



Gh@pro

**The aim of this brochure is to give you information about what Gh@pro vzw does.
Gh@pro stands for Gezondheidshuis Antwerpse Prostitutie.
(Health House Antwerp Prostitution)**



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1. Establishment

Gh@pro was established in May 2002 to offer preventive health care to sex workers in the province of Antwerp.

2. What does Gh@pro do?

As a sex worker you are exposed to many health risks. First and foremost you run the risk of being infected with a Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI). That is why we offer you the chance to undergo regular testing for these STI's (syphilis, hepatitis B, hiv/aids, gonorrhoea and chlamydia).

(The terms 'Sexually Transmitted Disease' (STD) and 'Sexually Transmitted Infection' (STI) are both used, although the term STI is more recommended.)



Besides this medical service we also offer social support. You can ask us questions about social security, health insurance and other professional problems. We will look for an answer and bring you into contact with other care providers when needed.

Gh@pro cannot replace your general doctor. We offer a care package that is specifically focused on your work. If you have other health problems, like flu, you should contact your general doctor. If you do not have a doctor we can help you find one.

3. Who is Gh@pro?

Gh@pro is made up of a team of doctors, social nurses and a outreachers.



4. How does Gh@pro work?

Our services are completely **free of charge**. That means that we do not charge anything for the tests or for the consultations. Everything you tell us will remain **confidential** (medical professional secrecy). We give you a registration number to ensure that everyone receives his own results. This registration number is based on your working name and date of birth. We give you a number to guarantee your **anonymity**.

Visiting the doctor

Gh@pro has a consultation centre in the middle of the red light district. You can visit us for a consultation without an appointment three days a week. You will need an appointment if you want to come for a consultation in the evening. So always let us know if you want to come in the evening or we won't be able to see you.

One of our doctors can also come out to your workplace to see you there. For that we need the agreement of the person who owns the business. (For privatehouses and bars)

The first visit:

During your first visit you will be given information about what we do and about the tests.

If you want to take an STI test you will be asked to provide:

- Blood sample: to check for syphilis, hepatitis B and hiv/aids.
- Urine sample: to check for gonorrhoea and chlamydia trachomatis.
- Gynaecological examination: to check for cervical cancer and vaginal infections.

A new appointment will be made to discuss the results after a couple of weeks.

The second visit:

Your results will always be discussed with you **personally**. They will never be given to other people.

You will be prescribed the right medication for any infections you might have and you can get a free vaccination against hepatitis B if you need it. A new appointment will be made if necessary.

The hepatitis B vaccine

The full vaccination schedule comprises three injections. There must be a one-month wait between the first and second injection. After the second you have to wait three to five months before the third injection.

A blood sample is taken one month after the last one, to check that the vaccination is providing you with the protection you need.

You can ask about contraceptives (pill, injection, coil, prescription), safe sex and a whole lot more. You can also ask for a pregnancy test (urine). If you have an unwanted pregnancy, we'll refer you to the right care centres.

5. What are Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)?

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) are not spread in the air. You cannot catch them by breathing or coughing, through hand contacts, by sharing towels or from the toilet. These pathogens are transmitted only when people have sex.

How do you contract an STI?

You can contract an STI if you have sex with someone. You can also infect someone else if you are carrying an STI and you have sex with someone. Many women and men who are carrying an STI infection do not have any visible symptoms. So you could infect a client or your partner without even realising it. Direct contact between two mucous membranes is usually needed to contract the STI pathogens. That basically means direct contact between **penis and vagina, penis and anus, penis and mouth, mouth and anus or mouth and vagina and the other way round.**

With STIs it is important that your sexual partner is treated too. If you are treated and your sexual partner isn't, an STI infection can just keep coming back.



The STI pathogens

VIRUSES:

herpes, genital warts, hepatitis B and hiv.

BACTERIA:

gonorrhoea, chlamydia and syphilis.

PARASITES:

trichomonas vaginalis.

INSECTS:

crabs and itch mites.

VIRUSES

GENITAL WARTS are the most common STI in Belgium. The time it takes for them to appear around the genitals after infection varies. They can look like little cauliflowers. They don't hurt but they can itch. In women they may be difficult to spot because they are hidden between the labia or around the clitoris. They may also appear around the anus. In men the warts are easier to spot because they usually appear on the penis. They can also occur around the anus, the anal cleft and in the pubic area. A condom will not always protect the infected area. There are salves but you may need to visit a specialist to get rid of them.

HERPES is an irritating viral infection that will never leave your body. That means it can come back throughout your life in the form of blisters. That is especially common in people with reduced resistance, due to tiredness or stress. When you have a rash you are infectious to others. A condom won't always protect the infected area. Many people get blisters around their mouth. If you perform oral sex when you have a blister on your mouth the virus will be transmitted to the genitals. In women the large and small labia are most affected. In men the top of the penis and foreskin are most affected. A rash can also appear around the anus and on the inner thighs. There is medication to treat a rash, but the virus will stay in your body for your whole life.

VIRUSES

HEPATITIS B is a highly infectious STI that can make you seriously ill. It can cause jaundice. The virus is transmitted through sexual contact and in the blood. If you do not combat it the virus can remain in your body and eventually cause liver damage, like cirrhosis or cancer. There are no good medicines, but there is a good vaccine that can protect you for a lifetime, provided you receive all three injections.

HIV/AIDS is the most serious and best-known STI, but it is not the most common in Flanders. The virus is transmitted in the blood, through sexual contact but not in saliva. The virus is also found in the fluid that comes out of a man's penis before he comes. The hiv virus affects the body's immune system. When someone is infected they may suffer from flu-like symptoms, but they may not be affected by the infection for 7-10 years. These people are seropositive, which means that they have the virus in their body but it isn't active. Although it is dormant the virus can still be passed on to another person. The virus will eventually become active and start to attack the body's immune system. As a result, the body becomes more sensitive to other infections in the lungs, stomach, brain and elsewhere. There is no cure for aids, but it can be treated.

BACTERIA

CHLAMYDIA is another common STI in Belgium. It is caused by bacteria that lodge themselves in the mucous membranes of the genitals. The bacteria can also lodge themselves in the throat after oral sex without condom (blowjob). Chlamydia does not cause much symptoms in women. There may be some increased vaginal discharge or abnormal discharge of blood after sex. Men may experience discharge from the penis a few weeks after infection. Pain during urination may be another symptom. If left untreated the infection can cause infertility in women. Chlamydia can be treated well with antibiotics. Using condoms reduces the chance of infection. The sexual partner must receive treatment too or the infection will keep coming back.

GONORRHOEA or the clap as its known is caused by bacteria on the mucous membranes of body openings like the throat, vagina, penis and anus. Gonorrhoea is an infection that does not cause much symptoms in women. Symptoms are increased vaginal discharge, which has an unpleasant smell and may be green or yellow. There may be some discharge of blood between periods. In men there is always an unpleasant smelling white discharge. Urination may be painful. If left untreated the infection can spread to the womb in women. Gonorrhoea is treated with antibiotics. The sexual partner must receive treatment too or the infection will keep coming back.

SYPHILIS is a serious STI. It starts with a painless sore that clears up on its own, but that doesn't mean the infection is over. The second stage symptoms include running a fever, a skin rash, hair loss and swollen glands. The disease may become more serious over years, affecting the brain, heart, bone and spinal cord. If it is spotted in time it can be treated with antibiotics.

PARASITES

TRICHOMONAS VAGINALIS is a parasite that can cause a vaginal infection. A man has no symptoms, but a woman will complain of discharge that smells bad and pain during urination. This infection can be treated with medication. It is important that the sexual partner also receives treatment.

INSECTS

CRABS AND ITCH MITES are both transmitted by bodily contact, so a condom will not help protect you from these infections. If you are infected you will get an itch and red spots. This infection can be treated well with medication.

A FUNGAL INFECTION is not really a STI. All women are prey to fungal infections when their resistance is low due to stress, tiredness, warm weather and revealing clothing, menstruation, etc. Frequent washing with soap can also cause a fungal infection. The infection is usually easy to treat with salve or pills.

6. Safe sex

Safe sex is the best way to minimise the risk of contracting these infections. Safe sex means protecting yourself and the other person from infection by an STI. We advise you to use a condom every time you have any form of vaginal, oral or anal sex. Always try to put the condom on before there is any contact.

Use sufficient lubrication when you have anal sex. This will help ensure the condom doesn't tear. Always use a water-based lubricant. Do not use an oil-based lubricant.

If you perform oral sex you should make sure the man doesn't come in your mouth. Always use a condom when you have a throat or mouth infection. When you perform oral sex without a condom you run the risk of contracting gonorrhoea, chlamydia and syphilis. You can only contract hiv/aids and hepatitis B through oral sex if you have an infection or open wound in your mouth or poor dental hygiene.

It's a good idea to use an additional contraceptive, like the pill or an injection, to prevent unwanted pregnancy.



What should you do if you have a broken condom?

You risk contracting an STI when a condom breaks or gets stuck in your vagina. Rinsing your vagina with non irritating soap and water certainly won't do any harm, but it won't prevent infection! You really have to have yourself tested. We advise you to have a urine test to check for gonorrhoea and chlamydia a week after you have a broken condom. Wait three months before taking a blood test to check for syphilis and hiv/aids.

A broken condom may also result in pregnancy. You cannot buy a soap that will prevent you becoming pregnant.

If you don't take the pill or use some other form of contraception it's advisable to take a 'morning after pill' within 24 hours to prevent unwanted pregnancy. You can get this pill without a prescription at any pharmacy. It is sold under the name Norlevo®.



7. When should you visit the doctor?

We advise you to have an STI test when you have a problem with a condom, when you experience unpleasant smelling vaginal discharge, when you experience pains in your lower stomach or around the genitals, and in the event of abnormal blood discharge, abnormal white discharge or lesions on the genitals.

Even if you do not have any complaints we advise you to have an STI check-up every six months.

8. Sponges

It is advisable to give your body time to rest when you have your period. We certainly recommend you do not work during the first few days of your menstruation. Some sex workers who need or want to continue to work use a sponge. For hygiene and health reasons it's important to use sponges that are specially made for this purpose.

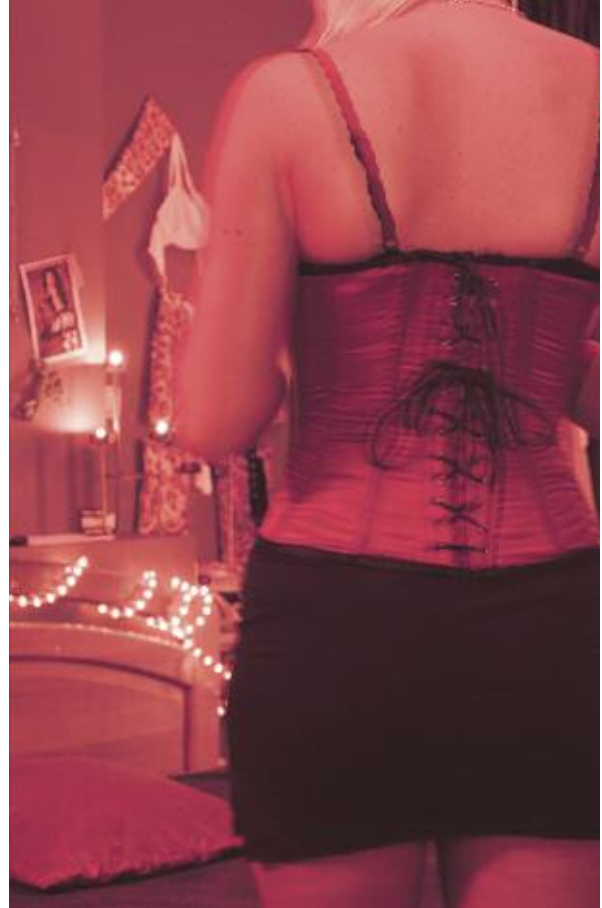
It is also important to use the sponge correctly. You should remember the following things:

- Only use a sponge once. Do not rinse it out and use it again.
- Never keep a sponge in for more than eight hours.
- If you cannot remove a sponge contact a doctor.
- Sponges absorb liquid, which dries out the vagina. It's advisable to use more lubricant to prevent the condom from tearing.
- Sponges are not contraceptives. They will not stop you becoming pregnant and they will not protect you from STIs. Always use a condom when you have a sponge in.

9. Our address and opening times

Gh@pro
Verversrui 3
2000 Antwerp
mondays: 2 pm - 4 pm
wednesdays: 10 am - noon
fridays: 10 am - noon

call: 03/293 95 91
mobile: 0474.98 57 66
fax: 03/294 33 70
email: ghapro@telenet.be
www.ghapro.be



10. Useful addresses

Pasop

Brabantdam 100B
9000 Gent
call: 09/233 47 67
www.pasop.info
pasop@skynet.be

Stiep

Oesterbankstraat 15
8400 Oostende
call: 0478/90 27 98
stiep_conny@hotmail.com

Espace P

Rue de Plantes 116
1030 Brussels
call: 02/219 98 74
espacepboxl@hotmail.com
http://users.skynet.be/bk340487

Aids & STD line

call: 078/15 15 15

Drugs line

call: 078/15 10 20
www.druglijn.be

Dr. Willy Peerscentrum

(unwanted pregnancies)
Lange Gasthuisstraat 45
2000 Antwerp
call: 03/226.25.25

Labyrinth (unwanted pregnancies)

Algemeen Centrum Ziekenhuis
Campus St-Erasmus
Luitenant Lippenslaan 55-57
2140 Borgerhout
call: 03/270 83 02

Institute of Tropical Medicine

Kliniek Leopold II
Kronenburgstraat 43/3
2000 Antwerp
For consultations:
call: 03/247 64 05
For SDT advice:
call: 03/247 64 65

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