

THE DRAMA DOWNUNDER!

The national *Drama Down Under* campaign has been running in South Australia since early 2007 and is set to feature throughout the year. The aim of the campaign is to increase awareness of the great variety of STIs (Sexually Transmitted Infections) among gay and same sex attracted men and to get them to have STI tests more regularly.



The AIDS crisis in the 1980's saw the rate of STIs among gay and same sex attracted men in Australia fall significantly. Men became more aware of STIs and regular testing became a part of their lives. But with the rise of new HIV infections from the late 1990's also came the rise of many other STIs. This rise continues: in South Australia the rate of syphilis has risen four-fold since early 2006.

Drama Down Under print ads will feature in *blaze* during much of 2007 (www.blazemedia.com.au) while throughout the year other *Drama Down Under* campaign material can be found in gay pubs, clubs, beats, sex on premises venues and gay-friendly businesses, as well as sex shops, gay community services, and information and health services includeing libraries.

The campaign material includes condom packs (**above**) and bookmarks (**left**). The bookmarks are designed to be used by medical staff as reminders in patient files, but of course can also be used to mark your place in a book or magazine.



The campaign has 2 phases, the first of which includes a fridge magnet featuring the same design as the Phase 1 postcard (**top left**). Phase 2 features 5 post-cards, all of which carry different messages relating to STIs and STI Testing (**above, left and below**). All 6 postcards are also available as one-sided A2 posters.



Z-cards (fold-out sheets with business card-sized covers) are also part of the campaign. You can find these by scrolling down to **pages 3 and 4**. If you would like copies of the postcards, book-marks and Z-cards as well as the condom packs, please contact Gay Men's Health Social Marketing Officer Matt Potter: matt.potter@gmhealth.org.au

chlamydia is a bacterial infection. You can get chlamydia in the cock or arse through anal sex, or in the throat through oral sex. Although uncommon, you can get infected in the cock through oral sex and in the arse through fingering or fisting. Often there are no symptoms but if they occur they include: a watery, white discharge from the cock and itching or pain in the opening of your cock that fades after you piss. Chlamydia can be diagnosed from a urine sample, a throat or anal swab. It's easily treated with a course of antibiotics.

crabs are tiny mites that live on the skin at the base of pubic hair. Crabs can also be found in beards, armpits, chest hair and eyelashes. Crabs are transmitted by close physical contact, sharing clothes, bed sheets or towels. Crabs cause an intense itching irritation. You can effectively cure crabs yourself with appropriate genital lice shampoos and creams available at pharmacies.

scabies is an infection caused by tiny mites, (smaller than crabs) that burrow under the skin. They are transmitted by skin to skin contact, sexual or otherwise. The most common symptom associated with scabies is a rash or itching. You can effectively treat scabies yourself with appropriate scabies lotions available at pharmacies.

hepatitis A is a virus that causes inflammation of the liver. It is transmitted by small particles of shit entering a person's mouth through activities like arse play or rimming, or by not washing your hands after sex with an infected person. It is more commonly transmitted by sharing eating or drinking utensils, cigarettes, joints or bongs. The symptoms include a mild flu-like illness, vomiting, abdominal pain and jaundice. A blood test will diagnose hep A. Prevention includes an effective hep A vaccination. A combination hep A and B vaccination is also available.

hepatitis B is a virus that causes inflammation of the liver. It is transmitted by contact with infected blood or cum through activities like unprotected fucking, sharing injecting equipment, toothbrushes or razors, oral sex, tattooing or body piercing with un-sterile equipment. Symptoms may include loss of appetite, tiredness, nausea, jaundice and dark urine. A blood test will diagnose hep B. There is no cure for hep B although there are some treatments available. Prevention includes an effective hep B vaccination, a combination hep A and B vaccination is also available.

hepatitis C is a virus that can cause inflammation of the liver transmitted through contact with blood. Although sexual transmission is relatively low there is an increased risk of transmission if you have other STIs or are engaging in rough sex and/or fisting. Being infected with HIV can increase the likelihood of transmission and acquisition of hep C during sex. Diagnosis is by a blood test. Standard treatment for hep C is a combination of 2 drugs. With treatment there is a 50 to 90 percent chance of clearing the virus.

genital and anal warts are caused by a viral infection called the human papilloma virus, or HPV. The virus is transmitted by skin-to-skin contact with an infected person. There may be no symptoms but when they appear, they can include small bumpy warts around the cock, balls and arse. The warts can be removed by a medical practitioner. Recurrences can happen and treatments sometimes requires several visits. The body's immune system will clear the virus some time in the future.

gonorrhoea is a bacterial infection of a person's cock, arse, throat or eyes. It is transmitted through anal sex, oral sex or by touching an infected cock or arse and then touching your own cock, arse or eyes. It's symptoms can include a dry sore throat, itchiness or pain during bowel movements, a clear or yellow discharge from the cock, and pain or burning when urinating. It is easy to diagnose and it is treated with antibiotics.

syphilis is a bacterial infection transmitted through anal sex, oral sex or arse play with an infected person. An untreated syphilis infection progresses through 3 stages. Stage 1: a painless red sore on your cock, balls, mouth, throat or arse that turns into a scab and then heals. Stage 2: rash on the palms of the hands, soles of the feet or other parts of the body, fever, swollen lymph glands, sore throat, headaches, weight loss, muscle aches and tiredness. Stage 3: damage to internal organs including the brain, nerves, eyes, heart, blood vessels, liver, bones and joints. This damage may be serious enough to cause death. Syphilis is easily diagnosed with a blood test and cured with antibiotics.

herpes is a viral infection transmitted both sexually and non-sexually by skin-to-skin contact. There are 2 kinds of herpes virus. Type 1 is usually found around the mouth (commonly known as cold sores) and type 2 is usually found around the cock and arse. There may be no symptoms but when they occur they can include: itching or tingly feeling around the infected area; painful blistering or sores which later form scabs and a flu-like illness. There is no cure for herpes but there are treatments that can reduce the symptoms and speed up the recovery.

shigella and other gut bugs are bacteria that cause bowel infections. Shigella is very infectious and is easily passed on. Infection is spread when tiny particles of shit enter the mouth. This can happen by rimming or putting contaminated objects like food, pens, and cigarettes in your mouth. Symptoms can include stomach cramps, diarrhoea (sometimes with blood and/or mucus), fever and nausea. Generally shigella is left to run its course (usually 4-7 days). In severe cases, especially with HIV-positive people, hospitalisation may be needed. Anti-diarrhoea treatments are often enough to treat gut infections but antibiotics can also be used.

human immunodeficiency virus is a virus that is transmitted by body fluids (blood or semen) from an infected person entering the bloodstream of another through unprotected fucking or the sharing of needles. Shortly after contact with HIV, a person may (but not always) undergo a sero-conversion illness, a severe flu-like illness that will pass in a matter of weeks. After this time a person becomes HIV-positive as the immune system creates antibodies to fight the infection. There is no cure for HIV and if left untreated the infection can cause serious illness and death. A combination of antiviral drugs can be used to prevent further damage to the immune system. Post exposure prophylaxis (PEP) is a course of antiviral drugs that may prevent HIV infection if taken within 72 hours of exposure to the virus. For more information go to www.getpep.info

Turn the page for information on testing for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.

12 HOT SPOTS IN THE DRAMA DOWN UNDER!



FOR MORE INFORMATION GO TO WWW.THEDRAMADOWNUNDER.INFO



STOP THE DRAMA DOWN UNDER!

WHERE CAN I GET AN STI CHECK?

AIDS Councils and PLWHA organisations can provide a list of GPs and sexual health centres in your area.

- AIDS Council of the ACT: (02) 8257 2855
 - AIDS Council of New South Wales: (02) 9206 2000
Freecall: 1800 063 060 TTY: (02) 9283 2088
 - Positive Living Centre (Sydney): (02) 9699 8756
 - Western Sydney: (02) 9204 2400
 - Hunter (Newcastle): (02) 4927 6808
 - Illawarra (Woolongong): (02) 4226 1163
 - Mid North Coast (Port Macquarie): (02) 6584 0843
 - Northern Rivers (Lismore): (02) 6622 1555
 - Northern Territory: (08) 8941 1711 Freecall: 1800 880 800
 - Western Australian AIDS Council: (08) 9482 0000
 - AIDS Council of South Australia: (08) 8334 1611
South Australia Freecall: 1800 888 559
 - Tasmanian Council on AIDS Hepatitis and Related Diseases: (03) 6234 1242 Freecall: 1800 005 900
 - Queensland Association for Health Communities (Brisbane): (07) 3017 1777
Men's Line Freecall: 1800 155 141
 - Cairns: (07) 4051 1028
 - Gold Coast: (07) 5572 8739
 - Sunshine Coast: (07) 5451 1118
 - Townsville: (07) 4729 2283
 - Victorian AIDS Council: (03) 9865 8700
Freecall: 1800 134 840 TTY: (03) 9827 3733
- PLWHA Groups**
- PLWHA ACT: (02) 6257 4986
 - PLWHA NSW: (02) 9361 8011 Freecall: 1800 245 677
 - Positive Heterosexuals: Freecall: 1800 812 404
 - ACON Women, HIV and Health Promotion: (02) 9699 8756
 - Northern Territory Friends: (08) 8941 7711
 - PLWHA SA: (08) 8293 3700
 - Positive Living Centre (SA): (08) 8293 3700
 - HIV Women's Project of SA: (08) 8239 9800
 - Tasmania (TasCAHRD): (03) 6234 1242
 - PLWHA Victoria: (03) 9866 8772
 - Straight Arrows (men only): (03) 9276 3792
 - Positive Women (Victoria): (03) 9276 8918
 - Queensland Positive People (Brisbane): (07) 3013 5555
Freecall: 1800 636 241
 - Cairns: (07) 4031 4350
 - Gold Coast: (07) 5576 6996
 - Sunshine Coast: (07) 5441 7077
 - Rockhampton: (07) 4928 9250
 - Mackay: (07) 4953 5071
 - Townsville: (07) 4724 0277
 - Western Australia (HAPAN): (08) 9482 0000

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES:

THERE'S NOT ALWAYS A SMOKING GUN!

If you get a sexually transmitted infection (STI), chances are you'll know about it because there will be a BIG DRAMA DOWNUNDER—like itchiness, sores or a discharge. But STIs don't always have symptoms, so it's easy to have an STI—and pass it on to someone else—without even realising.

That's why, if you're having casual sex, it's important to get a regular sexual health check. Sexual health checks are free, simple and painless—and the more sexual partners you have, the more frequently you should get tested. If you go to a sexual health clinic the testing will be free, if you go to a doctor there may be a charge unless the doctor bulk bills. If you are a sexually active gay man who has sex with different casual partners, it is a good idea to have a sexual health check every six months. Even if you show no symptoms, it is possible to have an STI and pass on the infection. Testing is the only way to know. Indications (i.e. symptoms) that you may have an STI include:

- An unusual discharge from your cock;
- Itching or stinging when you have a piss;
- Sores, blisters or rashes in the genital area.

If you are in a new relationship, monogamous or otherwise, it is advisable to get a sexual health check-up as you may have contracted an STI from a previous partner.

Routine sexual health screens may include blood testing for syphilis and hepatitis A, B and C.

What are STIs?

STIs generally fall into four categories:

- 1 **Viruses** e.g. HIV, herpes, genital and anal warts;
- 2 **Bacteria** e.g. chlamydia, gonorrhoea;
- 3 **Fungi** e.g. thrush or
- 4 **Parasites** e.g. crabs and scabies.

HIV positive men and STIs

If you have HIV here are some things you might consider:

- An STI may be more severe and more difficult to treat. It is also more likely that viral infections like herpes will recur more often than for a HIV-negative person;
- Some STIs (e.g. hepatitis A or B) can dramatically increase HIV viral load in body fluids—including cum and pre-cum—because the immune system is fighting both the HIV infection as well as the other STI. An increased viral load means there is a greater risk of passing HIV on if you are having unsafe sex.



GET A SEXUAL HEALTH CHECK TODAY

WWW.THEDRAMADOWNUNDER.INFO

