

DART Women's Edition June 1998



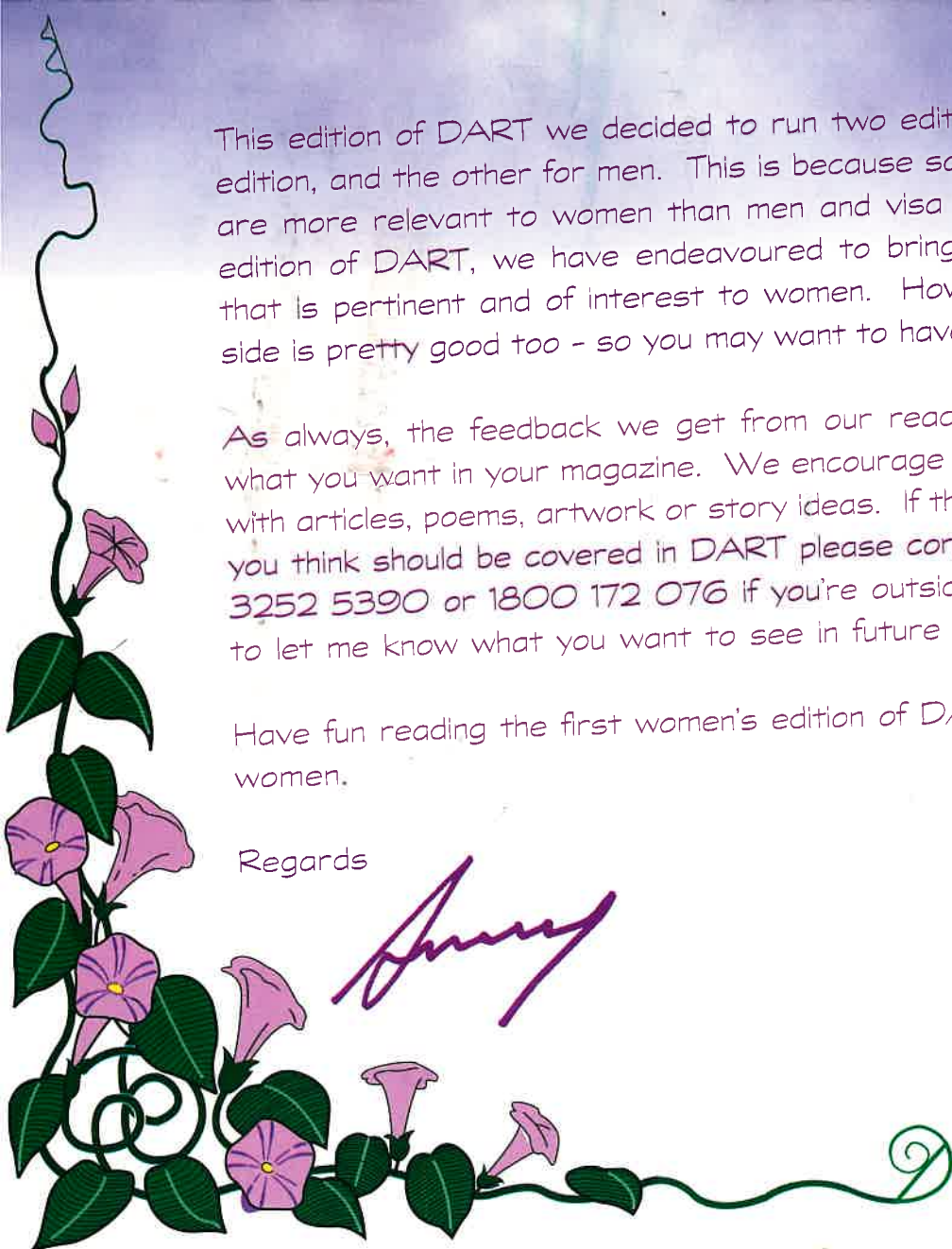
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This edition of DART we decided to run two editions in one - one a women's edition, and the other for men. This is because some injecting drug use issues are more relevant to women than men and visa versa. In this, the women's edition of DART, we have endeavoured to bring you a range of information that is pertinent and of interest to women. However, the stuff in the men's side is pretty good too - so you may want to have a read of their side as well!

As always, the feedback we get from our readers is the best indication of what you want in your magazine. We encourage our readers to drop us a line with articles, poems, artwork or story ideas. If there are issues or information you think should be covered in DART please contact me at QuIVAA on (07) 3252 5390 or 1800 172 076 if you're outside the Brisbane Metro Area, to let me know what you want to see in future editions.

Have fun reading the first women's edition of DART - written for women by women.


Regards




QuIVAA Playgroup-
free playgroup for drug users
with children. Non-judgemental &
friendly environment.
For info. contact Josy at
QuIVAA on (07) 3252 5390


Domestic Violence
Telephone Service-
a 24 hour, 7 day a week
service for those people
affected by domestic Violence
1800 811 811


Services offering a needle
exchange service donated
by  symbol.


Brisbane Youth Service (BYS)-
offers a range of services
for young women
14 Church Street,
Fortitude Valley
(07) 3252 3750 

Hepatitis C Council-
information, education,
counselling & referral for
women living with Hep C, their
family and friends
(07) 3229 3767

Brisbane Sexual Health-
free & confidential testing,
treatment & counselling
484 Adelaide Street
BRISBANE
(07) 3227 8666 

QLD AIDS Council-
information, education,
referral & treatments for
women living with HIV/AIDS,
their family and friends
(07) 3844 1990 

SQWISI-
information, referral, free &
confidential sexual health clinic
for workers in the sex industry
404 Montague Rd, West End
(07) 3844 4565 

KOBI House-
Sexual health clinic,
free & confidential testing,
treatment & counselling
Toowoomba Base Hospital
Wilmot Street
(07) 4631 6446 

Ladies Chat Group-
for women injectors on the
Gold Coast. For details
contact Di at GAIN
on (07) 5575 5144
Mon-Fri, 9am - 5pm

I Have Nothing Left To Give

I have nothing left to give -

My love was abducted and taken advantage of,
My individuality was stolen by one who preferred it
to her own.

I hocked my integrity in the name of unity,
My dignity was shed like an old overcoat.

My intelligence was prostituted to support my
habits,

I lost my loyalty one night in a coke induced haze,
My romance dribbled down the drain with my
sickness the next morning

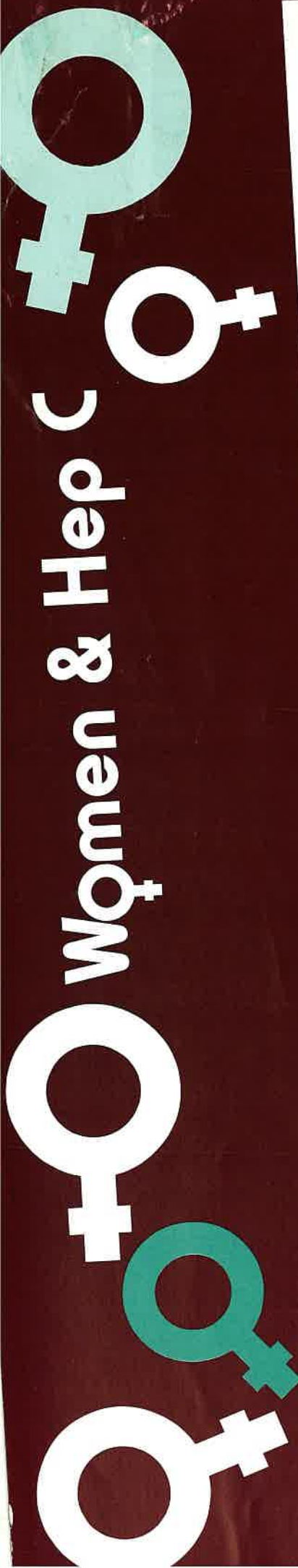
So I killed my kindness in retribution

I have nothing left to give

I have nothing to bring to you but my own confusion

Imogen, 1998

Artwork- Tinka Cowlam



The following small excerpt is taken from the 'Women and Hepatitis C' booklet produced by the Hepatitis C Council of Queensland. There are many issues specific to women with regard to the hepatitis C virus and this 40 page booklet covers most of them. For more details regarding this resource booklet, contact the Hepatitis C Council on (07) 3229 9238.

WHAT IS THE RISK OF PASSING HEPATITIS C TO MY CHILDREN?

If you have hepatitis C it is OK to have a baby. Throughout the world, the overall chances of transmitting the hepatitis C virus to your baby while pregnant or during delivery are between 1-5% when you have detectable levels of the virus in your blood (HCV-RNA positive). In Australia, the transmission rate is considered to be in the lower range.

Mothers with very low levels of the virus (HCV-RNA negative where the virus cannot be found in the blood) are highly unlikely to transmit the virus to their baby. Women infected with both HIV and hepatitis C are at significantly higher risk of transmitting the virus to their baby than mothers who have only the hepatitis C virus. It is highly unlikely that fathers with the hepatitis C virus will pass on the hepatitis virus to their baby.

All babies whose mothers have or have had hepatitis C will have antibodies showing up in their blood (these are the antibodies that all people exposed to hepatitis C produce against the virus). These antibodies have been acquired from the mother during pregnancy, but they usually disappear by about 18 months and do not affect your baby in any way.

Having antibodies does not mean your baby has contracted hepatitis C. However, when an infant is found to have the hepatitis C virus they have the same chances as adults of getting rid of the infection or becoming chronically infected.

Deciding whether to have your child tested can be a very hard decision for you and your partner to make. Some parents prefer to wait to have their child tested as a young adult. It may be useful to look at why you want your child tested, and how it will benefit your child to know if he or she does have hepatitis C.

Children living in a household where one or two parents have hepatitis C need to be educated about the risks of transmission of the disease. In fact, all children need this information nowadays. Schools and child-care facilities are very aware of this. All of these facilities have an obligation to have procedures in place for dealing with blood spills. If all blood is treated as if it is infectious, then the risk of a child passing on the disease to another will be minimal.

Some parents might find that after considering all the issues there is no benefit in having their child tested. If you decide to have your child tested, it is best to wait until infants are 18 months old, when all the antibodies acquired from the mother are gone.

Talking with the child's doctor and your liver specialist can help guide your decision. Many mothers discover that they have hepatitis C after they have had children, and some do not know exactly when they first got the infection, so it can be hard to know whether they had the virus before they had children. This can be a scary time for these mothers who may wonder whether

their children also have the hepatitis C virus. Again, it is important to remember that the chances of transmission are small. The decision to disclose that you have contracted hepatitis C to your children and partner can be very difficult and there are a number of issues involved. Counselling during this time may help provide education and support.

CAN I BREAST-FEED?

This question concerns a lot of women who wish to have children. For most mothers breast feeding their baby is an important and enjoyable part of being a mother. Several studies of breast-feeding mothers show that not one breast fed baby who was checked for up to a year, whose mothers have hepatitis C, became infected with hepatitis C. Scientists have found indicators of the virus in some mothers breast milk and colostrum (the breast fluid produced by the mother in the first few days of breast feeding) but not enough to transmit Hepatitis C.

Scientists believe that the virus is inactivated in the gut of the child and is unable to be transmitted in this way. Remember, hepatitis C is spread by blood to blood contact.

Cracked nipples and lesions in and outside the baby's mouth may be a source of entry for the infection. It is important to treat cracked nipples so they do not bleed. The benefits of breast feeding far outweigh the remote possibility of passing on the virus.

Breast milk produced by the mother protects the baby from all sorts of infections, however the final decision of whether to breast feed or bottle feed is entirely up to the parents.

QuIVAA Playgroup

QuIVAA are running a free alternative playgroup. We provide lunch, activities for the children, great atmosphere, company and support in a non-judgemental, friendly atmosphere.

A Nurse is on duty to provide child health development checks and to answer questions you may have about your health or your child's.

For more information about the playgroup, please call Josy at QuIVAA for more information on (07) 3252 5390.



The Hepatitis C Council of Queensland's publication 'Women and Hepatitis C' is a comprehensive resource written by women for women. It covers a multitude of topics about both Hepatitis C generally, and Hepatitis C as it relates to women.

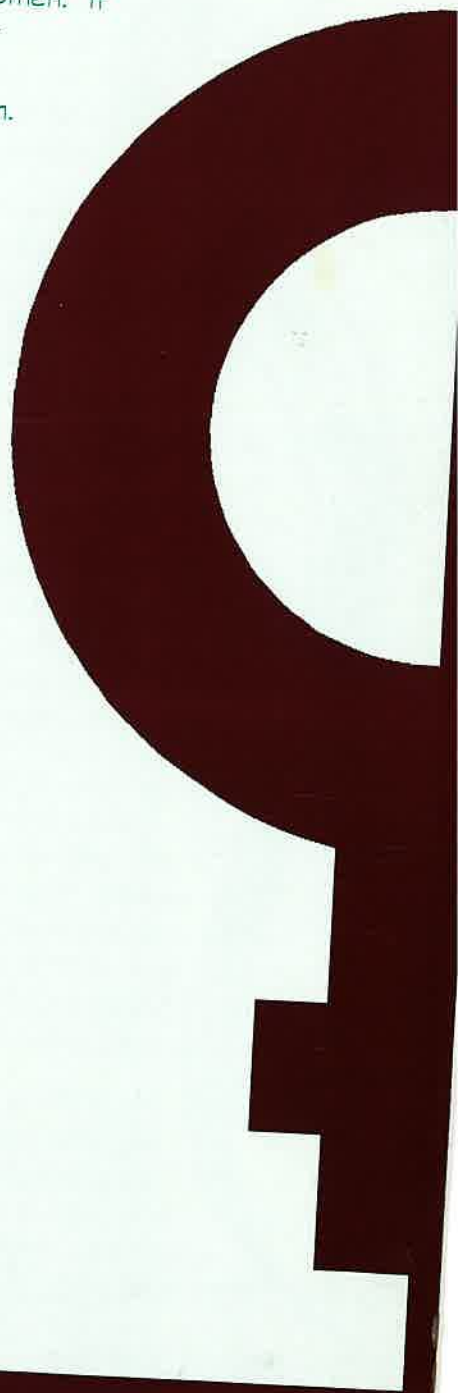
Copies of this resource are available at QuIVAA and most needle exchanges, or directly from the Hepatitis C Council of Queensland.

The Hepatitis C Council of Queensland also has a specific counsellor available for people with hepatitis C, their family, partners and friends.

Appointments are available every Wednesday afternoon. The counselling is done at the Brisbane Sexual Health Clinic at 484 Adelaide Street.


For appointments phone Lyndall Garrett on (07) 3362 0488 during business hours.

All other enquiries and requests for copies of the 'Women and Hepatitis C' booklet can be directed to Max or Jeff on (07) 3229 3767 or 1800 648 491.



Tiddas News

Indigenous Women's Information



Hi there I'm Bubba'ue, and I'm the new Indigenous Women's Officer at QuIVAA. I work alongside James in the Indigenous Unit. We offer information, referral and support for Murri people using drugs, their friends, family and peers. In our dealings within the community we've noticed a lot of problems with drugs and the way they're being used. Unsafe sex is also a big problem. These problems are everywhere in our community, not just in Brisbane.

If you are using needles for your drugs they should be brand new clean ones, that have never been used before. This is because if you share needles, you can also contract viruses like HIV/AIDS or Hepatitis C. Sometimes it's hard to get new needles, but if you're having troubles getting some, give us a call, and we can let you know where to get them in your area.

If you already have HIV/AIDS or Hep C, then you should still be careful to only use new clean needles, as you can pass these viruses onto other people if they use your equipment, and you can even make your own sickness worse by re-infecting yourself with a different strain of the same virus.

Some people have been using needles from their family and friends insulin packs, and then putting them back again and hoping they won't notice. Even if you clean the needles after doing this, you can pass on any viruses you might have to the person who the pack belongs to. You can also get viruses if you use old insulin needles that someone has already used. I've met Murri diabetics who have got HIV/AIDS or Hep C because someone has used their needles this way.

Some people are also using horse needles to inject their drugs. This is a bad idea because the thickness of the needle on a horse needle is a lot bigger than on the ones you should be using, and because of this you can do major damage to your veins. Not only is this dangerous and uncomfortable, but you will also end up with huge scars from doing it. Once again, it's best to get new clean needles (of the right sort) from a needle exchange. If you're worried about someone seeing you walking away from a needle exchange with a brown paper bag then maybe you can take another bag or a backpack to put your new clean equipment into. If you are using drugs with a few friends, then maybe you can take it in turns to go to the exchange and get stuff for all of you, although you should get fresh equipment each - not fresh equipment to share!

Don't forget that a needle exchange also takes back the used needles. This way you know that they are in a safe place, and they're out of your way, so no-one can find them! If you get rid of the dirty ones as soon as you've used them, then you won't be tempted to use them again, or give them to a friend to use. Also all needle exchanges are 100% confidential, so they won't let anyone know that you've been there.

Yarndie (Marijuana) is still being used a lot in the community as well. Yarndie has a lot of bad side effects, and because it has a lot of tar in it is bad for your lungs as well. There's no shame in limiting yourself to just a social smoke, or even saying no altogether. Another thing to remember about using drugs is that it can make you do things you wouldn't normally do - like have unsafe sex. There are lots of viruses and sexually transmitted infections that you can get if you do have unsafe sex. The best way to protect yourself and the person you're having sex with is to use condoms or other safe sex equipment. Safe sex stuff is also available at your local needle exchange. If you have safe sex, not only are you protecting yourself against sexually transmitted infections, but you also minimise the risk of unwanted pregnancy.

It's up to us, as strong Murri women, to look after ourselves and our families by insisting on safe sex and safe injecting equipment. Respect yourself by using safe sex and new injecting equipment, and help protect your family and friends by encouraging them to do the same. We are a strong community, and we need to help ourselves to stay healthy. Any questions you have about drug use, feel free to give us a call on (07) 3252 5390. We also have a freecall number for people not in Brisbane - it is 1800 172 076. We're open from Monday - Friday, 9am - 5pm, and we're always happy to have a yarn.

Regards, Bubba'ue

Women's Legal Service

387 Ipswich Road, Annerley (Cnr. Ipswich Road and Ponsonby Street)

- ◆ Free appointments with a Solicitor
- ◆ Free appointments with a Domestic Violence Worker
- ◆ Telephone Information Line available between 10am - 1pm and 2pm - 4pm every week day

Women's Legal Service provides free legal information, advice and referrals to women in all areas of the law.

Legal advice is available by appointment during the day or during legal advice sessions on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings between 6.30pm - 8.30pm at their premises in Ipswich Road. You can telephone in advance for these evening sessions, or just drop in, however for detailed enquiries it is best to ring and book a daytime appointment. All services are free of charge, individual and the strictest confidentiality is adhered to.

For information, appointments or telephone advice, contact the Women's Legal Service on their

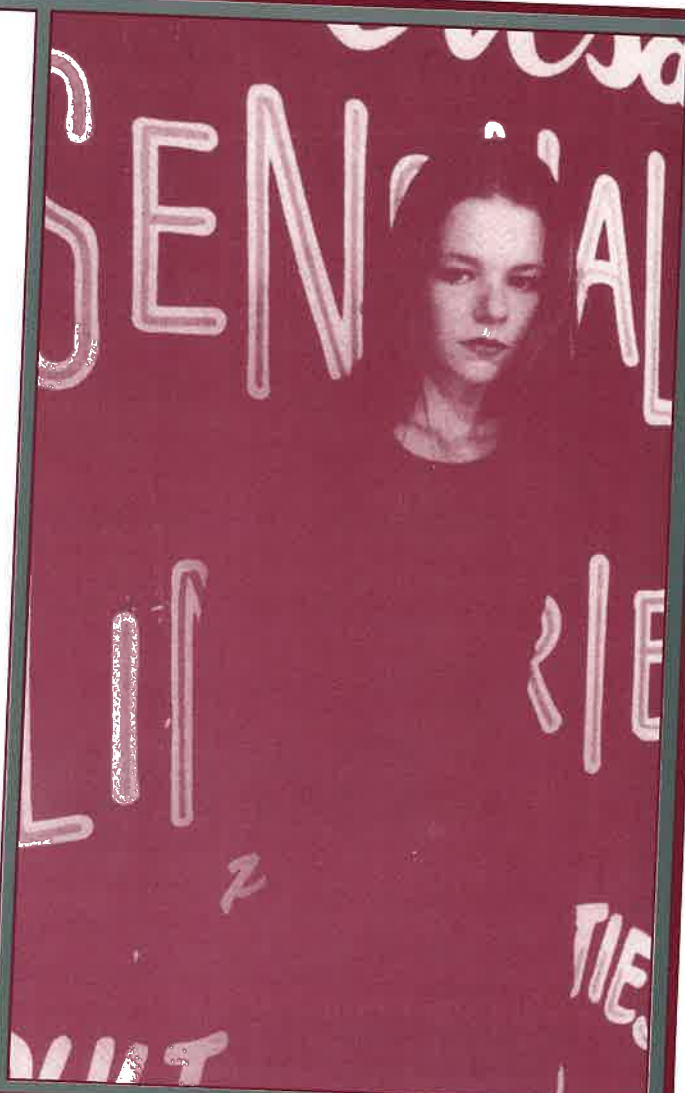
Client Advice Line
(07) 3392 0670 or 1800 677 278

♀ USING? ♀ YOUNG WOMEN 25 & UNDER

BRISBANE YOUTH SERVICE (BYS) INVITES WOMEN 25 AND UNDER TO CONTRIBUTE THEIR FANTASTIC THOUGHTS AND TALES FOR THE MAKING OF A STORY/INFORMATION BOOK WRITTEN BY YOUNG WOMEN FOR YOUNG WOMEN ABOUT DRUG USE.

PUT YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS IN WRITING, DRAWINGS OR JUST COME IN. FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL SARAH AT BYS ON (07) 3252 3750 OR ANNA AT QUIVAA ON (07) 3252 5390

BYS WILL PAY FOR CONTRIBUTIONS WHICH ARE USED.





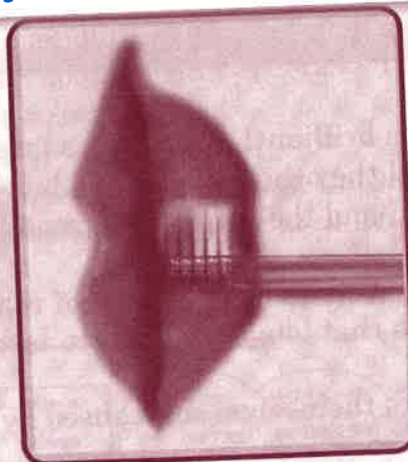
Oral Sex: A Mouth Hazard

Your mouth can be an easy place to pick up and pass on a wide range of diseases, including Hep A, B, C & HIV.

Here's a few tips on reducing the risks:
A healthy mouth is a safe mouth so...

1. *Get your mouth into shape:*

- go for a dental check-up
- get any holes filled
- get your own brush, avoid the risks of sharing someone else's as you could catch Hep C and other nasties
- start brushing your teeth & gums every day & only ever use a "soft" tooth brush and try using dental floss to clean between the teeth



2. Bleeding gums are a sign of infection and can be treated. Get to a dentist now!

3. Don't ignore tooth aches or try to mask the pain by taking more gear than usual. Pain is your body saying "there's something wrong". Get it checked out.

4. If you are having oral sex:

- always use a condom or a dental dam (whichever is appropriate!). Flavoured ones, (vanilla, strawberry, apple etc) can be a turn on.
- don't brush your teeth before having oral sex, wait until after
- rinse before and after with an anti-bacterial rinse such as 'Savacol' or 'Listerine'

Get a healthy mouth: They look good, smell good, feel good and taste fantastic!

Going down?!?

Jane Stanard



Reproduced with permission from KRC Magazine
Original design - Tim Baxter

Our friends over at SQWISI have a great new service they are operating for workers in the sex industry. Following on from SIR (the men's outreach project) and HER (the women's outreach project) is the new project SERV. SERV stands for Sexual-health, education and referral van, and true to it's name, SERV is a one-stop sexual health clinic and educational resource on wheels.

SERV operates every Thursday night at a variety of convenient venues including Albert Park from 7.30 pm - 9.30 pm and in Brunswick Street from 10 pm to Midnight.

The Brunswick Street services operate from 10 pm - 11 pm near the Nightowl convenience store, and from 11 pm - midnight near the corner of Arthur Street.

The van has Kathrine, the friendly SQWISI clinician on board. She provides confidential medical assessment and treatment. Also on board are trained SQWISI staff, who are able to bring you up to date on what's happening, and give you the latest resources.

For further details about SERV, or any of the other SQWISI services, call SQWISI on (07) 3844 4565 during business hours, Monday - Friday or drop in at 404 Montague Road West End.

Let's Talk About Sex.....

Deciding to have safe, or safer, sex is something for individuals to decide. A lot of factors have to be considered. A lot of the time getting around to the topic of safe sex is more of a drama than having safe sex!

When you've only just met someone it can be really difficult to talk about - and when you've known someone, or been with someone for ages, it can be just as bad!

There is no one correct way to bring up the topic of safe sex. Some ways that you may wish to try are-

'If it's not on, it's not on'

'Do you mind if we use one of these?'

'I prefer to have safe sex'

You can even make a joke to bring up the topic!

Sometimes in the heat of the moment it's easy to think 'I know them - they won't give me anything', but as well as the possibility of unwanted pregnancy (in some cases) unprotected sex can give you a whole lot more than just a great orgasm!

Sexually transmitted infections don't always have symptoms - people can have some STI's for years and not even know, so the only way to be sure you are not at risk is to be safe!

It's often a good idea to talk about safe sex before things start getting hot and steamy. In this way you can be sure that you and your partner are in agreement, and you can get down to the business at hand.

Also, by having safe sex as a set routine in your life, you're not as likely to do something different when you've had a few drinks or some drugs.

The main thing is to remember you are important, and you deserve to be protected and safe at all times, especially when you're having sex!



A Reader's Story

I'm a 33 year old HIV positive woman. I was diagnosed as positive 6 years ago through a routine blood test. At first I couldn't figure out how I could have contracted HIV - I had used heroin for about 3 years in my early twenties, but only with my partner at the time, and we never shared needles with anyone else.

After the initial shock of finding out I was positive, I became obsessed with knowing how and when I could have been exposed. After ruling out virtually every opportunity, I figured that I must have contracted HIV when I was using.

I started using just after I met Steve (not his real name). He had been using for a few years, but when we met he was only using occasionally. After about a year of using just now and again, we got more into it. I was working at two jobs at the time to try and support our habits, so Steve would usually be the one to go and score.

We had our own sort of ritual in the way we'd use - he'd get the gear and bring it home, then we'd mix up and use. Because my veins were so thin, Steve would have his shot, and then he'd inject me. I never thought much of sharing a syringe with Steve, because after all we were partners, and besides he knew all about using and I didn't.

Things continued on in this way, and months turned into years. Eventually I decided that I was over using, over having no money, over always having to wonder how we would afford the next shot. I tried to talk about getting clean with Steve, but he wanted to keep using. I tried to get clean and stay with Steve, but it just didn't work out - I couldn't cope with seeing him use but not using myself. Eventually I made the decision to leave him and get clean. It wasn't an easy time - I loved Steve very much, but I knew that was the only way I would be able to get off the gear and stay off.

We stayed in contact for a while, but I found that it was too easy to use when he was around, so we slowly drifted apart. Life went on as it does, and I met Brett (not his real name) and we've been together ever since. He's not HIV positive, but he's been a great support to me in helping me work through the issues surrounding discovering you're HIV positive.

I tried to contact Steve when I found out I was positive, and found out he had died of an overdose not long before. No-one knew whether or not he was positive, but the woman he was seeing after has HIV too, so I'd say it's likely he was.

It's easy to get angry in retrospect, but I wish that I had taken the time to learn all I could about what I was doing, and how to protect myself. I am not a powerless person, but I let Steve have all the power in that area of our lives, and now I guess I'm paying for it.

If I knew then what I know now I would still have used, but I would have been in control of the situation - I would have known how to hit myself up, and I would never have shared with anyone, even if they were my partner. There is information out there at needle exchanges and other health services about how to protect yourself. It only takes 5 minutes to talk to one of the staff at an exchange and get all of the information you need to stay safe. Safe against HIV/AIDS and safe against Hepatitis C.

Now I get all the information I can about my health, and am able to make informed choices for myself about my future. I wish that I had done that all along, because if I had, I wouldn't be telling you this now.

Home Detox Service

Going through heroin detox is a challenging and anxiety provoking experience for anyone. Most facilities available for detox are clinical and can be quite impersonal.

For women with children it can also mean difficulty in finding a safe place to leave their children. For this reason we have found that many mothers have chosen to utilise our home detox programme for heroin users.

It has been argued that the experience of watching a parent going through drug addiction detox is traumatic for children, however the support provided by the trained volunteer carers in this programme helps to reduce the stress in this situation considerably.

For example, the volunteers are available to take the children to day care or to school, prepare meals for them and to help keep them entertained and safe.

It appears through feedback that we have received from women who have participated in QuIVAA's Home Detox Project that the therapeutic benefits inherent in this project are numerous, whether or not they have children.

Firstly, being in their own home is a safe and comfortable environment, where they can access their own belongings and avoid judgements being placed on them.

Secondly, most have said that it is empowering to know that they can endure detoxing in their own home where the temptation to use is so confronting.

Thirdly, the services provided by the Sunbeam Detox Clinic (natural therapies), are invaluable in assisting clients to feel relaxed and to decrease the physical and psychological pain they are feeling.

These benefits are fantastic, but for mothers and other women with family/partner commitments it appears that being able to stay with their loved ones in their own homes is the biggest advantage.

For further information about QuIVAA's Home Detox Service, contact Angela or Vanessa at QuIVAA on (07) 3252 5390.



The Home Detox Project is still looking for volunteers to help detox people from heroin in their own homes.

QuIVAA provides full training.

For more information about becoming a Home Detox Volunteer, call (07) 3252 5390.



The QuilVAA Top Nine Overdose Myths

MYTH 1

If someone drops, it is best to lie them down somewhere and leave them to "sleep it off".

WRONG!

Leaving someone on their own could result in death. It only takes a few minutes for someone to stop breathing and die. Even if the person is breathing, they need someone to make sure that they don't stop breathing. They may also roll onto their back and choke if they vomit. Someone needs to make sure that they lie on their side (in the recovery position) to keep their airways open until help arrives. If someone drops, and they are not breathing and/or don't have a pulse, administer first aid and call an ambulance!

MYTH 2

Hitting someone up with water or salty water will bring them around if they have overdosed.

WRONG!

Injecting a person with water will have no effect at all if they have overdosed. Water is not the antidote to heroin or other drugs and will not reduce or "waterdown" the effect or the amount of the drug they have taken. Injecting large amounts of water can cause veins to collapse, cause swelling in the brain by having extremely high levels of fluid in the blood and can overload the kidneys.

MYTH 3

If someone drops you should put them in the shower or bath.

WRONG!

Water is one of the quickest ways to raise or lower a person's body temperature. If you put someone who has overdosed in a shower or bath you could send them into shock by changing their body temperature too quickly. They could also drown if their lungs get filled up with water. All this will achieve is to waste precious time!

MYTH 4

If someone who has dropped doesn't respond, walking them around will bring them back.

WRONG!

If someone hasn't responded to your attempts to bring them around, they might be unconscious. Forcing them to walk around if they are not breathing will only waste the short amount of time you have to get help and get them breathing again. If they are unconscious, moving them around a lot could also cause serious internal injuries.

MYTH 5

If you have dropped and been given a shot of Narcan to bring you around, it is safe to have another shot straight away.

WRONG!

The effects of Narcan are only temporary. The Narcan will wear off pretty fast and having another shot could make you drop again. In fact, even if you don't have another shot after you have been hit up with Narcan, you could drop again, particularly if you have got a long acting drug like methadone in your system. So you should make sure someone keeps an eye on you if you have dropped once and have been given Narcan. It is also important to remember that Narcan only works on opioids (heroin, methadone etc.). It does not work on pills, alcohol, speed, etc. So, if you have taken a cocktail of drugs, even if you are given a shot of Narcan to bring you around, you will still be out of it on the other stuff and need someone to keep an eye on you.

MYTH 6

Most overdoses happen because the purity of the dope suddenly changes.

WRONG!

The majority of overdoses in the community happen because people mix their drugs. For example, people taking drugs such as heroin, alcohol, benzos and methadone at the same time. Sudden changes in the purity of the heroin alone are rarely the cause of overdoses.

MYTH 7

It is usually new users who overdose.

WRONG!

Research on this issue in NSW shows that the first overdose usually happens after the person has been using heroin for at least two years.

MYTH 8

Suicide is the most common reason people overdose.

WRONG!

Research on this issue shows that the majority of drug overdoses are accidental, rather than an attempt at suicide.

MYTH 9

It is contaminants in the dope that cause overdose.

WRONG!

Research on this issue shows that contaminants are rarely, if ever, found in samples of street drugs such as heroin, speed, coke etc.