



CRUISING SAFELY

**Safety tips for men who
go cruising in parks
and open spaces**



CRUISING SAFELY

There are a great many different places in London where gay men meet and have sex.

As well as the pubs, clubs, saunas, backrooms, sex clubs and websites, there are dozens of parks and open spaces where men go cruising.

If you go cruising this guide can help you steer clear of any problems you might face.

And even if you don't go cruising and you tend to only meet guys in bars and clubs or on the internet, you may find some of these tips useful.




PUBLIC SEX AND THE LAW

Cruising in public places has been part of gay life for centuries. Men of all different kinds, including many that you might never meet on the gay scene, converge at cruising spots – and all with the same aim in mind.

But if you want to go cruising, there are a few precautions you need to take – to keep it sexy, to avoid being mugged or attacked and to avoid any problems with the police or the public.

Sex in public places is not necessarily illegal, so long as other people who might be offended cannot see you and are unaware that you are having sex.



So discretion is key – always choose a spot that is out of sight of anyone who could be offended.

However, having sex in public toilets is illegal, full stop – not just for gay men, but for everyone. If you're caught, you could be charged under the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

Used condoms, empty lube packets and other litter lying around are the most common cause of complaints about cruising grounds – complaints that may attract the attention of both the Metropolitan and parks police.

Disposing of litter thoughtfully will ensure you're not drawing unwanted attention to your cruising area.

If you have any questions about your legal rights regarding public sex, call the GALOP helpline on 020 7704 2040.

GETTING THE SEX YOU WANT

Cruising is like shopping – it's easier if you know what you're looking for.

Here are some things to think about:

- Making a decision beforehand about the kinds of sex you do and don't want will help ensure that you are happy with the sex you get when you cruise.
- If someone approaches you who you're not interested in, let him know – politely! You're allowed to be selective.
- If you start having sex near other guys cruising, you may find you

have an audience – and some of them may be eager to join in. Remember, the decision is yours. If you're only interested in one guy, find a more private spot.

- If you have second thoughts about someone or about having sex, remember that it's OK to change your mind at any time.
- If you've been circling around the site for a while and not found anyone, it might be best to call it a day. You don't want to get so desperate you let your guard down and take risks.

- Do you sometimes cruise on the spur of the moment? If so, keep condoms with you at all times. Then you'll always have some if you need them.
- Be aware that using drugs or alcohol will affect your ability to stick to the decisions you've made. It's best not to go cruising when you're completely off your trolley.

BEFORE YOU GO CRUISING

- If you are new to a particular cruising area, get to know the layout during daylight. Locate the exits and check for dead ends.
 - Talk to other guys who use the site if you can, and ask where they go. Ask about the kinds of men who use the site and about the best and safest days and times.
 - Some cruising grounds have areas where particular types of sex happen. Find out what happens where and when.
- How will you get home late at night? Check for night buses, local cabs and phone boxes.
 - Read the local press and the gay press and keep an eye out for posters or notices alerting you to any trouble in the area.
 - Talking with other cruisers will also keep you informed. If there has been any trouble, it's often best to let a place 'cool down' for a while and go somewhere else.

CRUISING SAFELY

Using a little common sense will help you cruise safely. We all take steps to protect ourselves every day – without even thinking about it.

We look both ways when crossing the road, for instance, and carry umbrellas when it looks like rain. It's wise to take similar precautions when you cruise.

Some ideas are:

- Don't carry too much cash. It's best to leave valuables and credit cards at home. If you keep them in your pockets, they can easily get lost or stolen.
- Don't be a target for robbery – for example, don't wave a flash mobile phone around or carry an expensive personal stereo.

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- Using a personal stereo can also stop you being aware of signs of trouble. You need all your senses when you're cruising.
 - Be aware of exits and dead ends. Cruising grounds look different at night and distances can be difficult to judge.
 - Choose places for having sex that are discreet and out of public view.
 - However, you are safer in areas where there are other cruisers, so avoid becoming isolated. And steer well clear of loud or rowdy groups that you are not sure about.

IF THERE'S TROUBLE...

It's rare for trouble to occur while cruising, but it pays to plan how you would respond if it did.

- Avoid confrontations if possible. If you feel threatened, move immediately to a place where there are more people.
- If you do find yourself trapped or being attacked, shout for help.
- You may want to carry a personal alarm – you can use it to attract attention if you're in trouble.
- Alert other men who are cruising to any trouble you've had or seen.

- If you see someone else in trouble, try to help, but without risking your own personal safety. Shout, attract the attention of others nearby and call the police.
- If you don't want to report a crime directly to the police, you can report it anonymously, [see the section on 'Violence and Abuse'].
- Informing the police about worrying incidents in cruising areas helps them to protect you.

GOING HOME WITH SOMEONE...

If you're thinking of going home with someone you've met in a cruising area, there are some precautions you may want to take:

- Have a conversation! Talking to the man you've picked up can help you find out what he's like and decide if you trust him.
- Trust your instincts. If you feel unsure, say you've changed your mind.
- It's worth thinking about what you will say when you want to leave or get him to leave. If you

don't feel comfortable being assertive, you could invent an excuse. Say you have to be somewhere, or that you have a friend staying and expect him back, for example. [And check out the free assertiveness training courses at GMFA.]

- A man you take home may be tempted to steal from you, so don't leave credit cards or cash lying around.
- You may want someone to know where you have gone. If so, tell or text a friend.



YOUR SEXUAL HEALTH

If you're having lots of sex with lots of different men, it's likely that, at some point or other, you will pick up a sexually transmitted infection (STI).

So you are advised to have a sexual health check-up every three months.

To be sure that you know as much as possible about the symptoms of sexually transmitted infections, read the booklet called Good Sexual Health, which you can find in gay bars.

Sexually transmitted infections can be passed on through oral and anal sex.

Most gay men use condoms for anal sex with casual partners.

Condoms will help protect both you and your partner from sexually transmitted infections.

Perhaps most importantly, condoms prevent the transmission of HIV, the virus that can cause AIDS.

Having unprotected anal sex is by far the most common way of HIV being passed on between gay men. Using condoms will protect you.

If you enjoy anal sex, be sure to have condoms and lubricant with you when you go out cruising.

Always use condoms carefully. Follow the instructions and use plenty of water-based or silicone-based lubricant.

Some gay men also use condoms – flavoured and teatless ones – for oral sex, because there is a very small risk of an HIV-negative man being infected with HIV if he gets an HIV-positive man's semen in his mouth.

For information about sexual health clinics and HIV testing, pick up a copy of *Need Help?* in a gay bar. Or see the listings at www.metromate.org.uk

HELPLINES & WEBSITES

LONDON LESBIAN & GAY SWITCHBOARD

020 7837 7324 [24 hours]

www.llgs.org.uk

www.queery.org.uk

LONDON FRIEND

020 7837 3337 [7.30-10pm]

www.londonfriend.org.uk

www.friend.dircon.co.uk

www.boyz.co.uk

www.qxmag.co.uk

www.stonewall.org.uk

www.avert.org

www.gayyouthuk.co.uk

[www.outzone.org/outzone/
outzoneindex.html](http://www.outzone.org/outzone/outzoneindex.html)

www.gawhydontyou.com

www.squirt.org



SEXUAL HEALTH, HIV & AIDS

LONDON LESBIAN & GAY SWITCHBOARD

020 7837 7324

THT DIRECT 0845 1221 200

Mon-Fri 10-10pm, Sat & Sun 12-6pm

www.tht.org.uk

NATIONAL AIDS HELPLINE

0800 567 123 (freephone 24 hours)

NHS DIRECT 0845 4647 (24 hours)

www.metromate.org.uk

www.hivgum.demon.co.uk

www.aidsmap.com

www.youchoose.org.uk

www.gmhp.demon.co.uk

www.avert.org

www.ssha.info

COUNSELLING

One-to-one counselling is available free from the following organisations. Speak to a sexual health counsellor at any NHS sexual health clinic.

**HEALTHY GAY LIVING
COUNSELLING SERVICES**
020 7816 8511

TERRENCE HIGGINS TRUST
020 7835 1495

PACE
020 7697 0014
www.pacehealth.org.uk

NAZ PROJECT LONDON
020 8741 1879 / 07834 328 239
www.naz.org.uk

WORKSHOPS

PACE and GMFA provide a range of popular evening and weekend workshops to help gay and bisexual men make the most of their sexual and emotional lives.

Book direct with PACE or GMFA, or online at www.metromate.org.uk

GMFA
020 7738 3712
www.metromate.org.uk

PACE
020 7697 0014
www.pacehealth.org.uk

VIOLENCE & ABUSE

Gay and bisexual men are urged to report any violence or abuse they experience – whether it's homophobic or domestic violence.

In an emergency, always dial 999 or contact your local police station.

If you don't want a police investigation or you want to remain anonymous, you can report incidents after the event (whether or not you were a victim yourself) directly to one of the Metropolitan Police's Community Safety Units (which often have gay liaison officers) or to specialist gay support organisations like GALOP or your local LGBT forum.

You can also find reporting forms in gay bars. Reporting incidents, however small, helps the police and gay organisations build up a picture of particular problems in your area.

POLICE COMMUNITY SAFETY UNITS

Call your local police station or Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111
www.met.police.uk/csu/index.htm

GALOP

LGBT community safety charity
020 7704 2040
(Mon 5-8pm, Weds 2-5pm, Fri 12-2pm)
plus 24-hour answerphone and text message reception
Email: info@galop.org.uk
www.galop.org.uk

LGBT ADVISORY GROUP

Advisory group to the Metropolitan Police. Website lists local LGBT Forums which facilitate reporting of homophobic crimes. Call or visit the website for local contact details.
07952 970813

www.lgbtag.org

www.lgbtag.org/info/links.htm

www.camdenlgbtforum.org.uk

www.lambethlgbtforum.org.uk

www.report-it.org.uk

VICTIM SUPPORT

0845 30 30 900

[24 hours]

www.victimsupport.org

BROKEN RAINBOW

[The Pan-London LGBT Domestic Violence Forum]

08452 60 44 60

Mon-Fri 9am-1pm, 2-5pm

Email: mail@broken-rainbow.org.uk

www.broken-rainbow.org.uk

www.lgbt-dv.org

RAPE & SEXUAL ASSAULT

If you have been raped, sexually assaulted or sexually abused, and you need help and advice or just someone to talk to, contact the police, a doctor, a sexual health clinic or one of the three specialist Havens for emergency treatment. For longer-term support, contact a counselling organisation.

The Havens are specialist centres that offer medical help, advice and counselling, as well as practical and emotional support, to anyone who has been raped or sexually assaulted.

THE HAVEN – CAMBERWELL

Kings College Hospital
020 7346 1599 (9am-5pm)
At all other times: 020 7737 4000

THE HAVEN – PADDINGTON

St Mary's Hospital
020 7886 1101 (9am-5pm)
At all other times: 020 7886 6666

THE HAVEN – WHITECHAPEL

The Royal London Hospital
020 7247 4787 (24 hours)
Email: haven@bartsandlondon.nhs.uk

THE METROPOLITAN POLICE WEBSITE

This website has some excellent pages devoted to information for victims of rape and sexual assault.
www.met.police.uk/sapphire/advice.htm

SURVIVORS

Helpline, counselling and support for men who have been sexually abused.
0845 1221 201 (Tues & Thurs 7-10pm)
www.survivorsuk.org.uk

FURTHER READING

The Camden and Islington Gay Men's Team produces a wide range of information and advice booklets, which are available free in gay venues in London.

For a full catalogue of all our resources, contact:

Camden & Islington Gay Men's Team,
Specialist Services – HIV Prevention
4th Floor, West Wing
St. Pancras Hospital
4 St. Pancras Way
London NW1 0PE

Phone: 020 7530 3956

Email: david.smith@camdenpct.nhs.uk



AIDS - A GAY MAN'S GUIDE

An easy-to-read introduction to the illnesses caused by HIV and anti-HIV treatment drugs.



GAY LONDON

Sexual health information for gay men from non-English-speaking backgrounds.



GETTING READY

A self-help workbook aimed at helping gay and bisexual men improve their self-esteem and get ready for relationships.



GOOD SEXUAL HEALTH

Detailed information about sexually transmitted infections and sexual health clinics.



KEEP IT UP

A gay man's guide to staying HIV-negative.



HIV - A GAY MAN'S GUIDE

A fully illustrated guide to the basic facts about HIV and AIDS.



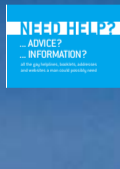
SEMEN, SEX AND HIV

An explanation of links between blood viral load, seminal viral load and infectivity.



HOW CAN YOU TELL

A guide to talking about HIV with your sexual partners.



NEED HELP?

All the gay helplines, booklets, addresses and websites a man could need in one handy credit-card-sized booklet.

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Camden Primary Care Trust is contracted by all the health authorities in London to be their publisher of HIV sexual health booklets for gay men for the London Gay Men's HIV Prevention Partnership.

TEXT:

Camden & Islington Gay Men's Team,
Specialist Services – HIV Prevention
4th Floor, West Wing
St. Pancras Hospital
4 St. Pancras Way
London
NW1 0PE

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PART OF:

LONDON GAY MEN'S
HIV Prevention Partnership

DISTRIBUTED FREE IN LONDON BY:





 **freedom's-shop.com**
The highest quality condoms at the lowest prices. Anywhere.



www.freedom's-shop.com

For lube online. Any time.

