

Beats

PRODUCED BY GAY MEN'S HEALTH

FACT SHEET 3

Beats are public places such as parks, beaches, bushlands, car parking areas and public toilets where men meet with other men for sex and or socialising.

Men from all walks of life use beats: they may be gay, straight, married, bisexual or same sex attracted.

Sometimes a beat may be used by someone who is just coming out and is looking to meet other men and some men use beats as a meeting place and move on to another location or their home.

Beats can be as anonymous as you like.

USING BEATS SAFELY

Go with a friend or tell a friend or housemate where you are going and when you expect to be back.

Take your mobile phone and a whistle. If you are chased or harassed blowing a whistle will attract attention and deter bashers.

Know the area. Go there earlier and check it out, look at the layout and possible escape routes or hiding spots: running around in the dark in an unfamiliar place can be very dangerous.

Avoid groups of men or boys: they spell danger. If a group of gay or bisexual men go to a beat together they usually split up when cruising the area.

Try to "size up" your partner. You can't always be sure whether a person means you harm by their looks or by talking to them, but if you feel uncomfortable or wary, trust your instincts and do not go into a secluded area with them.

If you are engaging in anal intercourse, ALWAYS ensure a condom and water based lubricant are used.

BEAT BEHAVIOUR – A GUIDE

Be discreet. Making lots of noise or wandering around semi naked or being otherwise obvious can attract unwanted attention of passers-by and police.

Don't butt in where you are not wanted. Take the hint if you're not wanted to join in.

Don't gossip. Just as you may not want people telling your friends and acquaintances that you were at the beat, don't do it to others. Respect for other peoples' right to privacy is expected.

If you are bashed, chased, harassed or the victim of an illegal activity at a beat, always report it to police.

Reporting violence at beats will protect other beat users and possibly yourself at a later time. South Australia Police has many Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officers (GLLOs) who can assist with making your report. For a complete list go to: www.blazemedia.com.au or contact your local Police Station.

LEGAL ISSUES

Simply being at a beat is legal because it is a public place. However, having sex in public is not legal.

If you are engaging in a sexual activity in a public place or visible from a public place you are committing an offence. This includes being in a cubicle with the door closed.

It is also important to remember the age of consent



in South Australia is 17 years old. It is no defence if you didn't know the person you are having sex with is under the age of 17 years.

POLICE AT BEATS

If you are questioned by the police at a beat, you must supply your name and address if asked. This is a legal requirement.

You can ask the police why they are questioning you and you can also ask them for their names, rank, station and ID number.

If police find you engaging in sexual activity in a public place you may be arrested and taken to the nearest police station.

If you have not been arrested, you may be reported and may receive a summons to appear in court.

IF ARRESTED

If you are arrested by police:

- You have the right to remain silent.
- You have the right to ask for legal representation.
- You must supply your correct name and address.
- You are legally required to go with the police.
- Anything you do say may be used in evidence in a court of law. ■

This fact sheet has been produced by Gay Men's Health, a project of the AIDS Council of South Australia. While Gay Men's Health recognises that beats exist, Gay Men's Health does not condone or endorse any illegal activities that may take place at beats.

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Gay Men's Health

Gay Men's Health works with gay, bisexual and same sex attracted men in South Australia