



CARE ABOUT YOUR SEXUALITY

It is important too!

INFORMATIVE GUIDE AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION FOR I M M I G R A N T S

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1. CARE ABOUT YOUR SEXUALITY. IT IS IMPORTANT TOO

Arriving in a new country means many changes and often many difficulties to overcome, such as adapting to new customs, learning the language, finding a job and somewhere to live, sorting out papers and permits, and also navigating the health system.

Throughout this process, doubts and queries may arise, along with various difficulties, however, in turn, numerous new possibilities may open up for every individual.

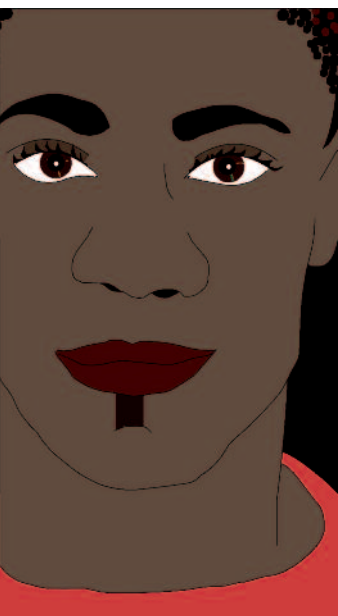
Taking care of your health is essential in helping you to face all these challenges, make the most of opportunities, and to feel good about yourself.

We need to take care of our health and that of course includes our sexuality. This means taking time to think a little about our habits and behaviour, and introducing small changes which can help us to avoid some problems, and obviously this can also affect our quality of life in terms of our sexual health.

Good health is important for everyone and good health includes sexual health, which, as we shall see, covers contraception, and prevention of STIs (sexually transmitted infections) but there is much more to it than that...



This guide provides some suggestions for caring for your sexuality and how to make the best use of the resources available to you.



2. THE RIGHT TO HEALTH

2.1. To take care of your health in Spain you need to know that....

- All foreigners (with or without "papers") residing in Spain and who are registered as residents with the local authority known as the **padrón municipal** are entitled to health care in the same conditions as Spanish nationals.
- In Spain, foreigners are entitled to **emergency** public health care in the event of accident or serious illness.
- Foreigners under the age of eighteen are entitled to health care in the same conditions as Spaniards.

- Foreign women who are pregnant in Spain are entitled to health care during pregnancy, birth and antenatal care.

DUTIES: All citizens using the Spanish health system, in addition to the rights to which they are entitled, are also required to comply with a number of duties. Some examples of these are: using the installations in a correct manner, respecting the regulations of each health centre and its staff, and making appropriate use of the resources available, to name just a few.

2.2. What is the Padrón Municipal?

The Padrón Municipal is a register which records all the residents living a particular municipal district.

Registration in the Padrón Municipal is a right and also a duty of all foreigners living in Spain. Once you are registered you become a regular resident with all the civic rights and duties that this entails.

Everyone, whether they have papers or not, is entitled to be registered in the Padrón Municipal.

It is free to register and has several **advantages** such as:

- You will be able to obtain a health card or Tarjeta Sanitaria which entitles you to medical attention and if you need to buy any medicine, this will entitle you to a reduction in price.
- Registration will also allow you to send your children to Public Primary Schools as well as subsidised private schools and to apply for grants and aid.
- You will gain access to numerous programmes run by the local authority, providing information, guidance and support.

The Town Hall or the Council offices of the place where you live will inform you on how to register on the Padrón Municipal.

2.3. The Tarjeta Sanitaria and health centres

The **Tarjeta Sanitaria** entitles you to use the public health system. Once you have obtained the health card or Tarjeta Sanitaria you will be assigned a medical doctor at your local health centre, and a professional nurse who will normally attend you.

Everyone whether they have "papers" or not, is entitled to a Tarjeta Sanitaria or health card.

You can consult your general practitioner or First Aid Doctor on issues concerning **sexual health**, for example, advice and guidance if you have had unprotected sex, what to do if you suspect that you have caught a sexually transmitted infection, information on family planning and contraception, advice in any situation of mistreatment, free HIV testing (AIDS virus) etc.

If you need it, your general practitioner may refer you to a specialist, for example, a gynaecologist or urologist.

If you are a woman and you are pregnant, you will also be assigned a midwife who will help to prepare you for the birth and who will monitor your pregnancy.

2.4. How do I apply for a “Tarjeta Sanitaria”?

IT IS IMPORTANT TO OBTAIN THE TARJETA SANITARIA card if you want to have access to regular medical assistance. The Health Centre in your area will help you to apply. Some non-governmental organisations (or NGOs) or immigrant aid associations will also offer support and advice on obtaining the health card and they will explain the Spanish health system to you.

In order to apply for the health card normally you will need to submit:

- A certificate of your registration as a local resident known as the empadronamiento.
- A copy of your Passport or other identity document.
- In some Spanish municipal districts they will also ask you for a Social Security number (you can obtain this in any Social Security Office if you are in work. If you do not work or you do not have a work contract, you will need a certification indicating your financial situation which can be obtained from the Tax Office known as the Delegación de Hacienda).

You should know that you can still receive medical treatment without a Health Card in the following cases:

If you have suffered an accident, or if you are ill or have an urgent health problem.

If you are under 18

If you are a pregnant woman

In Spain, everyone, whether they have “papers” or not, is entitled to health care in the event of illness or emergency.

2.5. Sexual health clinics

In some areas the Spanish health system includes clinics which are specifically concerned with sexual health: information and sexual orientation centres, prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases, contraception, emergency contraception (the “morning after pill”), medical and legal advice on voluntary pregnancy termination (abortion) free HIV/AIDS testing.

Your local health centre will tell you whether they can offer you these services or whether you will need to go to another clinic. Like all the other services, they are free and some clinics do not ask for your health card.

Don't hesitate! If you have any kind of worries or problems regarding your sexuality, ask for help!

2.6. Social services

Social services provide help and advice and offer a number of services: legal assistance, psychological support, special attention, cultural and employment assistance

It is important to remember that social services will always help you, it does not matter whether you have a residence or work permit or not.

Generally, you can seek help at the social services department of your local authority, where they will make an appointment for you if needed.



3. OTHER USEFUL RESOURCES

There are a number of centres, bodies and NGOs which also provide free help and confidential advice regarding health or social issues:

- **Women's centres:** these provide information and guidance services to women on a number of issues: employment assistance, legal advice, information on rights and duties, attention and support in cases of domestic violence, information on useful resources, cultural activities etc.
- **Youth centres:** these generally provide help and advice on sexual matters
- **Employment offices support,** information and advice on employment and training courses.
- **Police station:** where apart from reporting crimes you can process certain documents such as passports.
- **Civil Registry** these provide birth, marriage and death certificates, or family documentation known as the libro de familia
- **Trade unions:** these provide guidance and support to workers of all nationalities and they usually also organise activities for immigrant workers, both those working with valid contracts and those who are currently unemployed.
- **Drug addiction centres:** there are various centres dedicated to helping those with any kind of addiction providing them with the support they need to overcome their addiction.
- **Education counsellors:** these provide information on what you need to do to enrol your children at primary and

secondary school, they can advise on after school activities and grants for these, school lunches and school transport, grants, Spanish courses both for children and adults.

In order to access these services you will need to be registered in the padrón municipal in your area.

- **Red Cross/Red Crescent:** they have various centres providing health care to immigrants, refugees and displaced persons.



4. TALKING ABOUT SEX

Everyone has their own sexuality. Sexuality is a part of everyone, and it is present throughout our lives, although obviously we do not all live and express our sexuality in the same way.

There are as many types of sexuality as there are different people.

However, although sexuality is a part of all of us, sometimes it is difficult to talk about it. At times it is not easy to communicate something which is so bound up with our most intimate feelings, affection, reproduction, pleasure, couples etc.

This is true in many countries, as well as in Spain, and the reason is because in the past sexuality was something hidden which people did not talk about.

However, it has been shown that when we are more communicative in these matters it can actually improve our quality of life. This is why we propose to talk about sexuality here and we hope to encourage you to look at this aspect of your life and to learn more about it.

4.1. What is sexual health? What is sexuality?

Sexuality is concerned with the genitals and reproductive ability, however of course it is concerned with the whole body, and with personal relations, with couples and lovers, it is related to feelings and affection, with the search for and enjoyment of physical contact, with self esteem, with personal body image, with the roles assigned to men and women, with your own identity as a man or woman, with the skills for relating to other people, with the feelings, and emotions.

Sexual health is so much more than ensuring that you are not ill. **Sexual health is** about feeling good as a man or woman; it is feeling that relations (emotional and sexual) create wellbeing.

This is why it is important for every one to learn about and be familiar with their genitals and their body, and their way of feeling, enjoying and loving, and this will help you learn to accept and like them and learn to live your sexuality in the most satisfying manner possible which, in turn will make you happy.

Living your sexuality is not simply having sexual penetration. Sexual penetration is just one of the many ways in which, as human beings, we express our sexuality; but there are many other ways of expressing this such as: Caresses, hugs, kisses, massages, masturbation (alone or shared with your partners) caressing genitals with the mouth or tongue (oral sex), etc...

*Remember, sexuality is expressed in many ways.
The sex act is just one of many actions and it is not necessarily the most important.*

LET'S TALK ABOUT DIFFERENT KINDS OF SEXUALITY

Women's and men's sexuality are both equally important. All of us have to right to receive sexual information and to have satisfying and pleasurable sex. Naturally, it is essential for our sexual and reproductive rights to be respected.

4.2. Sexuality and different cultures

Every culture has different ideas on sexuality in term of what is understood by "sexuality", what erotic means and how much importance is attached to this in social terms, as well as what is "considered appropriate", and what is considered "inappropriate" or even punished and persecuted.

In addition, every culture has different ideas on gender roles assigned to men and women, and what it means (or entails) to be a woman or a man ("men should behave this way and women that way, men can do this but women can't, this is a woman's job, it is not man's work", and so on).

Obviously, every culture is entitled to construct its own view of sexuality and we should respect that. However, in order to merit our respect, it is essential for those attitudes to be included in the framework of human rights, and equality between men and women.

*We should think and talk about sexuality,
and in doing so ensure that our culture grows
and is increasingly enriched.*

Ideas are born, they grow change or modify, as a result of contemplation and thought. And with ideas and thought, the cultures of the world advance and go forward.

People's sexualities will also develop and change over time.

We must all work together to make sexual and reproductive rights, which are human rights, a reality in every country in the world, to be enjoyed by people of all cultures and beliefs.

4.3. Sexuality and gender

Sexuality is something that concerns both men and women. However, certain aspects of sexuality continue to be considered as mainly the province of men, or mainly that of women. For example, sometimes it is thought that pleasure is something particular to men, and that contraception is something that particularly concerns women.

However, there is no getting away from the fact that pleasure and contraception are questions that involve both men and women.

All people, men and women, have a body which provides them with the opportunity to obtain pleasure and satisfaction. And everyone, both, men and women, is responsible for preventing unwanted pregnancies, because pregnancy always "takes two".

These issues are gradually changing; however, the changes are slow to take place. Due to this fact, for many women being self aware on the erotic plane is a complicated issue, which involves getting to know their body and their genitals and learning to value their sexuality beyond the reproductive process, and discovering their own pleasure and satisfaction which is just as important as the man's.

Also gender culture, which is more deeply rooted in some societies, places many women in a difficult situation with respect to their personal and professional development. Women continue to be more involved (sometimes they are the only ones involved) in terms of **domestic tasks, family care of the children** even when they also work outside the home.

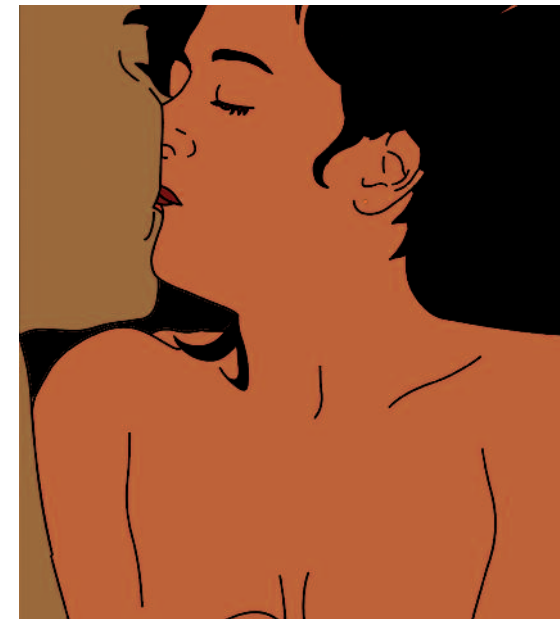
Many men continue to consider domestic work a women's responsibility. This work overload for women, in addition to being exhausting for them, means that a couple have less time to invest in their relationship.

Housework and caring for children should be a shared responsibility for both the man and the woman, especially when so many women work outside the home.

5. LEARNING ABOUT SEXUALITY MAKES SENSE

As we grow, we learn things about our sexuality. For example, we learn to value ourselves, we learn about our bodies, about love, and people who love each other and get together ... and also how to value whether sexuality is something positive or not...

What we are told and what we see has a considerable influence on our sexuality.



If we grow up believing that sexuality is something to be hidden, because it is secret and shameful, something that should not be talked about or which it is not appropriate to be curious about, we will find it hard to be self aware, to care for ourselves and in short, to enjoy and make the most of our sexuality.

Our sexuality is not something to be ashamed of, but quite the opposite, it is something valuable and important. For this reason it is worth being curious, talking, asking, finding out ... because all this will help us to live our sexuality as satisfactorily as possible.

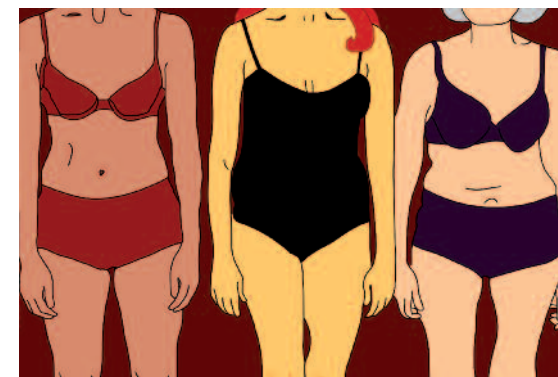
Learning about sexuality can help us to achieve many things:

- Becoming more self aware, getting to know our bodies, our desires...
- Feeling better about our relationship with our partner
- Enjoying sex more
- Discovering more about reproduction, and being a parent
- Looking after our health, avoiding unnecessary risks
- Knowing that it is possible to enjoy your sexuality without a partner and how to do this
- Contributing further to the sexual education of our children

6. OUR BODIES

6.1. Every body is different

Our sexuality is influenced by how we feel about our body, how much we like ourselves. However, for many people, especially women, it is sometimes difficult to feel at ease with their bodies.



This is often due to the “perfect” type of women shown on television, in magazines, cinema, and advertising ... with young, thin, stylish bodies ... and totally unrealistic. The models appearing in the communications media are not like many of the rest of us (older, with bigger bodies, people with disabilities, etc).

This is why it often seems that happiness and satisfaction can only be achieved by slim young people...

The reality is actually quite different ... AND MUCH BETTER. All MEN and all WOMEN **have different and beautiful bodies**, because from the moment we are born until the day we die, our bodies are sensitive and prepared for PLEASURE, for satisfaction.

All bodies are able to give and receive pleasure, to give and receive affection from the person they wish to be with.

6.2. Women's bodies, men's bodies and having sex

Our genitals are a part of our sexuality but the real sexual organ is the whole body, for both men and women. The whole body is full of sensitive feelings and possibilities for enjoying ourselves and feeling good. Reducing sexuality to what happens with the genitals is to considerably reduce sexuality.

The same occurs with sexual intercourse. Sex with penetration is also having sex but it is not the only possibility, nor is it necessarily the best or most pleasurable for all men or all women. In fact, for many people who enjoy a good sex life the coitus is not usually a customary sexual practice.

Having sex involves the whole body and the emotions. Caresses, kisses, hugging and being hugged are also ways of experiencing pleasure through our sexuality.

The idea that having sex consists only of penetration restricts many people's chances of enjoyment, as at particular moment they may not wish to have sexual penetration, or they may enjoy other types of relation. *For example, most women have orgasms more easily during sex without penetration, such as mutual masturbation or having their clitoris caressed (with the hand, rubbing or with the mouth ...).*

THIS IS WHY ALTHOUGH SEX WITH PENETRATION MAY BE ONE POSSIBILITY, IT IS IMPORTANT TO BE AWARE THAT THIS IS NOT THE MOST IMPORTANT ACT NOR DOES IT NECESSARILY GIVE THE MOST PLEASURE TO EVERYONE.

7. REPRODUCTION

Our sexuality enables us, among other things, to have children. When puberty arrives, for most people the reproductive phase of their lives begins, and with it the possibility of getting pregnant when they have sex with penetration.

Reproduction is the responsibility of both. For this reason both men and women should be involved in planning pregnancies.

Having a child can be grounds for celebration, but as long as it is a wanted child and you are in a position to enjoy it.

It is not a good idea to leave the decision of whether or not to use a condom in the hands of your partner, because your partner may have different ideas or interests from you.

On some occasions, unwanted pregnancies occur because little is known about the reproduction process or because people have mistaken ideas about contraception.

Here are some mistaken ideas which can lead to unwanted pregnancies:

Mistaken idea: "I am unlikely to get pregnant"

The truth: whenever a man and woman have unprotected sexual penetration, there is a risk of pregnancy. Some days the risk is greater than others, however that risk always exists. *Even when a woman has her period.*

Mistaken idea: "contraceptive methods are unreliable, so it makes no difference whether we use them or not".

The truth: contraceptive methods, if they are used properly, are very reliable in preventing unwanted pregnancies. There are many types of methods and centres (Health Centres, Sexuality and Contraception Consultancies) where they will tell you all about them, how they work, how they are used etc.

Mistaken idea: "it is better without a condom because it takes away the pleasure of sex".

The truth: the real pleasure in having sex comes from being relaxed with what you are doing, in the caresses you receive, contact and so on. When people are worried about risk, they become afraid and it is more difficult to enjoy yourself. Therefore, protection, which does allow you to relax, helps you feel much more pleasure.



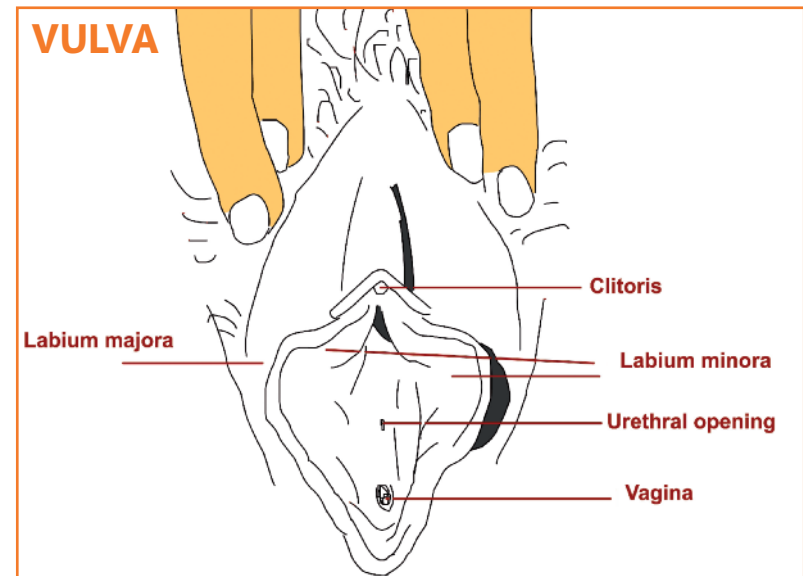
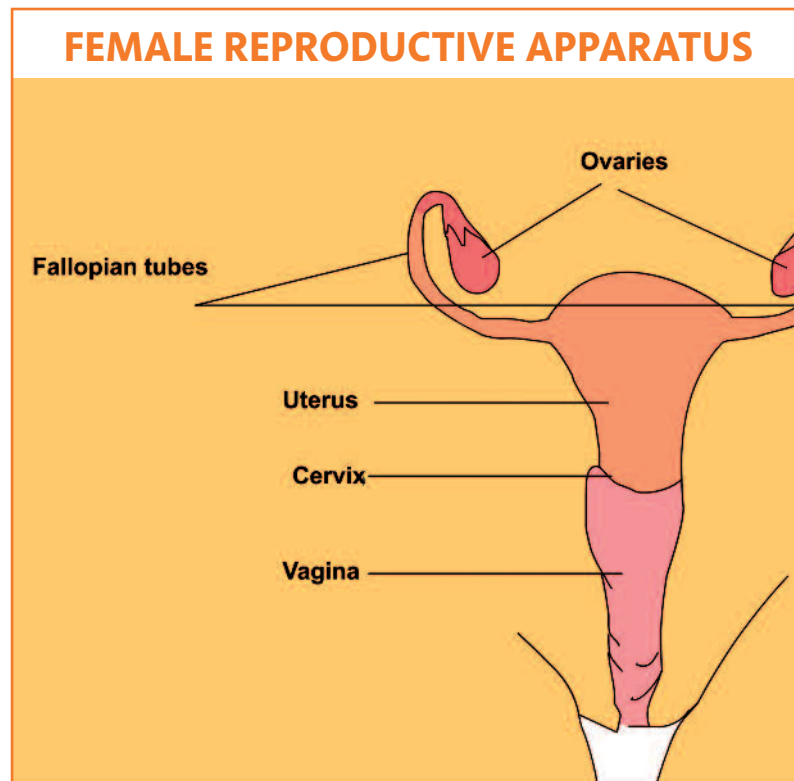
8. OUR GENITALS

Genitals are part of men and women's bodies associated with reproduction and also pleasure.

8.1. Female genitals

The female reproductive apparatus

The reproductive apparatus is part of a woman's genitals. This part is internal and cannot be seen from outside. It is for reproduction and has several different parts: **ovaries**, **Fallopian tubes**, **uterus or womb** and **vagina**.



In order to see all the parts of the vulva, you need to separate the inner lips with your fingers.

The vulva

The vulva is the part of a woman's genitals which can be seen from the outside the body. You can see it, for example, by using a mirror.

The vulva is a very sensitive zone for women. In the vulva the most sensitive part is the **clitoris**. Therefore, both the clitoris and the whole area around it can provide pleasure for a woman when she or her partner caresses it in an appropriate way and when this is done with **desire**. In this, the clitoris is the same as any other part of the body: it is not enough to be sensitive to feel pleasure from it, but desire is essential.

The clitoris is a part of a woman's body which is very closely linked with pleasure, excitation and orgasms. That is why when women masturbate they usually caress their clitoris and the area around it.

In the vulva it is also possible to see two holes:

- **Meatus (this is the end of the urethra):** where urine comes out.
- **Vaginal Entrance (or exit):** where the woman expels her vaginal fluid and blood from her period. This is the opening through which the penis enters the vagina when having sexual penetration and where babies emerge at birth.

The female vulva is also a beautiful part of the body. Any woman wanting to know more about her sexuality could begin by looking at her genitals with a mirror in order to familiarise herself with them and learn what they are like. What are they like? What do they look like? What zones do they comprise?

If we look we will see that female genitals are like a flower, in fact they resemble an orchid.

And that is what real flowers actually are, female genitals, (because they are the female reproductive organ of a plant). And flowers are one of nature's most beautiful creations. If she looks at them often enough, a woman may get used to her genitals and regard them with sympathy and love, like a beautiful part of the body which needs to be cared for and loved.

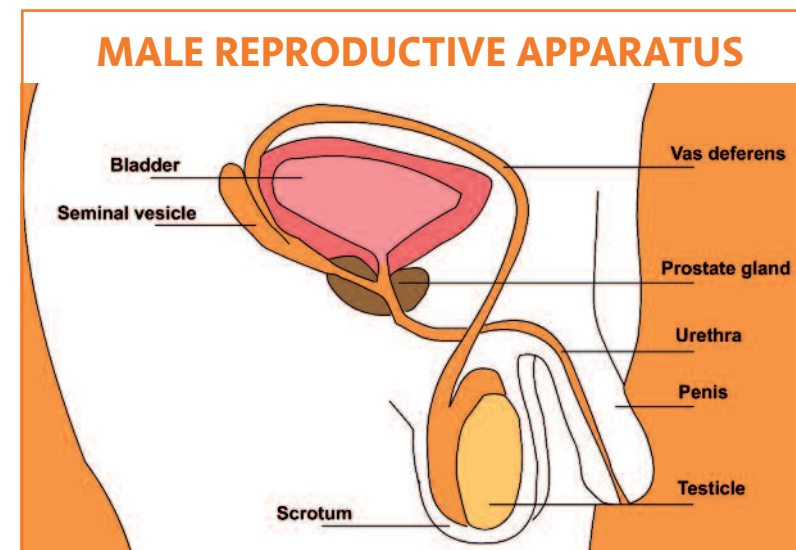
“Genital” health

Female genitals also need care because they may be prone to infections or problems which can, of course, be resolved with proper medical attention. Therefore, if you notice any unusual symptom in your genitals, (itching, swelling, too much discharge or strange smelling discharge) **it is important to consult your doctor who will tell you what to do to resolve the problem.**

From a certain age it is recommended that women have medical check ups every so often (once a year) even though there is nothing wrong, but simply to prevent any problems. It has been proven that adult women who get used to having

regular genital checkups with their doctor are less likely to develop certain diseases or serious problems.

8.2. Male genitals



The male genitals, like those of women, have an internal part (which is not visible) and which act mainly in reproduction, and an external part, which is visible, and also a source of pleasure.

The penis is a part of the male genitals which has various functions: It is used to urinate, is part of the reproduction process (because sperm is expelled through the penis) and it is also a sensitive organ which, when stimulated with desire, provides pleasure.

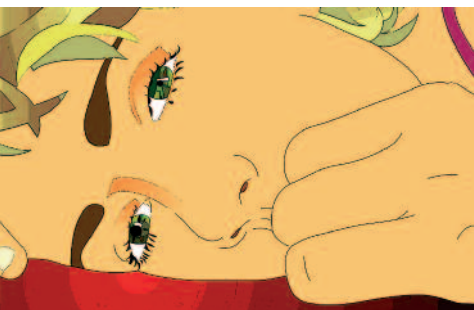
Around puberty, boys begin to make sperm (this around a similar time to when girls get their periods) and boys begin to notice this as they start to have ejaculations (expelling semen through their penis) particularly when they masturbate, although this can also happen in their dreams when they are asleep.

When boys begin to have ejaculations, it means that they can get a girl pregnant if they have sex with her.

As with a woman's clitoris, the man's penis, as it is sensitive, is the zone that is usually stimulated by a man when he masturbates.

“Genital” health

Male genitals can also be prone to infections or problems. And similarly, normally these are problems which are always resolved by seeing a doctor. This is why if you notice anything odd about your penis or testicles (if you have spots or pimples, or intense itching, warts, etc) the best thing to do is visit your doctor who will tell you how to deal with the problem. These problems DON'T GET BETTER BY THEMSELVES.



9. PLEASURE

Both men and women's entire bodies are designed to give us pleasure. However, our bodies are not the only source of pleasure, and we can increase our enjoyment if we are able to:

Learn to talk to our partner and tell them what we like and don't like in our sexual relations. Take into account our desires. Feel at ease in our relationship with our partner. Say NO to things we don't like or which are not so pleasant for us. Feel sure of ourselves, knowing that we are not running unwanted risks....

Take into account each other's feelings, as this is IMPORTANT for both of us.

10. MASTURBATION

Masturbation is when a person caresses his or her own body and genitals in order to feel pleasure and agreeable sensations. Sometimes this pleasure is accompanied by orgasm, although not always.

At times, people also have erotic relations, sharing their masturbation or masturbating themselves in the company of others. Sometimes they also masturbate each other.

These are other ways of making love. Some people like to caress in this way and others do not. Like any practice, it is voluntary and whoever wants to can do it, and whoever does not has no need to do it if they do not want to.

In general, masturbation helps a person to discover their own body, learn how it works, discover which areas are pleasurable and sensitive, and learning about how to caress it, the movements and rhythms that they like and those they like less, and in general, learn about their own orgasm. People who learn to give themselves pleasure alone also have more possibilities of enjoying themselves when in company, as they are able to explain their tastes and preferences to their partner.

Masturbation is a practice that a lot of people use because it gives them pleasure and a feeling of wellbeing, irrespective of whether or not they have a partner.

Masturbation does not cause illnesses in men or women, it does not stunt growth if you masturbate nor will you get spots or go mad. A person who masturbates has control over what they do, just like with any other behaviour and it does not lead to "loss of control" or "addiction".

Masturbation helps you to learn about your body and feel pleasure. It does not cause illness of any kind.

Women and masturbation

Masturbating is something that both men and women do. However, people tend not to talk about female masturbation and so at times it might seem as if it does not exist or that women “should not look at their genitals or touch them” because this would not be appropriate.

A lot of people continue to think that masturbation is something that is all right for men but not for women.

However, a lot of women often decide to take a more active role and learn for themselves their own erotic likes and dislikes by masturbating, so that they can pass this on to their partner and also to enjoy themselves when they are alone.

Any woman wanting to know more about her sexuality could begin by looking at her genitals with a mirror in order to familiarise herself with them and learn what they are like. Remember: the female vulva is like a flower, with its folds and softness and beautiful colour.

Fantasy is also important to sexuality. Women can also get used to “getting in an erotic mood” by imagining erotic scenes, or recalling erotic moments of their lives, remembering kisses, hugs or relationships that they were happy in, imagining others that are yet to happen, or letting themselves go and fantasising about scenes which maybe will never happen but which are pleasant to imagine. Some women prefer to read erotic literature or watch films and remember them afterwards (it is easier to imagine something you have read or seen before).

When a woman can easily keep an erotic image or story in her head and is familiar with her genitals, she can begin to combine both these things, finding an intimate private place where she knows that she will not be disturbed, she can begin to caress her body slowly, and calmly, concentrating on the agreeable feelings of her hand on her skin.

After touching her body all over, the woman can then begin to gently caress her genitals while keeping an erotic image in her head, and slowly she can begin to explore her feelings with different movements and rhythms.

After she has done this a few times she can then begin to concentrate her caresses more on the clitoris, seeking to increase the excitement and so reach an orgasm. Usually a woman will have to repeat these caresses several times in order to feel comfortable and to discover what stimulates her most when touching her genitals and her clitoris in particular.

11. CONTRACEPTION (FAMILY PLANNING AND PREVENTION OF UNWANTED PREGNANCIES)

Being a parent is something wonderful for both men and women, when it is desired and when it is a good time for having children (when you have enough money to support them when there is time and when it is the right moment in your personal life and you have a good partner...).

If you do not want to have children for the moment, it is best to talk this over with your partner and discuss which method you plan to use to avoid getting pregnant.

Contraception is not just a woman’s job, *it takes two*, both *the man and the woman* to decide. Both need to take responsibility for contraception as it takes two to get pregnant.



Choosing a contraceptive method

The most appropriate method you choose, is a personal decision which depends on a number of circumstances.

At a particular period in your life you may choose one method and at another stage you may decide to change to another.

If having sex with penetration is usually sporadic, and with different partners, the most appropriate method would be the **condom (male or female condom)**.

The condom is useful for those who have sex with different partners, because in addition to preventing pregnancy, it also prevents transmission of STIs (sexually transmitted infections) during sexual penetration, (for example, it prevents HIV infection, that is, the AIDS virus).

It is convenient because there are some sexually transmitted infections which may not be noticed at first because they do not have any symptoms, however, this fact does not stop them from being transmitted to other people. Therefore, although both partners appear to be healthy, it is better to have a medical check-up before using a different method which does not protect against STDs.



12. UNRELIABLE CONTRACEPTIVE METHODS

12.1. Coitus interruptus (or the withdrawal method)

Some couples use the withdrawal method (which consists of the man withdrawing his penis from the vagina just before he ejaculates, so that he will ejaculate his sperm outside the vagina), because they think it is a safe way of avoiding pregnancy.

However, it is important to be aware that withdrawal **IS NOT A CONTRACEPTIVE METHOD and nor is it a sure way of avoiding pregnancy**.

The famous saying “jumping the gun” is very true in this case. Withdrawal does not prevent sperm from entering the vagina, as before ejaculation the man can produce liquid which may contain spermatozooids. This liquid does not produce any sensation and the man does not know when he will emit this liquid.

In addition, many men claim that they can control when they ejaculate, which gives them time to withdraw, however, this is not easy to achieve and often many men actually end up ejaculating all or part of their ejaculation in the vagina.

This method can also make a couple nervous, as they are constantly waiting for the moment that he will ejaculate and if they cannot relax properly this makes it much more difficult to enjoy the experience.

***Prevention is beneficial for pleasure.
Taking risks considerably reduces pleasure.***

And as if this was not sufficient to put you off, withdrawal **DOES NOT PREVENT HIV INFECTION OR ANY OTHER SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES**.

For all these reasons this method is totally inadvisable for couples who do not want a pregnancy or who do not wish to take risks.

12.2. The calendar or rhythm method, Knaus-Ogino method...

The rhythm method is based on control of the menstrual cycle, based on the fact that there are certain days during the cycle (which coincides with ovulation) in which conception is more likely.

It is also known as the calendar method and consists of having coitus only on the supposedly “safe days in the cycle”, avoiding sex on the other days which are not safe, as then it is easier to get pregnant.

However, there are in fact no “safe days” for avoiding pregnancy.

A woman can become pregnant on any day of her menstrual cycle (including the days when she is actually having her period). Every day of the cycle is “unsafe”. The fact is that some days conception is more likely, and there are other days when it is less likely.

During a woman’s period or menstruation, and about two days before and after the period, are the days on which conception is less likely, however, this does not mean that it is impossible to get pregnant.

A woman can be fertile every day of the month. Some women have become pregnant by having coitus during menstruation (in theory these would be “very safe” days) or on other “not very fertile” days.

In addition, this method does not provide any protection against the HIV or AIDS virus, or against any other sexually transmitted diseases.

For couples who do not want a pregnancy, and who also want to protect themselves from sexually transmitted infections, it would be better to consider other methods such as the condom.

13. HEAVY PETTING

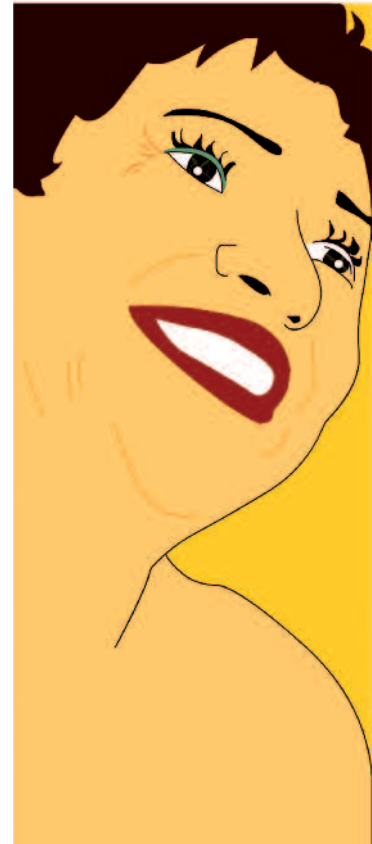
As we know, the sexual penetration act or **coitus** takes place when the man's penis penetrates the woman's vagina, or when the woman's vagina covers the penis. This act is the only sexual relation which can give rise to pregnancy.

There are many sexual relations in which pregnancy is impossible, however, they can still provide pleasure and good times for two people who like each other and find each other attractive. They are birth control sexual relations (sexual relations which cannot lead to pregnancy).

Examples of heavy petting: caressing the whole body, extensive massage, kissing, hugs, touching and stroking, masturbation, oral sex which consists of caressing and touching the genitals with the mouth or the tongue... are all ways of expressing sexuality and feeling pleasure without risking an unwanted pregnancy.

Some couples who wish to express their feelings and feel pleasure without the risk of pregnancy have this type of sexual relation. Other couples also have this type of relation (which does not involve coitus or penetration) when they do not have any contraceptives to hand.

It is also important to highlight the fact that most of these relations do not run the risk of transmitting an STD. Caresses kissing and hugging, sleeping together, touching each other's body, masturbating, caressing the genitals of another person with your hand are all relations which do not involve any risk of transmitting an STD (Sexually Transmitted Disease).





14. CONTRACEPTIVE METHODS

14.1. The male condom

The condom, also known as a rubber or a sheath, is, along with the female condom, (which is used and distributed to a much lesser degree) the only contraceptive which at the same time prevents:

- Unwanted pregnancies
- Transmission of the HIV (AIDS virus) and other sexually transmitted diseases.

It is known as the barrier method, as it stops sperm from getting into the vagina. It comprises a latex hood or cover which adapts to the penis when it is erect.

It is disposable and can only be used once, and is very effective for preventing pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases.

Another advantage of condoms is that they are very easy to obtain, easy to use and not too expensive. In addition, the woman does not have to take any medicine and there is no secondary effect.

Using the condom

Normally condoms come in a box or wrapping which have instructions on how to put them on.

In almost every city there are centres (sexual care clinics, associations etc) which distribute condoms free. What you need to do is ask around and find out where these centres are in your town.

There are still some mistaken ideas about male condoms:

Mistaken idea: “condoms break easily”

The truth: if you follow the instructions for use, it is very unlikely that the condom will break. In most cases when a condom breaks it is because it has not been stored properly, its sell-by date has expired or it has not been properly used. A condom which fails is one which is not used or not properly used.

Mistaken idea: “condoms detract from the pleasure felt, especially in the man”

The truth: condoms today are very fine and they are made from materials which ensure that the sexual act or oral sex remains an extremely sensitive experience. What is in fact true is that during penetrative sex, **the condom does not take away pleasure, but it actually provides more opportunities for pleasure** because a couple feels calm and safe and this enables them to enjoy sex a lot more than if they were worried about an unwanted pregnancy or illness.

Although it is the man who puts on the condom, it is important for the woman to know how it works, and she should carry one with her if she thinks that she may have sex with penetration and she should be responsible for deciding whether to use it. IT IS A QUESTION OF HEALTH.

14.2. The contraceptive pill

The pill is a contraceptive method used by women which is quite safe provided that it is properly used (you must not forget to take it, check when you have to take other medicines which could affect its effectiveness).

In some conditions it is not advisable to use this method (if you are a smoker, some existing pathologies, etc) and therefore you should consult a doctor before making a decision in this respect.

It consists of taking a total of 28 pills (one every day). Sometimes it is provided in a format with 21 pills (one per day) with a rest for seven days.

With the pill, a woman's periods are usually less heavy, and more regular. When a woman stops taking the pill she becomes fertile again.

In addition, you should remember that this method does not provide any protection against the HIV or AIDS virus, or against any other sexually transmitted diseases. When you only have sex on a sporadic basis and /or with people you might not know very well it is best to consider another method.

	SU	MO	TU	WE	THU	FR	SA
WEEK 1	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
WEEK 2	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
WEEK 3	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
WEEK 4	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

14.2.1 What should I do if one day I forget to take the pill?

If you forgot to take your pill and you realise this before 12 hours have passed, you should take the pill that you forgot, and the next pill at the normal time (you may well take two pills that day).

If you realise you have forgotten to take it after 12 hours have gone by, that month you will not be protected from unwanted pregnancy and you will need to use an additional method (for example a condom) when you have sex. In this case, you should not take the pill that you forgot, but you should take the next day's pill at the normal time and the

rest of the pack as indicated. When you finish this pack and you begin a new one, the next pack will protect you from pregnancy.

14.3. Contraceptive patch

This is a thin adhesive patch similar to sticking plaster, about four and a half centimetres wide which adheres to the skin and which works by releasing hormones that are gradually absorbed by the skin (it works similarly to the pill).

It is usually placed on the abdomen or the upper part of the body (avoiding the breasts) and on the buttocks. The woman can shower and bathe and the patch is not affected. The patch is placed on the first day of the menstrual cycle, and it is changed weekly until the 4th week when you have a rest.

Like the pill, it is extremely effective in preventing pregnancies (99% safe) if it is used correctly. Some women like it better than the pill because they only have to remember to change it once a week (whereas you have to remember to take the pill every day). The main disadvantage is that it does not protect against sexually transmitted diseases. It can also have secondary effects similar to those of the pill.

14.4. Injectable hormonal contraceptive

This method works in a similar way to the pill, however in this case the hormones are supplied through an injection.

It is recommended that, as with all hormone treatments you should seek medical advice before using it.

14.5. Contraceptive implant

This is highly effective however, it is quite expensive in Spain (about 160 euros) although Social Security will pay part of

the cost for some brands, and it is worth remembering that for what you pay in one day you have years of contraception.

In Spain it can be bought in pharmacies or chemist's with a medical prescription. It works in a similar way to the pill.

There are two types of implant as follows:

- **First type:** this consists of a long, thin flexible rod similar to a matchstick, which a doctor will insert under the skin in the fleshy part of the upper arm. Once it has been fitted the rod does not move, and it is highly unlikely that it will break.

It lasts for about three years, after which time the capsule or rod must be replaced by another or a different contraceptive method should be chosen, if wished.

- **Second type:** in this case two long thin flexible rods are fitted, similar in size to the first type but slightly bigger. They are inserted in the same way as the first type.

This type is designed to last five years although a replacement is recommended during the fourth year. This method is also highly effective in preventing pregnancy. However, as in the previous methods mentioned, it does not prevent transmission of HIV or other sexually transmitted diseases.

One advantage of this method its convenience because the woman does not have to remember to take a pill or replace the implant except every three or four years or so.

Disadvantages: once again it does not prevent the transmission of STDs (sexually transmitted diseases).

14.6. Vaginal ring

This is a very effective method for preventing unwanted pregnancy. It acts in a similar way to the contraceptive pill. It

consists of a ring about five centimetres in diameter, made from transparent flexible plastic, which the woman places in her vagina.

The woman has to fit the vaginal ring herself and she needs to do this between day one and five of her period. Then after 21 days she should remove the ring, and take a week's break, and in that week she will have her period. During this break of one week there is no danger of pregnancy just like the other days of the cycle.

Once the cycle is complete, the woman should fit another vaginal ring the following month.

Fitting the ring is not complicated. It should just be taken out of the packaging, pressed between the fingers and inserted into the vagina, just like a tampon. Once it has been fitted, the woman does not feel anything unless she has not inserted it correctly. In Spain it can be bought in pharmacies or chemist's with a medical prescription.

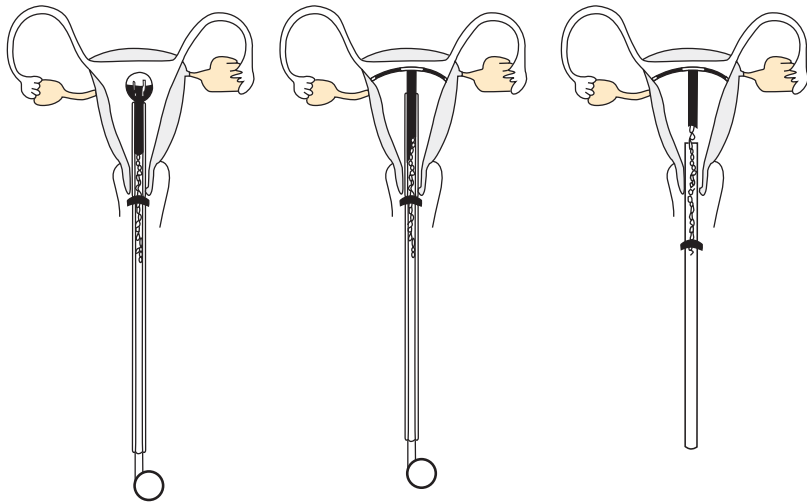
It does not prevent HIV infection or transmission of any other STIs.

14.7. IUD

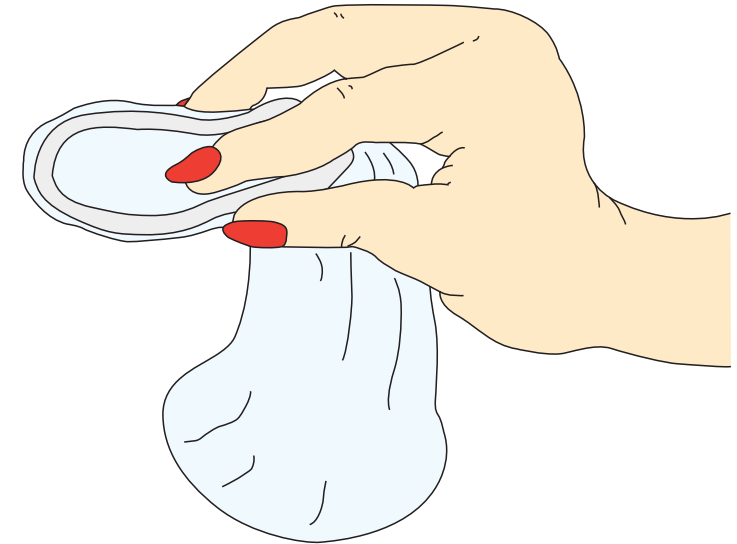
This does not prevent the risk of infection from STIs (Sexually Transmitted Infections).

The IUD (intra-uterine device) is a type of small T-shaped bar (around three centimetres). The IUD can be bought in pharmacies or chemists' and has to be fitted by a doctor or gynaecologist following an examination. Once it has been fitted it remains active for about 5 years.

This is a very effective method for preventing unwanted pregnancy. One disadvantage of this method is that it does not protect against sexually transmitted diseases and infections including AIDS.



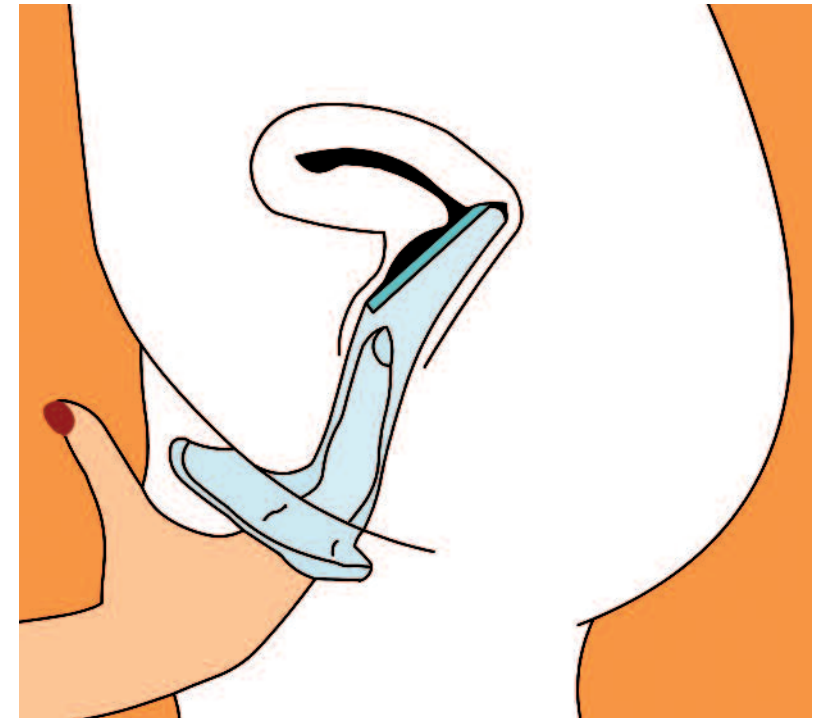
Fitting the IUD.
The IUD is fitted by a doctor or gynaecologist.



14.8. Female condom

This can be bought without a prescription and is effective for protecting against unwanted pregnancies and quite a high rate of protection from STIs. Sometimes it is difficult to find outlets that sell it.

It is a rubber hood rather like the male condom but bigger. It has two flexible rings, one at the closed end which is placed inside the upper part of the vagina. The hood adapts to the walls of the vagina and the external ring fits round the vaginal lips to ensure that it does not move during friction, and it protects part of the woman's external genitals.





15. WHAT SHOULD I DO IF THE CONDOM BREAKS DURING COITUS? WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I HAVE HAD UNPROTECTED SEXUAL PENETRATION?

If the condom is used correctly it is unlikely to break. In fact, if it does break it was probably past its sell by date, or had deteriorated or had not been used correctly.

Therefore, it is a good idea to check what has happened to avoid it happening again in future.

If it breaks, or if you have had unprotected sexual penetration it is possible to take a “day after pill”

The day after pill should be taken as soon as possible after having unprotected sexual penetration. It is very important to take it within 72 hours following unprotected sexual penetration (**and ideally it should be taken within 48 hours**) as the more time passes the more its effectiveness is reduced. **The speed** with which it is taken is therefore very important, to avoid unwanted pregnancy.

The couple may request the pill at a family planning clinic or in some sexual advice centres. In some cases, it may be prescribed at a health centre, gynaecology clinic or A&E centres.

It would be sensible to ensure that your clinical history indicates how many times you have had to use this remedy.

Nevertheless, in Spain this pill can be bought without a prescription in pharmacies for about 20 euros.

This emergency hormonal contraceptive carries a number of risks. Therefore, women over 16 can use it but if the girl is under 16 her case should be assessed by a health professional.

The day after pill should not be confused with the abortion pill. They are completely different. The day after pill is not abortive it prevents pregnancy.

What you should never do is use it frequently, as an alternative to contraceptive methods. It is not a good idea to abuse this method as ultimately it consists of taking a large dose of hormones.

Remember: the day after pill does not prevent transmission of STIs or HIV (AIDS virus) therefore it is important to take measures when having coitus or when the genitals are in contact in order to avoid possible risks.

16. ABORTION

VTOP or Voluntary termination of pregnancy is also commonly known as abortion. In Spain the conditions for carrying out a VTOP are as follows:

- It is the woman who decides whether she wants to abort or not.
- The woman has the right to this service without any discrimination on grounds or race or religion.
- Termination should be carried out with the pregnant woman's consent. In the event that the woman wishing to terminate a pregnancy (have an abortion) is 16 or 17 years old, even though the final decision



regarding the termination concerns her, at least one legal representative (father or mother) should be advised of this decision. This will not be necessary if there is any serious risk to the minor, danger of violence or abuse within the family etc.

- The woman may request an abortion within the first 14 weeks of her pregnancy provided that she has been informed of her rights and public assistance available in support of maternity.
- In exceptional cases where there is serious risk to the health or life of the pregnant woman or serious problems for the foetus (provided that these have been verified and attested by specialist doctors) the abortion may take place up to 22 weeks of pregnancy.
- Women wishing to terminate a pregnancy should be informed of the public centres where they may go to have their abortion.
- Voluntary termination of pregnancy (or abortion) should be carried out by a specialist doctor in a public or accredited private health clinic.

Prevention...

Many unwanted pregnancies occur because measures were not taken to avoid conception.

If a woman does not want to be pregnant, there are effective contraceptive measures for preventing this (see the section on contraceptive methods).

It is important for the couple to consider, following an abortion, what went wrong to avoid this kind of problem in future. And remember, *pregnancy takes two, and both should collaborate in avoiding such situations in the future.*

If you have terminated your pregnancy and you are unsure how to prevent another pregnancy in future, seek help and guidance, go to your health centre or to a family planning clinic and ask them for advice.

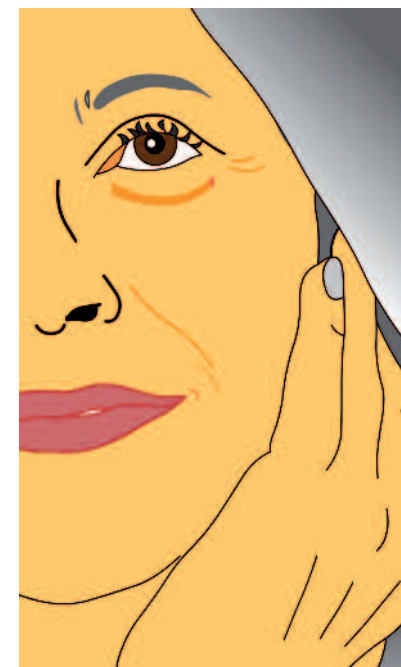
Be extremely careful! Some women try to terminate their pregnancy using inadequate methods, such as for example, taking allegedly "abortive" medicines without medical supervision. THIS IS VERY DANGEROUS AND UNNECESSARY, as in Spain a woman can terminate her pregnancy in public or accredited private clinics (free) without any risk to her health.

It is also important to be aware that putting herbs or other remedies in the vagina will not have any contraceptive or abortive effect, and it could even harm your health.

17. PREVENTION OF SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES AND INFECTIONS

Some diseases can be spread through contact with another person's genitals, specifically through coitus, or through oral sex (when licking or sucking the genitals of the other).

We talk of STI (Sexually Transmitted Infections or Genitally Transmitted Infections) to refer to those infections in which the main source of infection is genital contact.



We talk of STDs (Sexually Transmitted Diseases or Genitally Transmitted Diseases) to refer to those pathologies where the main source of transmission is frequently genital contact.

STDs are different from STI in that many infections do not show any symptoms, or there were symptoms which went unnoticed (so therefore there is no apparent disease in itself).

However, a person with an STI may develop symptoms later on, and may also transmit that infection to other people.

17.1. HIV and AIDS

One of the most serious infections today is AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome) which is caused by a virus known as HIV. When someone is infected with HIV (for example, through having coitus without a condom) this virus resides in the body and can end up by damaging the body's immune system and therefore, increasing the probabilities that AIDS will develop, and could lead to death.

Today, fortunately, people who are infected with HIV can be treated although there is still no cure. If they know that they have HIV virus they go to the doctor and follow the treatment given. With good medical care and taking the correct medication, they can now lead a normal life and live almost as long as someone without HIV.

People who live with the HIV virus are known as "HIV +" or HIV positive. These people have the virus but they have not developed the disease (AIDS).

VIH+ people can transmit HIV virus to someone else even though they do not have any symptoms and do not feel ill. For example, if an HIV+ person carries out or receives penetration (anal or vaginal) without a condom, he or she can

transmit HIV to the person with whom they have the relations.

However, a person with HIV+ may carry out or receive penetration (anal or vaginal) and if he or she uses a condom, HIV virus will not be transmitted to his or her partner.

The problem is that many people have been infected with HIV and they do not realise it, as the symptoms do not show for many years. As they are unaware that they are carrying the virus and as they appear quite normal, they may transmit the infection to a number of other people if they do not take the appropriate precautions. For this reason it is important to be aware that a person's "appearance" does not reveal whether or not that person has an STI (sexually Transmitted Infection).

It is important to know how to avoid and prevent these infections, or what to do if we think that we may be suffering from one.

There are various sexually transmitted infections which can cause serious health problems.

17.2. Erotic relations which carry no risk and risky relations

STDs and STIs are NOT transmitted through touching or caressing the other person's genitals with the hand or with other parts of the body, apart from the genitals or the mouth. There are numerous erotic relations which do not transmit infections of this type.

For example, *"safe" relations include kissing, hugging, caressing the whole body with the hands, massage, shared masturbation (one person masturbates the other or the couple masturbate each other using their hands).*

Other safe relations include:

- **Coitus using a condom or anal penetration with a condom.**
- **Oral sex with protection** (for example when licking or sucking the man's penis, if the man is wearing a condom, it is safe. It is also safe to lick or suck a woman's genitals if her genitals are covered with an open condom or a transparent film, such as cling film).

Be careful! The following relations carry the risk of transmitting a STI:

- Coitus without a condom or anal penetration without a condom.
 - Unprotected oral sex (licking or sucking the genitals of another person).
- In order to prevent infection all you need to do is use a

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS ARE A REALITY WHICH UNFORTUNATELY AFFECT THE HEALTH OF MANY PEOPLE (causing pain, illness, discomfort, infertility and sometimes even death).

HOWEVER PREVENTING SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS IS A SIMPLE MATTER AND EASY FOR US TO DO.

condom when having sexual penetration or anal sex and do not have oral sex without using protection (unless you are quite sure that your partner is free from STI and remember, these infections can lie dormant for years with no symptoms, and a partner may appear perfectly healthy and yet they could infect you with an STI).

A reminder: all the sexual practices we have talked about and those where there is no possibility of transmitting infections or illnesses are erotic practices which do in fact give both pleasure and satisfaction to both partners.

17.3. STI symptoms

The following symptoms may indicate the presence of a sexually transmitted infection: itching or wounds in the genital area, unusual discharge or secretion, the appearance of warts, pain in the genital zone or surrounding area.

If you have any of these symptoms, the most sensible thing to do is see a doctor as quickly as possible. The sooner a STI is detected and diagnosed the easier will be its treatment and the less effect it will have.

Remember that many sexually transmitted infections in certain stages of their development have no symptoms whatsoever.

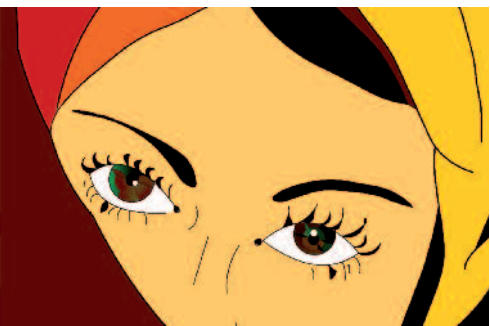
Therefore, if a person has had unsafe sex (coitus without a condom, anal penetration without condom, or if the mouth has been in contact with vaginal secretions or semen etc.) he or she should see a doctor in order to carry out the necessary tests.

Furthermore, if you have a sexually transmitted infection, just because the symptoms seem to have disappeared it does not necessarily mean that the infection has gone or is cured.

You should also take precautions in any future genital contact, for the sake of your health and that of others.

Most sexually transmitted infections can be treated. If this treatment is adequately followed, they may be cured or their symptoms can be greatly reduced. Hiding the infection and waiting for it to get better by itself does not help at all and may have serious consequences for the infected person. Talking this over with your partner is essential under the circumstances.

It may be that your partner has infected you without knowing, or conversely you might have transmitted it. In any case the couple should also go to the doctor. It is necessary to do this with all the partners you have had unprotected sex with in recent months.



18. GOOD TREATMENT AND ABUSE

Satisfaction in erotic or sexual relations depends on many factors. Some of the most important of these concern the couple's relation and the treatment and care that both partners in a couple receive.

If two people treat each other with affection, love, warmth, attention, cuddles and consideration they have much more chance of enjoying their erotic and sexual life.

If two people treat each other cruelly, indifferently, are bad tempered, lacking in respect, violent or dismissive, it is quite likely that their sexuality and their life in common will not be very satisfactory.

If a person treats his or her partner with indifference, lack of respect or violence, (physical abuse such as hitting, or verbal abuse such as insults) it is quite likely that the person who suffers will not feel good and will not enjoy their sexuality or their life as a couple along with other aspects of their life.

As individuals, we need to defend our right to be treated well, with respect, with love, affection and care, whether it is a one night stand or a relationship of many years standing.

Good treatment

When we are well treated we feel good. We feel looked after and cared for, we feel important and our self esteem is improved.

A couple may care for each other mutually and it does not matter if they spend only one night together or a one-off sexual encounter, or if they have spent a whole life together.

It is always important for two people to treat each other well, and we all have the right to demand this good treatment.

We are well treated when: they care about you, pay attention to you, speak to you nicely, attend to your needs and your pleasure, when they care about how you feel, plan contraception with you and how to prevent disease, are involved in bringing up children together ..they make you feel that you are both equally important...

We all deserve good treatment, and your needs and wishes should be respected, in sexual relations and in the context of your relationship as a couple.

Abuse

When we are abused we feel bad. We feel that we do not count and our self esteem suffers.

There are many ways to treat someone well just as there are ways to treat someone badly.

Some forms of abuse are quite clear: physical attacks, insults.. Other kinds are more difficult to see:

- Threats ("if you don't do this I will hurt you...").
- Hitting objects or things, pushing and shoving...
- Controlling behaviour ("where you are going? who you are going with? Don't wear that, don't go around with those people...").
- Isolating behaviour: trying to separate you from your family or friends, or reducing your group of friends and acquaintances.
- Surveillance (spying on where you go and who with, reading your mail, listening to your telephone conversations, following you, calling all the time, harassing you...).

- Lack of respect (mocking your opinions, making fun of your family and/or friends, failing to keep agreements, humiliating comments about your appearance, your body or your personality, sneering...).
- Financial constraints (not letting you work, controlling your money...)
- Sexual violence (pressurising you to have sexual intercourse against your will, or any other type of relations...).

Abuse occurs when the abused person feels increasingly desperate and worse over time; therefore it is best to give people who treat their partners like this a very wide berth.

There are some false impressions regarding abuse:

Mistaken idea: "the abused person likes to be treated like that. If not he/she would leave".

The truth: nobody likes to be abused. However, some people feel trapped by the relationship or they feel that they do not have sufficient resources to leave. Other people are afraid that they will be in a worse situation if they try to escape being badly treated.

Mistaken idea: "you can never leave an abusive relationship".

The truth: it is possible to leave an abusive relationship. Many people have done so. For this purpose, people who are abused should realise that they can leave this relationship, that they are strong enough to do so and that there are people who will help them.

Mistaken idea: "abuse is just physical violence"

The truth: there are many ways of abusing someone and these are not just physical blows, however these ways can be very damaging and cause a lot of suffering.

Mistaken idea: "abusers change with time"

The truth: people who abuse their partner do not usually change, if anything they get worse. Often the only solution is to leave the abuser.

*Remember: someone who is abused is not guilty.
The only guilty person is the perpetrator.*

Who can help me with an abusive situation?

There are many resources in different towns and cities in Spain who can help victims of abuse (mainly women) and most of this aid is free and confidential (women's associations, women's centres, legal guidance services, etc.).

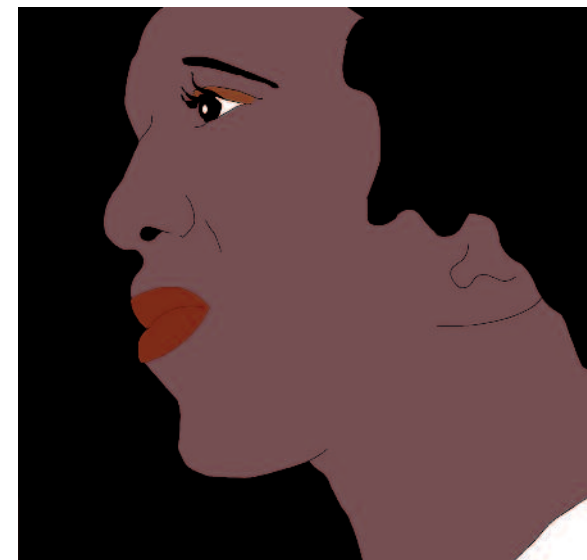
If you find yourself in this situation you can call the following telephone number for advice, help and to find out where you can go:

016

This telephone number can be called from Spain and attention is provided in several languages (including English). Available 24 hours a day. You can also consult lawyers.

Other telephone numbers you can call are:

- 900 100 009
(Commission for investigation of Abuse of Women, a national body)
- 900 19 10 10
(Institute for Women)





19. WHO DO YOU LIKE? SEXUAL ORIENTATION

One result of our sexuality is that WE MAY FEEL ATTRACTED TO AND BE INTERESTED IN OTHER PEOPLE.

People who you consider special, whom you like, who you would like to have a relationship with, who you want to touch, have them touch you, have sex with them, love them...

We also know that most men feel attracted towards women. In this case they are known as “heterosexuals”.

However, there are many men who are attracted by other men. In this case they are known as “gays” or “homosexuals”. It is the same for women. Although most women are interested in men, many others feel attracted by women (in this case they are considered to be “homosexuals” or “lesbians”).

That fact of someone being attracted to people of the same sex is known as homosexuality and it is an issue which is kept well hidden in many cultures, acting as if it did not exist, or if it exists, it is seen as something negative, or frowned upon. This has been the case because perhaps as it occurs less frequently and because it is considered that the normal situation should be couples made up of men and women.

The possibility of finding someone attractive, loving, caring, being a couple, enjoying your sexuality, feeling happy, having a family... is not something exclusive to heterosexuals.

These ideas make it very difficult for many homosexual men and women to accept themselves as they are, and to live their sexuality to the full.

It is important to know that gays and lesbians have as much right as the rest to live their sexuality in a way that they find satisfying for them.

In Spain, there are gay, lesbian, transsexual and bisexual associations which offer various services (information, orientation, courses, activities...) generally these are free and you can use them if you need them.

20. MISTAKEN MYTHS AND IDEAS REGARDING SEXUALITY

You hear all kinds of things about sexuality. Some are true and others are not. In every era, in every place and in every culture there have always been erroneous ideas and myths regarding sexuality.

Here are just a few of these mistaken beliefs:

Mistaken idea: “ablation of the clitoris is like male circumcision and does not cause any problem to women. It is done for hygienic purposes”.

The truth: female genital mutilation (cutting off a woman’s genitals or a part of them) is not more hygienic; in fact on the contrary, it can cause numerous problems: health troubles, pain during sex, problems with childbirth, infections, all kinds of discomfort....

There is no reason, albeit hygienic, aesthetic, or of any other kind, which justifies such a negative practice for a woman’s health. It is not



comparable to male circumcision because that does not affect a man's pleasure when having sex, nor does it cause health problems.

In the case of girls, in addition, female genital mutilation sometimes causes problems as serious as death caused by shock (due to the intense pain felt when they are cut). It is a very harmful practice for girls, and is a serious violation of the most basic human rights and which, furthermore, in Spain is a crime both for those who carry out the act and the parents and tutors who consent or promote it.

Mistaken idea: "pregnancy is a woman's business. The man should not have to be bothered with it".

The truth: this is false. Pregnancy takes two, and both the man and the woman should be concerned with ensuring that an unwanted pregnancy does not occur as it could have negative effects on the woman, but on the man as well.

The father is also responsible for the maintenance and care of the child, in fact, in Spain, by law, parents are required to do this, and the mother may legally claim costs from the father for the maintenance of any children that they have in common. The father is legally obliged to contribute to the costs of the children even if he is not married to the mother. And if there are any doubts regarding the paternity of a child, proof of his paternity by means of a DNA test can be ordered.

And furthermore, it is also the responsibility of both the man and the woman, to prevent transmission of STI (Sexually Transmitted Infections) such as HIV (the AIDS virus) as they are both affected.

Mistaken idea: "men do not cry or express their feelings, because they would look weak".

The truth: crying or expressing emotions does not make a man any less manly. There are many ways to be a man, just as there are different ways of being a woman. No one way is better than another.

In addition, learning to express your emotions does not make you weaker, irrespective of whether you are a man or a woman. It makes you a more rounded human being, and helps you relate to others.

Mistaken idea: "A woman who carries condoms with her is a tart".

The truth: this is not the case. Women should look after their health, and the health of their partner, avoiding disease and unwanted pregnancy. A woman who carries condoms if she thinks that she will need them, is a responsible woman who looks after herself, and who loves and protects herself.

Mistaken idea: "if a woman has relations with several men it means she is immoral".

The truth: a woman can choose to have relations and to have them with whoever she wants. It is a fundamental human right. This does not make her less moral or make her better or worse. The same goes for a man if he does it.

Mistaken idea: "when a woman has her period she cannot wash her hair, or bathe or have sexual penetration".

The truth: a woman can lead a perfectly normal life when she has her period. She can bathe, wash her hair, play sports if she wants, make mayonnaise, touch plants and so on. As well, women who want to, can have sex, with or without penetration, it is not dangerous and it is not a problem as long as the person wants to do it.

Mistaken idea: "if a woman is a virgin on marriage and she remains faithful to her husband, there is no risk of contracting a sexually transmitted disease or an STI".

The truth: if a woman gets married without having any type of sexual contact, but her partner has had unprotected sex prior to marriage (such as coitus without a condom) then even though he has no apparent symptoms, he may infect her.

In this case, it would be important for the person who has had unprotected sex to visit the doctor and have the requisite medical tests to ensure that he is free from

infection prior to having unprotected sex (eg. sexual penetration) with his wife.

Mistaken idea: “the sex act is over once the man has ejaculated”.

The truth: the sex act does not need to end with male ejaculation. The couple can continue by caressing each other, kissing, masturbating or having oral sex (caressing the genitals with the mouth or the tongue). Many couples continue their relations following the man’s ejaculation, they simply do not have sexual intercourse with penetration but they do other things. Sometimes couples continue the relations so that the woman also reaches orgasm, generally by caressing her clitoris.

Mistaken idea: “men know all about sex, and women know very little”

The truth: Generally, in various cultures, men have been allowed to talk freely about sexuality but this does not mean that they know more.

Mistaken idea: “if I am careful with the pill, I won’t have to worry about anything else”.

The truth: the contraceptive pill prevents unwanted pregnancy; however, it does not prevent sexually transmitted infections (STI) which unfortunately exist. And we know that from his or her physical appearance it is not possible to tell whether a person has a sexually transmitted infection.

If you want to have sexual penetration, and you don’t want to get pregnant or catch an STI it is best to use a condom (male or female). And this goes for oral sex too.

When caressing a penis with the mouth or tongue, it should be covered with a condom. In the case of caressing a woman’s genitals with the mouth or tongue they should be covered with a plastic covering.

Another option is to have safe sex, that is caressing each other, or mutual masturbation (two people mutually caress their genitals with their hands) where there is no risk of unwanted pregnancy or an STI.

Mistaken idea: “all women bleed the first time they have sexual penetration and it is always painful”.

The truth: this is not the same in all cases. Often the woman does not bleed at all the first time she has sexual penetration, and when women do bleed it is usually only a few drops.

As to pain, if the woman is relaxed, she wants to have sex, and she trusts her partner etc, she need not necessarily feel pain. If, in addition, the couple finally have sexual penetration after having spent a lot of time cuddling and caressing on previous occasions, and they know each other’s bodies, having built up their confidence, and also having learnt to masturbate and climax beforehand it is more likely that the woman (and the man) will experience sex with pleasure and without discomfort or pain.

21. WOMEN’S HEALTH AND PREGNANCY

It is important for the pregnant woman to see a doctor so that she will receive the appropriate care and attention during her pregnancy, which will improve her health and also that of her baby.

You should be aware that foreign pregnant women in Spain are entitled to health care during their pregnancy and birth as well as postnatal care, irrespective of whether or not they have a residence or work permit (with “papers” or “no papers”).



Take care of your health during pregnancy!



22. YOUR CHILDREN'S SEXUAL EDUCATION

Your sexuality is important and so is that of your children (if you have them). Therefore, it is worthwhile ensuring that you contribute to their experiencing sexuality as happily as possible.

As a parent, you can do many things to make this happen.

Many mothers and fathers consider that they are not up to it, as they themselves have received little information. However, perhaps now would be a perfect time for your children to have a different situation at home. You do not need to be a specialist, nor do you need to know much about sexuality, it is enough to:

Make your children feel important and loved, listen to them and take note of their questions and queries (even if you do not know all the answers) talk to them about your values and your ideas on sexuality (even if they do not necessarily coincide with theirs) and tell them about things you consider important...

However, above all let them know that they can count on you as well with regard to this matter.

Here are some ways you could begin. And you may find that it is not as difficult to go on as you first thought...

Of course, all this is also true for disabled children, and of course for all kinds of families not just the so called "traditional model". All families can offer a good sexual education you just need to put your mind to it.



23. PROBLEMS IN YOUR SEX LIFE AND WITH YOUR PARTNER

Although sexuality can be a source of satisfaction, sometimes people have certain problems or "dissatisfaction" in their erotic life.

For example, one or other partner might not enjoy sex, whereas before they used to, but for a while they have not enjoyed it so much, or they may feel that sexual intercourse with penetration is painful or unpleasant, or that one partner feels anxious before sex, having problems in getting aroused, or lubricated or having an erection (in the case of a man) or having difficulty in reaching orgasm, or perhaps they have never had one and would like to.

Most of these situations can be improved with adequate help, because luckily there are services which can provide you with guidance and advice on how best to resolve the problem. *There are sexual advisory clinics which can help you (in a confidential and private manner). In these cases, you can also see your doctor.*

At other times problems may be due to the fact that you are unhappy with the relationship with your partner. If you are not satisfied with your relationship, if you feel that it is not worth it, or you feel abused or you are experiencing a similar situation and you do not know how to deal with it, you can also get help. There are services to help you or where they can tell you where to go with sexual and relationship problems (social services in your neighbourhood, your doctor, sexual advisory clinics and relationship guidance centres...).

24. CONCLUSION

We hope that you found this brief guide useful and interesting. We hope too that your stay in Spain will be happy and positive whether you are here for just a short time or for the rest of your life.

Remember that in Spain there are experts on sexual health who have all the resources needed and who will be happy to help you!

Care about your sexuality! It is important too!

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