. Although some gay men may also be attracted to women, they usually say that their feelings for men are stronger.

In any large group of people, there are usually several gay people present. However, you cannot tell whether or not someone is gay unless he or she wants you to know. Gay people blend right in with other people.

Gay teenagers may not be able to specify just why they feel different. All of the guys they know seem to be attracted to girls, so they don't know where they fit in and they may not feel comfortable talking with an adult about their feelings.

"I never had any real attractions towards women, but I really knew that I was gay when puberty began. I felt an attraction toward the other boys and I was curious to find out what they were like."

James, age 17

Remember, gay people are out there, wherever you are. Trust your instincts. Sooner or later you will meet someone who feels some of the same things you do.

"When I first met another gay person, I felt excited, anxious, nervous and happy. There was an incredible relief to know that I was not alone, that there was someone else like me. It was also intimidating, not knowing what to expect, but I quickly loosened up and felt relaxed."

Nathan, age 18

HOW DO I KNOW IF I'M GAY?

You may not know all your sexual feelings. You don't have to rush and decide how to label yourself right now. Our sexual identities develop over time. Most adolescent boys have strong sexual feelings during the years around puberty (usually between 11 and 15 years old), when their bodies start changing and their hormones are flowing in new ways. As you get older, you will figure out whom you are really attracted to.

Boys with truly gay feelings find that over time, their attractions to boys and men get more clearly focused. You may find yourself falling in love with your classmates or maybe developing a crush on a particular adult man. You may find these experiences pleasurable, troubling or a mix of the two.

If you think you might be gay, ask yourself:

- When I dream or fantasize sexually, is it about boys or girls?
- Have I ever had a crush or been in love with a boy or a man?
- Are my feelings for boys and men true and clear?

If you cannot answer these questions now, don't worry. You will be more sure in time. You, and only you, know how to label yourself correctly.

MAKING CONTACT

You may be ready to find out more. Start by reading. If you feel comfortable, ask the librarian in your public library. If your library does not have much on sexuality, or if you aren't comfortable requesting them in person, call the Family Resource Connection at 1-800-298-4321. Books and videos will be mailed to you at no cost, along with a postage paid mailer to return them. This service is free and confidential. You may also want to check out the Gay section of a large bookstore. The Southern NH HIV/AIDS Task Force and the PFLAG NH Chapters in Concord and on the Seacoast offer confidential lending libraries of gay-positive books and videos.

There are several organizations listed in this brochure that will provide you with accurate, current and specific HIV/AIDS information, along with a counselling and support.

PFLAG NH has a Helpline (211) and HEADREST has a teen info-line (800) 639-6095.

Both will let you talk about your feelings and will direct you to other organizations that help gay people. We can also refer you to gay-positive adults in your school and community.

WILL I EVER HAVE SEX?

Naturally, you think about finding an outlet for your sexual feelings. Becoming a healthy sexual person is part of the coming out process. You may be scared at the prospect of having sex. This is normal for everyone. No one should start having sex until he or she is ready. Until then, you may choose to masturbate or fantasize.

Sex should only happen between mature individuals who care about each other. You will know when the time is right. What counts is that whatever form of sexual expression you decide on, it should feel right for you and your partner.