

CALLING ALL DIVAS

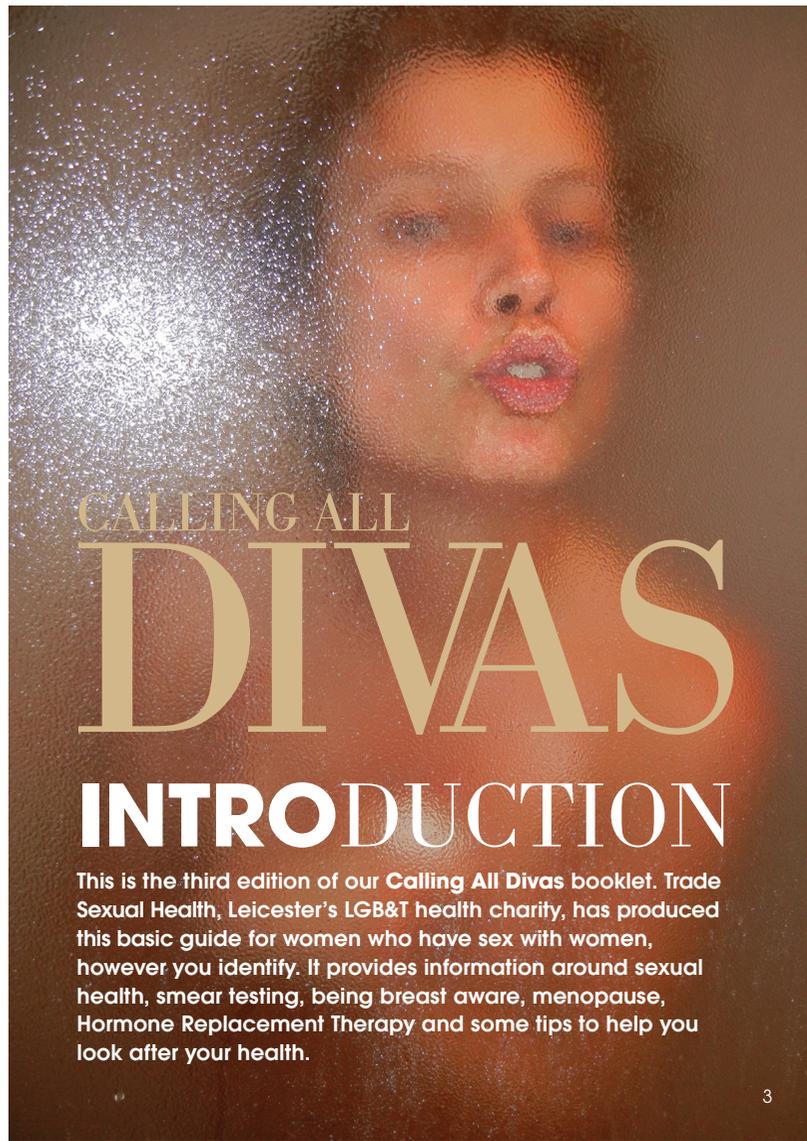


SEXUAL & PERSONAL HEALTH GUIDE
FOR LESBIAN & BISEXUAL WOMEN

CALLING ALL
DIVAS
CONTENTS



- 3 INTRODUCTION
- 4 TRADE SEXUAL HEALTH
- 6 LET'S TALK ABOUT SEX
- 7 THE FEMALE GUIDE TO STIs
- 8 WHAT STIs CAN I GET?
- 9 WHAT ARE THE HIV RISKS FOR LESBIAN & BISEXUAL WOMEN?
- 10 SAFER SEX TIPS BETWEEN WOMEN
- 11 DENTAL DAMS
- 12 WOMEN'S HEALTH
- 14 BE BREAST AWARE
- 16 WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN MY BREASTS
- 18 THE MENOPAUSE
- 18 SEX & THE MENOPAUSE
- 19 HORMONE REPLACEMENT THERAPY (HRT)
- 20 HOW TO CONTACT TRADE SEXUAL HEALTH
- 21 LOCAL & NATIONAL SEXUAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR LESBIAN & BISEXUAL WOMEN



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INTRODUCTION

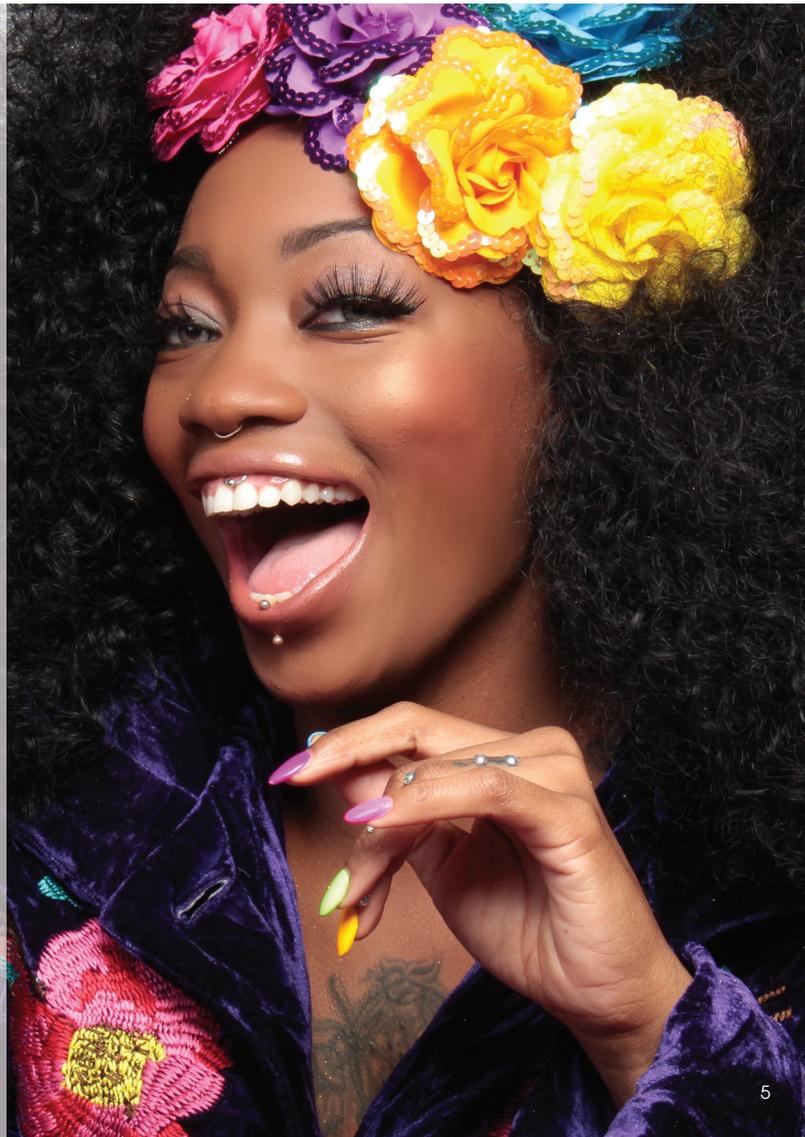
This is the third edition of our **Calling All Divas** booklet. Trade Sexual Health, Leicester's LGB&T health charity, has produced this basic guide for women who have sex with women, however you identify. It provides information around sexual health, smear testing, being breast aware, menopause, Hormone Replacement Therapy and some tips to help you look after your health.

Trade Sexual Health

Trade Sexual Health is an HIV prevention and sexual health promotion charity for anyone who identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGB&T), man who has sex with men (MSM) or woman who has sex with women (WSW) living or working in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.

We do a lot more, but here's just a few of the services we offer:

- * Sexual health information
- * **Approach** – Counselling Service
- * One-to-one emotional and practical support
- * Support in 'coming out', sexuality and relationships
- * **CLINIC xtra** – full sexual health checks
- * **Kwik Prick** – rapid HIV testing
- * Social and support groups
- * Volunteering opportunities
- * Free safer sex packs



LET'S TALK ABOUT

SEX

Sex can be, and for many is, a big part of intimate relationships and can be a fun way of getting to know your partner(s). Below is a list of common practices for women who have sex with women. This list is not exhaustive and each is down to personal preference.

FINGERING

This is stimulating the vagina with your fingers.

ORAL SEX

This is the stimulation of the vagina and clitoris with your tongue and lips. This can be through licking or sucking.

RIMMING

This is the stimulation of the anus with your tongue or lips. This can be through licking, kissing and inserting the tongue into the anus.

FISTING

This is where you stimulate the vagina or anus through slowly inserting all fingers, often one at a time, into your partner to stimulate the vaginal or anal wall.

TRIBADISM

This is the stimulation of a woman's genitals through rubbing yours on hers. It can be done in a range of sexual positions.

The above sexual acts can put women at risk of contracting or passing on sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

THE FEMALE
GUIDE TO...

STIs

Contrary to popular belief, lesbian and bisexual women are at risk from sexually transmitted infections (STIs). It is really important for women who have sex with women to have a good understanding about how to stay safe during sex.

Many women believe if they have sex with women then they can't catch an STI. From a dedicated survey, 85% of women who identify as a lesbian have had sex with men in their past*, so even if you and your partner have only had sex with women your ex's, or their ex's, may have experienced heterosexual sexual contact.

All lesbian and bisexual women can be at risk of getting a sexually transmitted infection.

* Prescription For Change: Lesbian & Bisexual Women's Health Check 2008.
www.stonewall.org.uk



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WHAT STIs CAN I GET?

Women who have sex with women are at risk of contracting all STIs, however, we at Trade Sexual Health thought it was important to let you know the ones you are most at risk of.

Chlamydia & Gonorrhoea

These are bacteria which are found in the semen and vaginal fluids of infected people. Infection can be spotted by increased vaginal discharge, spot bleeding/irregular bleeding pattern and painful urinating, although some women may not show any symptoms.

Crabs/Pubic Lice

These cling to pubic and body hair, causing itching and blood spots on the skin and are easily passed on from close body contact.

Genital Warts

Warts are a common virus of the skin. Small fleshy lumps appear around the genitals and can also be found inside the vagina and on the cervix.

Hepatitis

This is a viral infection which affects the liver and can be easily passed on through blood and faeces.

Herpes

Herpes shows itself as small painful sores anywhere on the genitals, around the mouth and nose (cold sores) and fingers and hands (whitlows). This is a virus that remains in your body and outbreaks of symptoms can appear more than once.

Syphilis

This is a very infectious bacteria and will result in painless ulcers normally at the site of entry. Ulcers in the mouth and vagina are sometimes unnoticeable.

Thrush

This is an overgrowth of yeast causing vaginal itching often with a thick white discharge.

T.V. (Trichomonas Vaginalis)

A frothy, itchy vaginal discharge caused by a parasite that is commonly transmitted by sharing sex toys.

WHAT ARE THE **HIV** RISKS FOR LESBIAN & BISEXUAL WOMEN?



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HIV can be transmitted through blood, breast milk, vaginal fluids and semen. Although the risk of transmitting HIV between women is low, some same-sex sexual practices may carry a risk of infection.

Oral sex

Cuts or sores in the mouth or genitals leave you at risk.

Sex on your period

It is easier to contract HIV through blood so it worth taking extra care at this time of the month.

Sharing sex toys

Remember to use barrier protection such as condoms.

Rough sex

Fisting and S&M activities can lead to bleeding or tearing of the vagina/anus.

Donor insemination

Remember to use a health service approved sperm bank to eliminate risk. If you are using a donor without using the health services make sure they have a HIV test.

For a HIV test contact your local sexual health clinic. See details on page 23.



safer sex tips between **WOMEN**

There are a few easy steps women who have sex with women can take to reduce the risk of sexually transmitted infections and HIV.

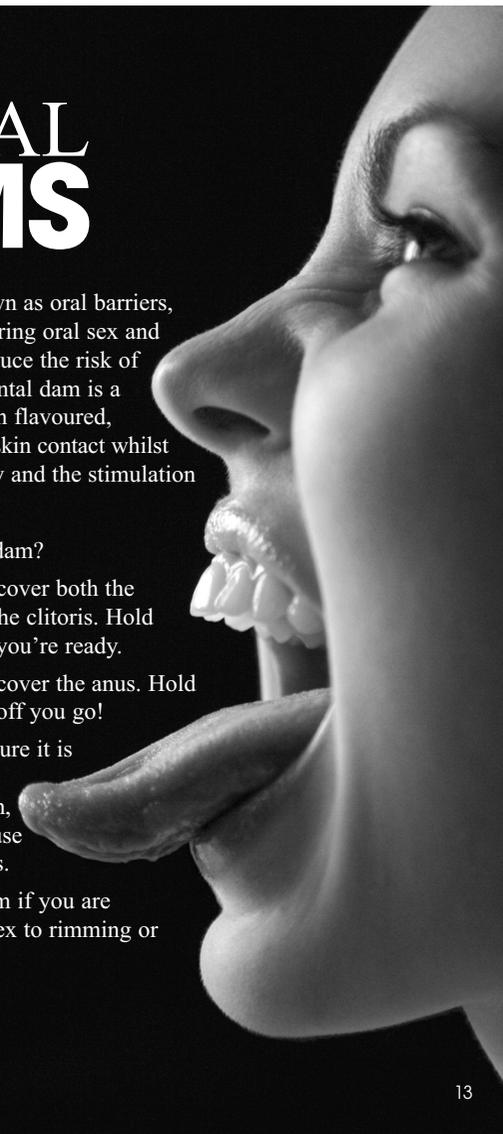
- * If you use sex toys, use a new condom for each partner and between penetration of different orifices.
- * Wash sex toys after use with soap and warm water.
- * Avoid oral sex if either of you has cuts or sores in the mouth or on the lips.
- * Some infections are transmitted by hands, fingers and mutual vulval rubbing. Make sure you wash your hands before and after sex.
- * Keep nails short to avoid nipping your partner
- * Wear latex gloves and use plenty of water based lubricant for vaginal and anal fisting.
- * Using a barrier makes it less likely that infections will get passed on. You can get free condoms, femidoms, lubricant, latex gloves and dental dams (see page 13) by dropping into the Trade office.

DENTAL DAMS

Dental dams, also known as oral barriers, are designed for use during oral sex and rimming in order to reduce the risk of contracting a STI. A dental dam is a thin sheet of latex, often flavoured, which prevents skin to skin contact whilst still allowing sensitivity and the stimulation of your partner.

How do I use a dental dam?

- * Lay the dam flat and cover both the vaginal opening and the clitoris. Hold the dam in place and you're ready.
- * Lay the dam flat and cover the anus. Hold the dam in place and off you go!
- * If using lubricant, ensure it is on the vagina or anus before placing the dam, and ensure you only use water based lubricants.
- * Always use a new dam if you are switching from oral sex to rimming or vice versa.



Womens HEALTH

Cervical screening (smear test) is offered to all women over the age of 25 on a three yearly basis regardless of their sexual orientation or behaviour. From the age of 49 the tests will be offered every five years until the age of 64.

This test is taken to look for abnormal cell changes from the cervix. Regular screening prevents 75% of cervical cancers from developing.

WHERE DO I GO?

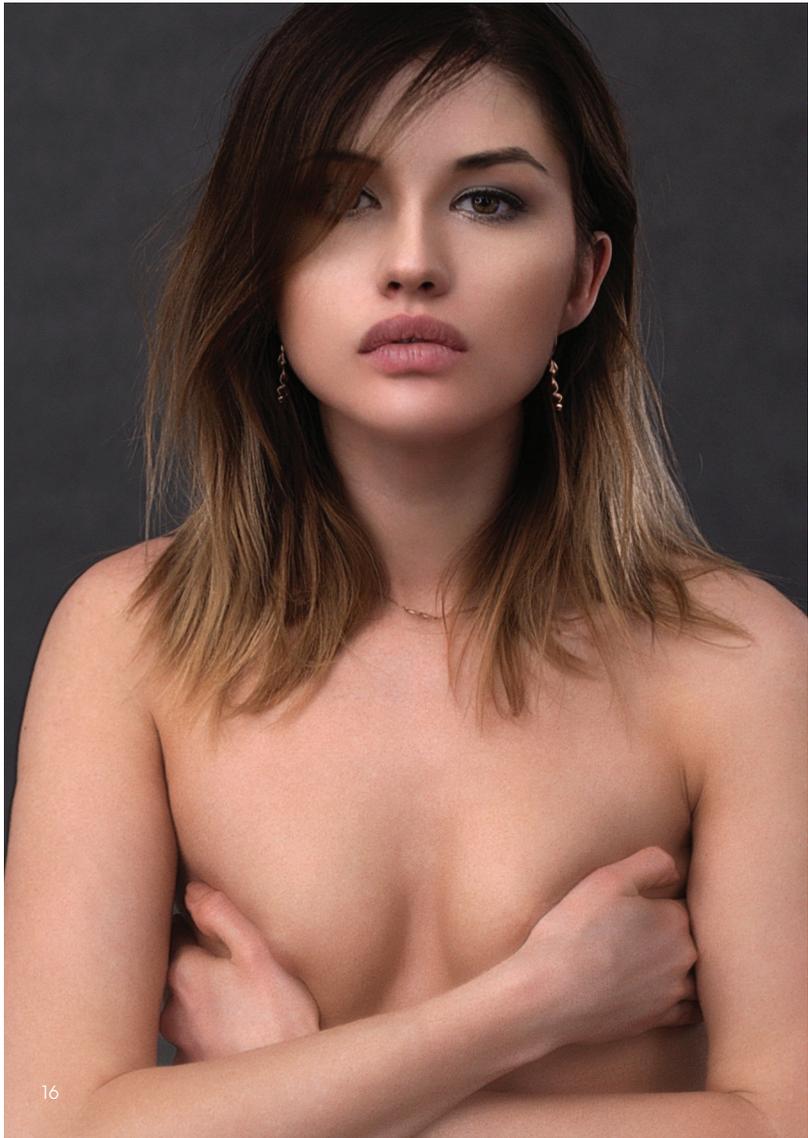
A smear test is offered with your GP. Normally a practice nurse will carry out the procedure for you. Alternatively, check with your local sexual health service to see if this is available.

I'VE NEVER HAD SEX WITH A MAN, SO I DON'T NEED A SMEAR TEST?

Nearly all cases of cervical cancer are associated with the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV). HPV is passed on through bodily fluids. This means that transferring vaginal fluids on hands and fingers, oral sex or sharing sex toys, can all be ways of being exposed to HPV. For women this is a problem as the virus causes cell changes which left untreated can develop into cancer.

HPV can be carried by someone for a number of years, without them even knowing it, so it is best to get checked.





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BE BREAST AWARE

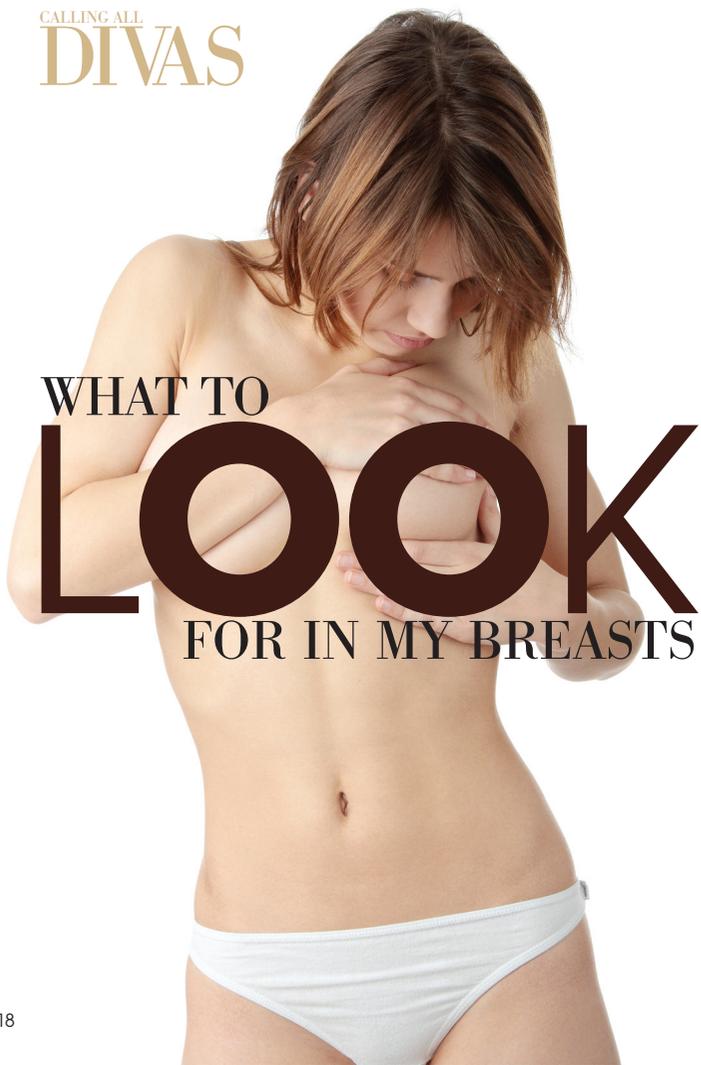
Breast cancer affects many women of all sexual orientations

One in eight women are at risk of developing breast cancer in their lifetime and on average 62,000 women are diagnosed with breast cancer each year in the UK*.

Detecting cancer early means that the treatment is more likely to be effective. Knowing what your breasts normally feel like will help you be able to detect abnormal changes. The appearance and feel of breasts can change at different times of the menstrual cycle.

*Breast Cancer Care. www.breastcancercare.org.uk

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WHAT TO
LOOK
FOR IN MY BREASTS

When checking your breasts, it is important to be aware of what changes are normal in your body's menstrual cycle. We have developed a short list of the main things to check.

- * Changes in the outline or shape of the breast.
- * Changes in the look or feel of the skin, such as puckering or dimpling.
- * Discomfort or pain in one breast that is unusual, particularly if it is new or persistent.
- * Any new lumps, thickening or bumpy areas in one breast or armpit, which differs from the same part of the other breast and armpit.
- * Nipple discharge that is new to you and not milky.
- * Bleeding from the nipple.
- * Moist red areas on the nipple that doesn't heal easily.
- * Any changes in nipple position, such as pulled up or pointing differently.
- * A rash on or around the nipple.

If you notice any of these changes, see you GP immediately.

The Menopause

Every woman will go through the menopause though each will experience it differently. The average age women go through menopause is 52 years old, but a woman could start to experience menopausal symptoms between the ages of 45-55 years old.

Menopause symptoms

- * Hot flushes and night sweats.
- * Sleep disturbances.
- * Vaginal symptoms such as dryness, itching or discomfort.
- * Urinary symptoms: many women become more prone to urinary infections such as cystitis.
- * 70% of women experience the most common symptoms of hot flushes and night sweats.

Sex & The Menopause

During menopause, lower levels of oestrogen can decrease the blood supply to the vagina. This can affect vaginal lubrication, causing the vagina to become dry and uncomfortable

We at Trade have come up with some quick tips to help menopausal women continue to have great sex.

Top tips

- * Increase sensitive touching to enhance natural lubrications before vaginal penetration.
- * Use water based lubricants; these are available different flavours and can also come with enhancing qualities such as tingle and heat.
- * Use of erotic materials such as DVDs or books.
- * Try a new sex toy for a different sensation of penetration and vibration.

Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT)

HRT can help prevent women from developing osteoporosis by replacing the oestrogen lost during the menopause. It is good at controlling menopausal symptoms, but it can slightly increase the risk of developing conditions such as breast cancer and deep vein thrombosis.



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HOW TO CONTACT TRADE SEXUAL HEALTH

If you feel you need some advice or support, then visit our Leicester city office or contact us by telephone or email. All our services are confidential.

Address: **Trade Sexual Health, 2nd Floor, 27 Bowling Green Street, Leicester LE1 6AS**

Telephone: **0116 254 1747**

Website: **www.tradesexualhealth.com**

Email: **info@tradesexualhealth.com**

 **TradeSHealth**

 **Trade_S_Health**

 **TradeSexualHealth**

 **TradeSexualHealth**

Opening times: Monday to Thursday 9.30am -5.30pm, Friday 10am-4pm



LOCAL AND NATIONAL SEXUAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR LESBIAN AND BISEXUAL WOMEN

CLINIC xtra

Trade Sexual Health, 27 Bowling Green Street, Leicester LE1 6AS

Local Sexual Health Services Contraception, full sexual health checks and treatment.

St Peter's Health Centre

(Leicester)

Loughborough Health Centre

Telephone: **0300 124 0102**

Website:

www.leicestersexualhealth.nhs.uk

Breast Cancer Care

Telephone: **0808 800 6000**

Website:

www.breastcancercare.org.uk

National Health Service

Tel: **111**

Website: **www.nhs.org.uk**

MORE INFORMATION RELATING TO YOUR SEXUAL AND PERSONAL HEALTH CARE

NHS Sexual Health Advice:

www.nhs.uk/Livewell/LGBHealth/Pages/lesbianhealth.aspx

Dental Dam Guide:

www.thesite.org/sex-and-relationships/safer-sex/dental-dams-4562.html

Safe Sex for Women:

www.autostraddle.com/safe-sex-for-lesbians-45382/

NHS Cervical Screening:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/cervical-screening-lesbian-and-bisexual-women

Vaginal Health:

www.nhs.uk/Livewell/vagina-health/Pages/vagina-health.aspx

Breast Awareness:

www.breastcancer.org.uk

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Trade Sexual Health

Your local LGB&T charity

**2nd Floor, 27 Bowling Green Street,
Leicester LE1 6AS**

Telephone: **0116 254 1747**

Website: www.tradesexualhealth.com

Email: info@tradesexualhealth.com

Registered Charity Number: 1081552