

When you're a minor, the problem is major.

The Underage Gay

Growing up gay is not easy.

Parents, for most young gay people, are problem number one. Even the more modern, "liberal" parents, who don't immediately march the young person off to a mental hospital, may nevertheless constantly bring up the subject of seeing a shrink or keep a jailer's watch over their child's whereabouts.

When a gay young person does get out of the house for a while straight kids the same age sometimes present problem number two. "Faggot," "dyke," "sissy" and "lezzie" are at the top of the teenage putdown list. School counselors are not always much help. With a few exceptions, they lean toward the "phony liberal" attitude: "Why of course I understand your problem. Now don't you think you'd like to see the school psychiatrist?"

In this hostile environment, one of the greatest needs of gay people is to get together with other people like themselves. This helps combat the feeling that they are alone in a world of straight people.

Gay Youth holds meetings designed mostly to let young people get to know each other and talk about their common concerns. The



group is entirely independent and is open to people up to age 21. It also holds social events from time to time. See page 9 for details. (Incidentally, parents may need help too. Parents of Gays is a place they can go for understanding. See page 8.)

Despite all, sometimes the situation is hopeless, and a gay young person can't bear to stay at home. In such cases, Runaway House might be the best source of help. It's located at 1743 18th Street NW, just below S Street. Young people can stay there for up to two weeks; then counselors ask them to decide where they're going to go. For those who need it, houses are available for longer stays, and young people who "can't go home again" can be placed with gay foster parents if they want.

- D.A.

A Note from WAGCC

The Washington Area Gay Community Council is happy to have a part in bringing you this guide to the gay community in the Washington area—the first such comprehensive directory ever published.

WAGCC (which most people pronounce "wag-see") is a coalition of gay organizations and enterprises. It has three main purposes: to foster communication within the gay community; to do the same between the gay community and non-gays; and to offer assistance as needed to organizations providing services to gays.

As an extension of these functions, WAGCC has undertaken planning for a gay community center to serve the Washington area. It will be a meeting place for gay people of all types. It will be a convenient source of information. It will offer facilities to gay organizations which are already functioning and will offer encouragement and support to others to form groups to meet needs not already being served. It will be a place for gay people to meet, relax, organize, hold discussions, put on events, seek counseling, find brotherhood and sisterhood. It will be a place run by gay people for gay people.

It will be these things, that is, if gay people bring it to reality. As of this writing, the community center is no more than an idea, a plan being formulated by a task force of committed individuals. People are needed— their ideas, time, energy, money is needed. You are needed. We want all parts of the gay community to feel that the center is THEIR center. This will happen if people from all parts of the community participate in bringing it into being.

If you can help, please contact me at 234-4287, or write WAGCC at PO Box 40552, Washington DC 20016. Your gay brothers and sisters thank you.

David L. Aiken

David L. Aiken,
WAGCC Chairperson

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Gay Is Healthy

Health-conscious? Here's a quick rundown of medical facts about gay sex which every gay person should know.

Not long ago, after hot debate and with a brave air of innovation, the American Psychiatric Association came forth with the wondrous discovery that there are no scientific grounds for calling homosexuality an emotional disorder. The learned doctors thus ratified what most gay people have known all along, i.e. that gay is OK.

Nonetheless, while being homosexual is a perfectly healthy state, gay people lead different sex lives from straight people and therefore have use for different health information about sex. These facts aren't too easy to come by, because medical personnel rarely think in gay terms. So let's look at some of the 'special health facts that gay people should take into account — first for gay women, then for gay men.

Gay Women

In some ways gay women are better off health-wise than straight women. They don't risk the side effects of birth control pills, they don't face the dangers of childbirth, and they run less risk of cancer of the cervix (a part of a woman's genitals). Also, venereal disease is very rare among gay women.

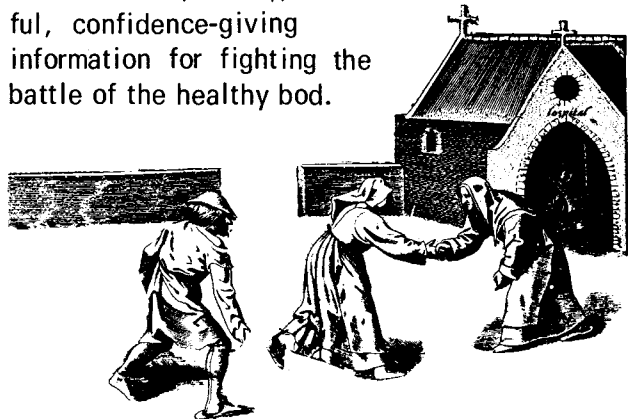
There are points gay women should remember, however. Gonorrhea bacteria live in moist areas with little exposure to air. Theoretically, therefore, it is possible for gay women to pass the bacteria to one another from finger or tongue to vagina if the infected woman has a heavy discharge. But in fact, because of the higher incidence of VD among straight couples, a gay woman who has sex with a bisexual woman has a much greater chance of contracting it.

This article was prepared with the assistance of Tim Corbett, Dr. Jeffrey Drobis, Barbara Lewis, and Walt Senterfitt — all personnel of the Washington Free Clinic — to whom thanks are gratefully extended.

The classic symptoms of gonorrhea for a woman are a grey pus-like discharge from the vagina, itching, burning, and a foul odor of the vaginal area. A woman can have gonorrhea without these symptoms though, and these symptoms can indicate some other condition (such as vaginitis), so don't try to doctor yourself.

A sexually active woman should have a gonorrhea culture test taken at least yearly. Many women have this done routinely when they visit their gynecologist for a yearly pelvic exam, when they are wise to have a pap test (for cancer) taken also. At the Washington Free Clinic in Georgetown (1556 Wisconsin Avenue NW, 965-5476), gonorrhea culture and syphilis testing is done routinely for women. (Syphilis, incidentally, is very rare among gay women.)

A big problem for gay women is simply to find a sympathetic, knowledgeable doctor. How do you tell a doctor that your last sex partner was not a man but a woman? A pelvic examination can be uncomfortable enough when the doctor is sympathetic to you. What's it like if he thinks you're a freak? Check around among your Lesbian friends — or with the gay women's groups listed in this directory — to learn the names of good doctors. As another help, consider reading *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, a woman's health book prepared by women (Simon and Schuster, \$2.95), which contains much useful, confidence-giving information for fighting the battle of the healthy bod.



Gay Men

Before all else, gay men need to know about VD. Both gonorrhea and syphilis are very common among gay men, and if you're sexually active (even if only with your lover), you should get a checkup at least every three months.

Symptoms of gonorrhea in a man's cock are a burning sensation when urinating and, later on, a yellow discharge. It's not well known that you can also get gonorrhea in the anus and the throat. Again from contact with another guy's cock. Gonorrhea of the throat may never show symptoms. Gonorrhea of the anus may show such symptoms as rectal pain, mucous discharge or blood.

Syphilis is also very dangerous, and many gay men have it without knowing it. Two weeks after you have sex with an infected friend, a small round lump with hard edges (a "chancre") will usually appear on your penis, in your mouth, on your tongue, or on your anus. This is the first symptom. It may not be painful. You may not even pay attention to it. It will disappear. Six weeks after infection many random symptoms occur, such as fever, sore throat, skin rashes, headaches, etc. They will subside too. After that there will be no sign you have syphilis until sometime five to 30 years later, when your brain, heart and other organs may become diseased, often fatally.

Your only good protection is regular testing. At the Washington Free Clinic (see page 8), blood tests for syphilis, as well as culture smears for gonorrhea of the cock, anus and throat, are available on Saturdays from understanding gay men in the gay men's VD clinic. (Incidentally, regular doctors rarely think of checking for gonorrhea of the anus or throat.) A blood test every six months will catch syphilis before it does permanent damage.

Regular doctors are also generally reluctant to take anal or rectal complaints very seriously. A gay man who has anal symptoms of any kind should insist that his doctor make a careful examination and give him a clear report.

Here are some other health facts gay men will find handy:

◆ You can sometimes catch hepatitis, a very debilitating disease, from rimming, i.e. licking somebody's anus. If that's what you dig, be aware of this danger. Some doctors believe gam-

ma globulin injections (before or after) can protect you. There is no sure protection.

◆ In case your best friend hasn't told you, just about everybody catches the crabs once or twice. The crabs are annoying, itchy mites which hop from your bed partner's pubic hair to make themselves at home in yours. They're harmless but very uncomfortable, and eventually they will spread to your body hair, your underarm hair and your eyebrows. You can treat them quickly and painlessly with various drugstore preparations. A-200 Pyrinat is a good brand.

◆ Scabies, another pesky mite, can also be caught through sex — or from bedsheets or towels up to 48 hours after an infested person has used them. Scabies inhabit the skin of the fingers and arms. They secrete a juice into the blood that causes red bumps on the thighs and buttocks which can itch like crazy. Scabies can be treated painlessly with a lotion on doctor's prescription.

"In case your best friend hasn't told you, just about everybody catches the crabs once or twice."

◆ Venereal warts are small growths of skin which appear around the anus or on the shaft of the cock. They are caused by a virus transmitted in sex. They aren't painful, but unless they are caught and treated by a doctor (who paints them with a special solution), they may eventually require surgery. Have a friend check you over for them — or do it yourself with a mirror.

◆ Fistfucking, a recent rage with some sophisticates, is sliding your clenched fist up your friend's anus. (Yes, Virginia, some people *do* that.) It is not always harmful but it certainly can be: it can permanently tear the asshole muscle (sphincter), rupture the rectum, cause massive hemorrhages, and cause a lethal disease called peritonitis. A person can die quickly from being fistfucked.

* * *

Gay women and men who have the right information can and do lead relaxed, loving, fun sex lives. It's important, however, to care enough about your bed partners to tell them if you discover you've exposed them to VD. It's also important to know a good sympathetic doctor. And it's important to talk frankly with your friends about the facts of sex and health.

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Would you like to help eliminate sexually repressive legislation and discriminatory law enforcement practices?

A legal battle to have anti-sodomy laws ruled unconstitutional was initiated this summer in a pre-trial hearing before Judge Norman of the DC Superior Court. As a result sodomy charges against 10 gay men were dismissed.

An appeal by the US Attorney's office is likely to reverse that decision this winter. Then defendants will take their case to the Supreme Court, where a determination would affect anti-gay laws in DC and 41 states.

Heavy expenses have already been incurred by three defendants and the law firm of Karr & Graves. Additional funds are badly needed to proceed. Donations are being requested. Please send your contribution in any amount to:

Personal Choice Defense Fund
c/o Lambda Rising
1724 Twentieth Street, Northwest
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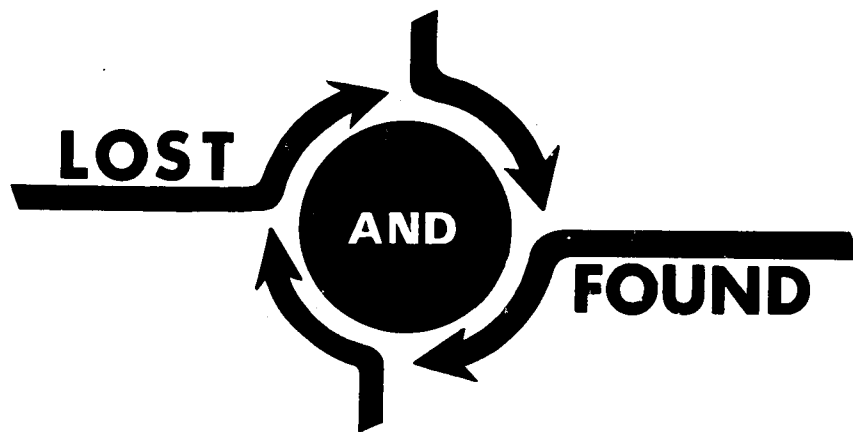
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