

# Your Sexual Health

ADDRESSING THE SEXUAL HEALTH OF GAY & BISEXUAL MEN.

## Research Helps Us All

My name is Clara Shayevich and I am a Nurse Practitioner at San Francisco City Clinic since June 1993. Everyday I am seeing patients, diagnosing and treating them for the various STDs. A large component of my work includes screening and enrolling patients into the different research projects that are done at City Clinic.

*'Research leads to new approaches and improvement in the quality of care for all of us.'*

The next time you are a patient and a provider asks you if you would like to be a part of research study strongly consider participating. Of course, helping with our studies is always voluntary and you will receive the same high standard of care whether you choose to participate or not. However, we hope you will consider participating - You bring something unique and individual to the experience and if you do not participate we cannot make changes that take your experience into account. It is important that we hear your voice.

Since I began working at San Francisco City Clinic in 1993, now a full 15 years ago, I have enrolled thousands of patients to participate in research studies. It is something that I enjoy doing. I see how your participation changes clinical practice and how we practice medicine from day to day. I know it makes a difference, in the 1990s for example, in an effort to find a less invasive way to treat gonorrhea at City Clinic, we studied the effectiveness of the use of Cefixime tablets in comparison to a Ceftriaxone injection. We found the tablets to be very effective. Now the standard practice is to use tablets, which means easier treatments and less pain for patients in the traditional clinic as well as at some less traditional venues.

This is only one of the examples of how clinical practice has changed due to innovation based on best practices in Clinical Research. So the next time someone hands you a questionnaire or asks you to participate in a study remember that none of these changes could happen without your key participation!

--- Clara

## Sexual Health On the "Go"

Every once and a while - at some point you are going to be in a situation that lends itself to you going home (or over to someone else's home or hotel) for some fun. Now in the cases when you have been dating or know the guy well from being around town and in the same circuit this doesn't usually pose much of a problem. It's always easy to find out what's the deal on someone who you see around a lot or have had a few encounters with before.

But what do you do on those occasions when you are out of town or have a night on the town alone or find yourself with lots of hits on your currently favorite website. Do you take the chance to go with it - based on a few minutes of talking or chatting? Have any back up plans in case something goes wrong? It's something to think about. Gone are the days when you could cruise anyone walking along and take him on face value.

"Go" sex is about the kind of play that happens without a lot of knowledge its going to happen and in most cases it's with someone you don't know well or even at all. Here are a few steps you might want to think about before you shoot out that email with your home address or hop into your car and go over to his place for a bit of slap-n-tickle.

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## Dogs Continue Talking about Syphilis Prevention in 2008

The San Francisco Department of Public Health - STD Prevention and Control Section has carried the "Dogs Are Talking" syphilis awareness campaign into 2008. Launched last summer, the campaign aims to boost awareness among gay and bisexual men and to encourage men with multiple sex partners to get tested on a regular basis.

Syphilis cases have been high in San Francisco since 2002, prompting the health department to mount a series of campaigns to draw community attention to the disease. This latest campaign is intended as a positive, lighthearted reminder for gay men to take care of themselves. "Men love their pets, and will spare neither trouble nor expense to make sure they're in good health," says Jacque McCright, Sexual Health Promotions Manager. "We just want them to show themselves the same level of care they do their dogs."

Dogs Are Talking campaign ads feature San Francisco dogs discussing their owners' health and trying to come up with creative ways to encourage their men to get tested for syphilis. The campaign ads have appeared on Muni buses, in the *Bay Area Reporter*, and on digital ad space in the Castro.

**The campaign website can be found at:**  
<http://www.dogsaretalking.com>



**It can be really tough to watch a friend's quality of life change due to the use of crystal meth.**

It affects many of the people in his circle—friends, co-workers, buddies, family, boyfriend and partner.

It can be difficult to sort out the feelings of anger and disappointment. It's hard to know the right thing to do, and what is going to help. It's hard to take care of yourself while trying to take care of him.

The Buddies program is a safe space for individuals who want to work out these challenges. We have a chance to tell our stories. We share information about meth and its effects, exchange coping strategies, and ways to reduce the stress and harm for those dealing with the day-to-day consequences of crystal meth.

### Topics that we'll discuss:

Dealing with anger & frustration  
Self-care  
Healthy boundaries  
Communications  
Creating support  
Healthy and affirming sex

### For more information:

Call New Leaf Services at 415-626-7000 ext. 201  
on the internet: [drawtheline.org/buddies](http://drawtheline.org/buddies)  
or e-mail Buzz Bense at  
[gaymenshealth-sf@earthlink.net](mailto:gaymenshealth-sf@earthlink.net)



## A Men's Plan for Sexual Health

- 1) If You Use It - Test It! [www.STDtest.org](http://www.STDtest.org) or [www.SFCityClinic.org](http://www.SFCityClinic.org)
- 2) **MAKE** routine testing for syphilis, gonorrhea and Chlamydia a regular part of your health care every 3 months.
- 3) **ASK** your provider if he/she is testing for all of these when you have your labs done.
- 4) **TALK** to your partners. Find out if they are testing routinely.
- 5) **TELL** your sex partners if you test positive for an STD.
- 6) **GET** it treated as soon as possible and don't have sex while being treated.
- 7) **SHARE** the news. If you aren't willing to talk to your partners, visit [www.InSpot.org](http://www.InSpot.org) to email them anonymously to inform them to get tested and treated.

## **Personal Wellness & Community Health**

*Submitted by: Derrick Mapp  
HIV Health Counselor  
L.I.F.E. Program San Francisco*

San Francisco's gay male community is a very social one. Yet one of the most common complaints from gay men is the disconnection they feel from other gay men around them. Pick a reason – there are as many as there are types of gay men in the Bay Area. The disconnect gets deeper when you consider the various social and community-building programs both from organizations and from individuals (online and off) that a person can choose.

Of course, men are connecting for sex and sexual encounters – online and off. Now to be clear I don't think this means we should not have any of the sexual encounters that we enjoy; just that these are not necessarily the only connections we want to make with one another.

I am often surprised at the innovation that comes from individuals in our community. The best thing I have heard has been “if you don't see something happening that would make you happy, make it happen.” I would add the corollary, “if you see something happening that you'd like to be a part of – support it with yourself.”

There are similar programs in San Francisco to support just about any need you may have. All you have to do is reach out, get and stay involved. Everyone benefits when you do.

I see it regularly in my work as an HIV Health Counselor at the Shanti L.I.F.E. Program, with other HIV-positive and HIV-affected gay men who may come in not feeling/being healthy in mind, body and spirit. They speak about the disconnection from themselves and others.

*Shanti...Continued on page 4*

## **Making Your Sexual Health Sizzle**

*thom grexa phillips, CMT, CFT, CSB*

Happy Season... Spring is a great time to enjoy the outdoors, and its attendant opportunities for fun and GAYmes... naturally, some of these GAYmes can include hot sex. In this series, I'll be offering information for you to use to enhance your sexual health.

**Sexual Body:** Many men can lengthen the duration of intercourse and enhance their pleasure response by strengthening the underlying muscles of the genital region.

- Pelvic Floor (Kegel) exercises: You can do these standing, or sitting. Breathe in a count of five, squeeze your pubococcygeal (PC) muscles (the ones that you can manipulate by stopping the flow of urine while urinating) as hard as possible and hold for a count of 5 seconds. Breathe out on a count of five, as well. Use sets of repetitions daily and eventually increase the length of time you hold, and the number of repetitions in each set.
- Pelvic Rocking exercises: These can be done standing, with knees gently relaxed, or seated, or lying down. Bring your buttocks backward/downward as you inhale gently on a count of five, and slowly thrust it all forward on the exhalation. You can increase the length of time and the repetitions in each set as you practice this regularly.

Body exercises that strengthen your core (i.e., the abdomen, lower back) can also aid your body in enhancing sexual health. Incorporating a body-appropriate routine of sit ups and back stretches into your exercises will complement the ones use for the pelvic floor.

*NOTE: Please consult with a medical professional before beginning any exercise program.*

**thom grexa phillips** thom grexa phillips is a California-certified sexologist, a nationally-certified bodyworker and fitness trainer, and a dedicated sexual health activist. He operates a health and wellness consultancy in the SF Bay Area and frequently leads retreats for men in California, Hawaii, and elsewhere dedicated to the pursuit of holistic and mindful pleasure. Visit his website at [www.tpraxis.net](http://www.tpraxis.net)

Over the course of several months, by participating in one of the L.I.F.E. interventions, connecting with other gay men in emotionally healthy ways, many men had their lives positively transformed. There are similar programs in San Francisco to support just about any need you may have.

All you have to do is reach out, get and stay involved. Everyone benefits when you do.

**More information about Shanti and the services they offer, can be found at [www.shanti.org](http://www.shanti.org)**

**Main offices:**

**730 Polk Street San Francisco | California 94109**

**Main: 415 | 674-4700**

**\* L.I.F.E. has a myspace page! Visit**

**<http://www.myspace.com/thelifeprogram> and tell us what you think about your L.I.F.E.**

*“GO” Sex.. Continued from Page 1*

### **Online & Cyber Sex Match Ups**

- Keep in mind that anonymity online isn't as real as you think – anyone with enough imagination can find out more about than you realize with some easy searches. So watch out how much information you put out in your profile or chats.
- When using most chat functions – turn on the chat logging features. It makes a copy of your chat and stores it on the computer. Print a copy out and leave it somewhere where it can be found if you go missing. (If you plan to drive – I always suggest leaving a second copy in your car with his name, address etc).
- Always try to get his name and number and then confirm it's his number before you go.
- Email or call a good buddy and explain that you are lining up a scene with someone you don't know well and make an contact arrangement – either a SMS, phone call or some other type of signal that you will commit to respond to unless you are unable to, at which point they should call for help on your behalf.
- Trust your instincts - if it doesn't feel right – STOP. Don't be afraid to ask him to leave or get yourself out of there.

### **Bar & Club Encounters**

- Make sure you are seen talking to and leaving with your “pal”
- On your way out – try to swing by a friend and casually introduce your “pal” mentioning you are going back to his or your place for some fun – and that you will speak with them (your friend) later that night or the next morning. This sends a pretty strong message that people know who you are and who you left with and when.
- Most men now carry some form of a “trick”, contact-card, or business card – ask for his before you leave (you might offer yours in exchange). You can always casually give it to a friend at the venue as you leave for safekeeping. If the sex is great and the chemistry works – you can always ask your new “pal” for another and say you lost the other one in all the excitement of getting him home.

Keep it in mind that having sex and casual encounters add lots of spice to life. But it is very important to take care of yourself. So that old adage plays out true here – the best defense is a good offense. Good luck!

***Don't forget to include STD screening on a routine basis.  
Men who have multiple sex partners are at an increased risk for STD's.***

**[www.STDTest.org](http://www.STDTest.org) can help find out for FREE!**