Practice in Geneva
A guide for sex workers in Geneva
Rights and obligations

The legal framework in Switzerland

Working as a prostitute is legal in Switzerland. Sex work is a gainful activity permitted in accordance with the principle of economic freedom.

Two consenting adults may therefore freely exchange sexual services in return for payment (of goods or cash), providing that the sex worker does so in a self-employed capacity and is not acting under pressure or duress from any other party.

Each canton operates differently, and may enforce its own regulations relating to sex work. You can find out about the legal restrictions governing sex work in each Swiss canton by visiting http://www.sexwork.ch.

Federal Swiss law sets out offences relating to prostitution that exist at national level.
The offences that can be prosecuted are listed below:

**Encouraging prostitution (Art. 195 of Swiss Criminal Code):**

Any person who:

1. induces a minor into prostitution or encourages a minor in his or her prostitution with the intention of securing a financial advantage;
2. induces a person into prostitution by exploiting his or her dependence or a financial advantage;
3. restricts the freedom to act of a prostitute by supervising him or her in the course of his or her activities or by exercising control over the location, time or frequency of their work or other aspects of their work;
4. makes a person remain a prostitute against his or her will

is liable to receive a custodial sentence of up to 10 years or a monetary penalty.

**Unauthorised practice of prostitution (Criminal Code Art. 199):**

Any person who violates the cantonal regulations on the permitted locations or times at which prostitution may be practised or the manner in which it may be practised, or regulations on the prevention of related public nuisance is liable to receive a fine.

**Trafficking in human beings (Art. 182):**

1. Any person who as a supplier, intermediary or customer engages in the trafficking of a human being for the purpose of sexual exploitation, exploitation of his or her labour or for the purpose of removing an organ is liable to a custodial sentence or to a monetary penalty. The soliciting of a person for these purposes is equivalent to trafficking.
2. If the victim is a minor or the offender acts for commercial gain, the penalty is a
custodial sentence of not less than one year.

3. In every case, a monetary penalty must also be imposed.

4. Any person who commits an act abroad is also guilty of an offence.
Genevan law on prostitution and implementing regulation

In Geneva, the Genevan law relating to prostitution (LPrest) and its accompanying regulation (RPrest) define the legal framework governing the practice of sex work and the operation of organised premises (brothels) and escort agencies.

Among the provisions of this law are compulsory registration with the BTPI (Brigade contre la traite et la prostitution illicite – police department combating trafficking and illegal prostitution) and mandatory awareness training for anyone who wishes to carry out sex work.[1]

Registration

To register (card system), individuals must make an appointment to visit the BTPI police department in person before they begin sex work. Registration is free of charge (telephone +41 22 427 71 40 for an appointment).

BTPI:

Boulevard Carl-Vogt 17-19
1205 Geneva
Tel: 022 427 71 40
gprost@police.ge.ch

You must be a Swiss national or have a permit to work in the country at the time of registration.

Sex workers can declare their intention to suspend or terminate their activities at any time. You must notify the BTPI in writing, enclosing a copy of your identity document[1] and the date on which your activity will cease. If you are definitively exiting sex work, you may request the removal of your file from the BTPI’s record of sex workers.[2]
Work permits

Any person from abroad who wishes to legally practise sex work must obtain work permit L, B, C or G. European nationals need to make an online declaration (IMES – Swiss Federal Office of Immigration, Integration and Emigration).

European nationals can apply for authorisation to carry out sex work. Citizens of non-European countries cannot apply for a residence permit in order to engage in sex work, but they may do so legally if already in possession of permit B or C.
IMES/90-day declaration:

European nationals (EU 25 and EFTA countries) may work in Switzerland for a period of 90 days per calendar year (1 Jan to 31 Dec) without residing in the country by making a declaration to the Federal Department of Justice and Police. They must register online at the following address before beginning or resuming their activity:


Workers must keep a copy of this online declaration with them at all times.

Short-term residence permit (permit L):

European nationals who wish to move to Switzerland to work for a period of no more than 365 days may apply for permit L. If you work in organised premises (brothels), you will receive employee permit L, whereas if you work from home or on the streets, you will receive self-employed permit L.

Long-term residence permit (permit B)

European nationals who wish to reside in Switzerland and practise sex work in the country for more than 365 days may apply for permit B. If you work in organised premises you will receive employee permit B, whereas if you work from home or on the streets, you will receive self-employed permit B. In order to obtain permit B for work in organised premises, you must demonstrate your intention to remain in Switzerland for more than one year and that the operator of your place of work intends to allow you to work there for longer than a year.

Permanent settlement (permit C)

Permit C, which allows permanent residency, is in principle issued following an application
from a person who has lived in Switzerland for 10 years with permit B or L (most EU/EFTA countries), or five years for citizens of certain other European countries.

**Cross-border work permit (permit G)**

European citizens currently living in Europe who wish to work in Switzerland while continuing to live in their country of residence may apply for permit G.

In Geneva, applications for permits must be submitted to the *Office Cantonal de la Population*. You must complete:

- Form M to obtain a residence permit if you wish to live in the canton of Geneva (permit L or B)
- Form F to obtain a cross-border work permit if you wish to work in Geneva while continuing to return to your home country regularly and remain resident there (permit G)

All supporting documents requested on the reverse of these forms must be enclosed with the application.
Working around Switzerland

- EU and EFTA nationals who hold an employee permit L or B benefit from geographical and professional freedom and may work anywhere in Switzerland and change their job if they wish. They may be employed in a massage parlour. If you wish to be self-employed, you must exchange your employee work permit for an EU/EFTA self-employed permit B.

- Holders of a self-employed permit L or B from EU or EFTA countries may work anywhere in Switzerland. If you wish to be employed in a massage parlour, however, you must apply for an EU/EFTA employee permit B (or L).

- Holders of permit B or EU/EFTA permit B obtained under family reunification rules may undertake salaried or self-employed work regardless of their nationality without further administrative formalities by virtue of LEtr Article 46 (Swiss law on foreign nationals and integration) and Article 27 of OASA (Swiss ordinance on admission and residence).

- In all cases, a person who wishes to change their canton of residence must declare this to the Office Cantonal de la Population et des Migrations. For citizens of EU or EFTA countries, this is a simple declaration. However, nationals of third countries are required to submit an application to move to another canton and wait for the outcome before doing so (LEtr Article 37).

- No authorisation is necessary for a temporary stay in another canton (LEtr Article 37 paragraph 4).
Authorised locations for prostitution in Geneva

In Geneva, there are various locations where sex work can take place: on the street (e.g. Boulevard Helvétique and the district of Pâquis), in premises used to sell sex (brothels), via an escort agency, or at home by advertising online or in newspapers, etc.

Prostitution in public areas (i.e. on the street) is permitted everywhere in Geneva but may be forbidden in particular places such as close to schools, places of worship, cemeteries, hospitals, parks, playgrounds, public transport stops or stations, public toilets and places accessible to the public or reserved for parking cars, etc.

While soliciting is permitted, carrying out an act of a sexual nature in a public place is against the law and an offence under Art. 198 of the Criminal Code.

There is a zone in Geneva where prostitution is forbidden. This area lies at the bottom of Boulevard Helvétique in the district of Les Tranchées (see map).

Police checks

The police may carry out checks on sex workers or their premises at any time. Such checks may take place in apartments, organised premises or on the street and concern any person engaging in sex work behind closed doors or outside, via the internet or small advertisements.

Police officers may also verify the licence documentation for premises and the identity of individuals found on site.

Any individual involved in sex work without a valid work permit and/or without BTPI registration is liable to incur a fine.
Self-employed status/working conditions

All individuals whose occupation is sex work are self-employed. This means that neither the times, locations, nature or frequency of the sexual practices they engage in nor their clients can in any way be imposed upon them by another person or party.

Those in charge of organised premises or escort agencies are obliged to issue itemised receipts for all amounts paid.

Similarly, it is strongly recommended to have a contract in place for any property let or sublet, and that receipts are requested for all rental amounts paid.

Administrative obligations

Aside from the question of residence permits, the responsibility for undertaking all other
administrative formalities lies with sex workers themselves. It is therefore up to you to seek information and take action to acquire the insurance policies you need and declare your income. You must have a valid address at which you receive your mail and ensure this reaches you, and arrange for a trusted person to collect it in your absence.

**Health insurance:**

All persons with their home address in Switzerland (Swiss nationals/workers with permits C, B or L) are required to take out health insurance with an authorised federal health insurer (LAMal) as soon as they arrive in Switzerland. Even if you join following receipt of your work permit, premiums are payable from your date of arrival in Switzerland. It is therefore important to set aside a minimum of 350 Swiss francs (CHF) per month in anticipation of your insurance payments.

Individuals who have obtained permit G (cross-border commuting) who live in a non-neighbouring country must also join a Swiss health insurance provider.

You may freely choose your own health insurance provider, but the body must be an approved provider of health insurance under the Swiss federal health insurance law (LAMal). For the purposes of basic cover, health insurance providers must accept customers
regardless of their age or health status, without imposing reservations or a waiting period. The customer applies to join their preferred provider directly.

Only basic medical cover is compulsory; further complementary policies are optional.

Health insurance premiums are payable monthly. Not all medical fees are reimbursed. You must first pay the fees up to the excess amount stated on your policy (e.g. 300 or 2,500 CHF per year).

**AVS (Assurance vieillesse et survivants – Old-age and survivors insurance or OASI)**

Everybody who has their home address or carries out paid employment in Switzerland must be affiliated to the AVS. Those who work in the country for a relatively short period of less than three months per year are exempt from this obligation.

In Geneva, the AVS regards sex workers as self-employed, irrespective of their actual place of work. You are therefore personally responsible for contacting AVS and arranging to be part of the scheme. In order to grant you self-employed worker status, AVS will verify that you have registered with the BTPI.
AVS contributions are calculated according to income. For self-employed workers, this is estimated for the first year of activity, then adjusted if necessary according to the income declared to the tax authorities.

**Taxation:**

Residents of Switzerland and those undertaking paid employment in the country are subject to tax. People engaged in sex work are regarded as self-employed workers. You have a duty to declare your self-employed activity to the Swiss tax authorities. Once you have done so, you will receive an annual tax return containing a special form that must be completed and returned.

**Violence, abuse, exploitation, human trafficking, rape, etc.**

If you are the victim of violence, abuse, exploitation or trafficking, you have rights that you can exercise under the law.
Sex work is and will always remain a self-employed activity. This means that nobody, whether someone close to you, the operator of a premises or any other person can compel you, either by threat or by force, to carry out sex work or particular sexual practices. You may go wherever you wish, and you are entitled to choose when you work.

Any form of coercion used against you is punishable by law.

In Switzerland, encouraging prostitution and human trafficking are criminal offences. Likewise, acts of violence (e.g. psychological, physical and sexual violence, harassment, or the fraudulent use of images), coercion and exploitation are also criminal offences that can lead to prosecution and a conviction.

If you believe you are being abused by a person you know or the operator of premises used for prostitution, we advise you to contact Aspasie or another organisation of your choice so that you can talk completely confidentially about your situation, find out about your rights, and receive support to take the next steps if necessary.

If you experience physical violence, it is important to see a doctor quickly so that you can receive the treatment you need, as well as obtain a medical report of your injuries that will subsequently help ensure the violence against you is recognised. A medical report does not imply any obligation to prosecute your attacker, but it provides evidence that will play an important part in a trial.
All individuals who have suffered physical or psychological violence are strongly recommended to seek support in any action they may take.

The time limit for reporting the offence is three months from the date on which the plaintiff knows the identity of the perpetrator.

Moving into another form of employment or finding an additional job

If you feel you wish to stop sex work for whatever reason, if you want to find an additional job to vary your sources of income, or if you would like to think about your general situation and the potential alternatives to sex work in the medium or long term, SOS Femmes offers a consultation service that can help you.

The process of moving into another profession is one that differs for each individual sex
worker. According to your wishes, family situation, level of French and general education, as well as your financial needs, status and rights in Switzerland, the *SOS Femmes* consultation service will guide, inform and support you to develop your plans and bring them to fruition, offering information and solutions appropriate to each individual situation.

Firstly, the objective is often to stabilise your overall situation in order to improve your living conditions so that they are conducive to developing appropriate plans for your personal and professional life. For example, we do this by looking for a place to live, helping you with medical or administrative difficulties (e.g. health insurance, tax, debt, the AVS retirement scheme or residence permits) and exercising your employment and financial rights.

It is also not always easy to be part of the labour market in Geneva, to look for a new job or work experience or follow a course of study or training. The *SOS Femmes* consultation service can help you write your curriculum vitae or a covering letter, evaluate your skills, promote your knowledge, submit applications and prepare for job interviews. It can also help you choose a training programme and seek sources of funding, take part in language courses or work in our second-hand clothes store *Les Fringantes* so that you can practise your French and gain experience in this field of employment.

Should you need support, the *SOS Femmes* consultation service offers you attention and kindness, helping you build your self-confidence and identify other possibilities.

**Where is it held?**

*La Consultation – SOS Femmes*

10, Rue de la Madeleine

1204 Geneva

The *SOS Femmes* consultation service is open to sex workers without an appointment every Thursday afternoon from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.

If you wish, you can also make an appointment by telephoning 022 311 22 22 on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday or Friday from 10.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. or by sending an e-mail to: consultation@sosfemmes.ch
The service is free of charge and your confidentiality is guaranteed.
Health

FAIR SEX WORK

Fair Sex Work is an approach that enables sex workers of both sexes to be at the forefront of promoting respect for certain standards in sex work.

Working in accordance with FxW recommendations means: “I look for clients who appreciate this way of working. The sex work I practise signifies a high level of health, hygiene, safety and pleasure.”
To ensure the best possible protection against HIV and AIDS and other sexually-transmitted infections:

- Always use a male or female condom during penetrative sex
- Always use protection during fellatio, whether ejaculation occurs or not
- Do not allow sperm or menstrual blood to enter the mouth, i.e. do not swallow sperm or blood
- Consult a doctor if you experience itching, a burning sensation, discharge or flu-like symptoms after unprotected sex

Behaviour carrying no risk of HIV/AIDS infection:

- Kissing, stroking or massage
- Sharing cooking equipment or toothbrushes
- Using swimming pools or saunas
- Exposure to tears, sweat, urine or faeces
- Mosquito bites
STIs, symptoms and treatments

**Chlamydia (Chlamydia trachomatis)**

**Transmission**

- Unprotected vaginal or anal penetration and/or oral sex (fellatio)
- Mother-to-baby transmission during childbirth.

**Symptoms**

- Often presents no symptoms
- Sometimes causes a tingling or burning sensation while urinating, lower abdominal pain or pain during sex, bleeding
- Women: vaginal discharge
- Men: discharge secreted from the end of the penis.

**Complications**

- Women: infection of the fallopian tubes potentially causing infertility or ectopic pregnancy
- Men: reduced fertility.

Prevention: Male/female condoms

Incubation period: 1-12 weeks

Screening:
- Genital/anal PAP smear test
- Urine sample
- Testing of partner(s)

Treatment
- Antibiotics for the infected person and their partner(s).

**Gonorrhoea**

Transmission
- Unprotected vaginal or anal penetration or oral sex (fellatio); the infection is rarely transmitted through cunnilingus.
- Mother-to-baby transmission during childbirth.

Symptoms
- Often presents no symptoms
- Discharge from the vagina, penis or anus, an unpleasant smell; pus may be present
- Pain in the vagina or head of the penis, pain while urinating or during sexual intercourse, itching or irritation in the anal region, occasional bleeding between periods, sore throat, redness and irritation in the mouth and throat.

Complications
- Men: may spread to the prostate and epididymis
- Men and women: may lead to infertility, and more rarely, other complications such as inflammation of the joints, skin, heart and conjunctiva.
Prevention: Male and female condom

Incubation period: 2-10 days or more if there are no symptoms.

Screening:

- Genital/anal PAP smear, throat swab
- Urine sample or blood test
- Testing of partner(s)

Treatment

- Antibiotics for the infected person and their partner(s).

**Syphilis**

Transmission

- Unprotected vaginal or anal penetration or oral sex (fellatio);
- By contact with a skin wound (chancres and secondary-stage syphilis rashes are highly contagious)
- Kissing, if a chancre is present in or on the mouth
- Through blood (sharing syringes or items used to inhale drugs)
- Mother-to-baby transmission.

Symptoms

There are three stages:

- Stage 1: lasts 10-90 days: A chancre (small painless sore) may appear on the skin or mucus membranes (penis, head of the penis, testicles, clitoris, vagina, anus, breasts, rectum, lips, mouth or throat). The chancre disappears without treatment after 3-6 weeks; however, the affected individual continues to carry syphilis.
- Stage 2: These symptoms sometimes appear automatically after the chancre, but they may also appear several years after sexual contact: skin rashes (chest and back, and a telltale rash on the palms and soles of the feet, as well as the genitals).
Possible joint or muscular pain, fever and/or patchy hair loss. These symptoms disappear without treatment but the infection remains present (latent syphilis).

- Stage 3 (lasting up to approx. 30 years after sexual contact): severe damage to the vital organs and nervous system (heart, brain, eyes and bones).

Complications

- Neurosyphilis: The bacteria may invade the central nervous system leading to meningitis (asymptomatic or with headache), and attack the eyes and hearing. This complication is more commonly found in HIV-positive patients.

Prevention: Male/female condoms

Incubation period: Blood tests give positive results 15-20 days after infection, but for complete certainty it is necessary to allow three months to elapse between the last point of possible infection and the test to conclude that a negative result is a 100% reliable indication of the absence of syphilis.

Screening:

- Conventional blood test: a blood sample is taken and the result is known within one week.
- Quick blood test: a droplet of blood is taken from the fingertip, with the result available within 20 minutes.

Treatment

- Treatment via antibiotic injection for the patient and their partner(s)Six months after treatment has ended, a further blood test is necessary to confirm its success. It is essential that follow-up tests are carried out.

**HPV = Human Papillomavirus Condyloma**

Transmission

- Sexual contact (oral, anal, vaginal or penile)
Contact between the skin and infected lesions during sexual touching (transmission via the fingers)

Mother-to-baby transmission during childbirth.

Symptoms, complications

- 1-8 weeks following infection: small painless warts (which may also be invisible) called condyloma appear on the genitals or anus
- Cervical cancer
- Cancer of the penis (rare).

Prevention:

- Male/female condoms
- Vaccinations in girls (quadrivalent vaccine types 6, 11, 16 and 18)[1]

[1] http://www.infovaccins.ch/index.php/14-accueil/11-vaccination-contre-le-papillomavirus-hpv-v-retablissons-la-verite (Vaccine that protects against two members of a family of approximately 20 viruses that may in rare cases be linked to cervical cancer – 2.3% of cases of HPV in industrialised nations).

Screening: Medical examination and cervical smear test (screening every two years), to be repeated following treatment as the infection may return.

Treatment

Warts to be treated with cream and if necessary, local extraction or laser removal treatment.

Herpes

HSV = Herpes simplex virus
HSV-2 = Genital herpes,
HSV-1 = Oral herpes

Transmission
Sexual relations: by direct contact with the vesicles (small spots) found on the vulva, penis or anus or by discharge from the cervix, vagina, urethra or anus

Where herpes affects the mouth (cold sore), transmission from the mouth to the vulva, penis or anus is possible but uncommon.

Mother-to-baby transmission.

Symptoms, complications

- Vesicles (sacs) full of liquid, then spots on the genitals or anus. Pain which is often severe
- Pain while urinating
- In children: neurological disorders and other serious health problems.

Prevention:

- Male/female condoms
- Dental dam during cunnilingus and anilingus

Incubation period:

Viruses may appear 2-20 days following infection.

They may appear several years after the infected individual contracted them

Screening

- Medical examination, smear test* or blood test (if no symptoms present)
- Caesarean section in cases of acute-phase genital herpes.

Treatment

Creams or appropriate antiviral treatments can alleviate symptoms and minimise recurrences but do not eliminate the virus. Individuals are carriers for life.

The disease often evolves by outbreaks (triggered by fatigue, stress, exposure to the sun, depressed immune system, etc.)
Hepatitis B

Transmission

- By sexual contact and bodily fluids (blood, pre-ejaculatory fluid, sperm and vaginal discharge)
- From a tattoo or piercing carried out in non-sterile conditions.
- Through skin wounds if there is contact with blood.
- Via the mucous membranes of the mouth, vagina or anus.

Symptoms, complications

- No symptoms in the genital area
- Presence of fever, fatigue or jaundice in 10% of cases
- Serious liver disease (cirrhosis and/or cancer).

Prevention:

- Hepatitis B vaccine
- Male/female condoms

Incubation period: 1-6 months

Screening

- Conventional blood test: a blood sample is taken and the result is known within one week
- Quick blood test: a droplet of blood is taken from the fingertip, with the result available within 20 minutes.

Treatment

- A majority of infected individuals will naturally eliminate the virus before they become chronically ill.
- In cases of chronic hepatitis, appropriate treatments exist that can suppress the virus. Complete recovery is rare.
Hepatitis C

Transmission

- Contact with blood, even small quantities. Transmitted in particular by sharing used syringes or the equipment used to prepare to inhale drugs.
- From a tattoo or piercing carried out in non-sterile conditions.
- Low risk of transmission during sexual activity.

Symptoms, complications

- Fatigue and exhaustion, loss of appetite, digestive problems and fever. Jaundice occurs in 10-15% of cases.
- The infection becomes chronic in approximately 80% of cases. Between 10 and 20% of chronic sufferers go on to develop cirrhosis of the liver and 1-5% progress to liver cancer.

Prevention:

- There is no vaccination
- Male/female condoms
- Use clean equipment to inject or inhale drugs
- Do not share toiletries such as toothbrushes, razors or nail clippers. This precaution is important because unlike HIV, the hepatitis virus can survive outside of the body for up to several weeks.

Incubation period: 2 weeks to 6 months

Screening

- Conventional blood test: a blood sample is taken and the result is known within one week
- Quick blood test: a droplet of blood is taken from the fingertip, with the result available within 20 minutes.

Treatment

- Hepatitis C is treated with antiviral medication. The most recent drugs are able to
eradicate the virus in some people.

AIDS virus HIV

Transmission

- Transmission occurs through sperm, vaginal discharge, semen (anal or vaginal penetration without a condom or fellatio without a condom).
- Blood transmission (open wounds, sharing syringes or paraphernalia for inhaling drugs, menstrual blood).
- The viral load is very high during the first few weeks following infection, which means the risk of transmitting the virus is very high as well. The higher the viral load, the more contagious the individual. Viral load is a measure of the amount of HIV virus present in the blood of an infected person.
- Mother-to-baby transmission (during pregnancy, labour or breastfeeding).

Symptoms, complications

- Symptoms may appear 2-4 weeks following infection (sometimes there are none at all); they then give way to allow a chronic infection to take hold (“chronic” means a longlasting infection for which long-term treatment is necessary, or an infection which is impossible to eradicate):
  - Fever, diarrhoea, skin rashes (blotches with small spots on the body), fatigue, the appearance of ganglions that increase in size, muscular pain
  - The symptoms of an infection may go unnoticed in an infected person.

Prevention :

- There is no vaccination
- Male/female condoms

Incubation period: The majority of tests available can detect the virus with certainty six weeks following the point of possible infection.

Screening
Conventional blood test: a blood sample is taken and the result is known within one week.

Quick blood test: a droplet of blood is taken from the fingertip, with the result available within 20 minutes (wait 3 months following the point of possible infection to ensure a completely reliable result).

Self-testing: the person carries out their own test (wait 3 months following the point of possible infection to ensure a completely reliable result).

If any of these tests produces a positive result, it must immediately be confirmed by a blood test.

Treatment

There is no treatment that cures the virus. However, long-term treatments exist that can slow the progress of the disease – known as “triple-combination therapy”.

This triple combination of treatments acts to prevent or delay the development of the AIDS phase by blocking the replication of the virus. These treatments therefore increase the life expectancy of HIV-positive people, but they are not a cure.

Vaginal mycosis

Transmission

- Sexual contact (oral, vaginal, anal, penile), sexual touching
- Vaginal mycosis is not regarded as a sexually-transmitted infection.

Symptoms, complications

- Itching
- Vaginal discharge which is white with a thick, creamy texture
- Burning
- Inflammation of the head of the penis.

Prevention: 
- Male/female condoms
- Medical examination and sample of the affected area, smear test.

Treatment

- Appropriate medication
- Cream to be applied to mucous membranes or pessary to be inserted into the vagina.

**Trichomoniasis**

Transmission

- By sexual contact. The parasite can survive for several hours on toiletry items such as towels. Contamination may be accidental in some cases.

Symptoms, complications

- In women (especially aged 16-35): Vaginitis is common, causing copious yellowish, unpleasant-smelling vaginal discharge as well as itching, burning while urinating and a frequent need to pass urine, etc.
- In men: In many cases there are no symptoms, however, pus may leak from the penis in the morning alongside an itching sensation from inside the penis.

Prevention: Male/female condoms

Incubation period: A few days to a few weeks.

Screening: Vaginal smear or urine sample.

Treatment

- Treatment by pessaries. These are contraindicated during the first trimester of pregnancy.
- The individual’s partner must be treated at the same time.
SCABIES

Transmission

- Intimate contact such as touching, or contact with the clothes or personal belongings of the sufferer.
- Highly contagious: The parasites are found in bed linen and on pillows, armchairs, clothes, etc. These items can easily transmit the parasite.

Symptoms, complications

- Very strong itching, especially at night, skin lesions on the wrists, between the fingers, on the buttocks, thighs, genitals, navel and nipples; some specific skin lesions called scabies burrows appear on the wrists and palms or between the fingers; nodular scabies consists of red nodules that cause the genitals to itch.

Diagnosis is often difficult because characteristic scabies lesions are not always found alongside burrows, itching or the appearance of vesicles. On occasions, it may be necessary to try out a treatment to confirm a diagnosis of scabies.

Treatment

- Topical treatments and medication can treat the infection.

Crabs (pubic lice)

Transmission

- Intimate contact such as touching, or contact with the clothes or personal belongings of the affected person.

Symptoms, complications

- On the body, areas of hair and the scalp: violent itching that causes skin lesions.

Prevention: Practising basic hygiene rules, regular monitoring
Incubation period : 8-10 days.

Screening : No further tests are essential to diagnose the infection. Diagnosis relies on the context in which the condition occurs and the symptoms noted.

Treatment

- Treated by applying lotions, creams or shampoos.
- Partner(s) are also treated.
- All clothes must be washed at a temperature of at least 55°C.
- Aerosols can be used on contaminated objects such as sofas, carpets, mattresses, toiletries, etc.

**PEP (Post-Exposure Prophylaxis) or emergency HIV prevention treatment**

This is an emergency triple-combination treatment used to protect against HIV. It can be prescribed by a doctor who considers it necessary following the risk of infection through unprotected sex or a split condom, for example.

When this treatment is given in optimal conditions, it reduces the risk of HIV infection but cannot protect the individual against other sexually-transmitted infections (syphilis, gonorrhoea, chlamydia, hepatitis, HPV, etc.)

The treatment, which costs approximately 1,500 CHF, is covered by basic health insurance policies provided by LAMal insurers.

But Aspasie or Groupe Sida Genève can provide it for CHF 250.

For any further information, you can contact Aspasie or Groupe Sida Genève.
When to begin treatment

The earlier the treatment begins, the more effective it is; it should therefore begin as quickly as possible after the point of possible infection, so during the first few hours or up to a maximum of 48 hours after the risk was incurred.

During the week call the Groupe Sida Geneva (078 217 32 07 de 9h à 17h) or Aspasie. During the weekend go to the emergency room.

In what circumstances can PEP be given?

- Following unprotected sex with vaginal or anal penetration
- When a condom has split
- After receptive oral sex with ejaculation
- Where a partner is HIV-positive and has either an unknown or detectable level of virus in the blood and belongs to a group at high risk of HIV infection (man who has sex with other men, person originating from Sub-Saharan Africa, individual who uses intravenous drugs)
Where is the treatment available?

You can seek PEP treatment at the accident and emergency department of your nearest hospital.

HIV/AIDS clinic
Hôpitaux Universitaires de Genève
Rue Gabrielle-Perret-Gentil 4
1205 Geneva
Monday to Friday from 9.30 a.m. to 5.30 p.m.

Accident and Emergency department – Hôpitaux Universitaires de Genève
Rue Gabrielle-Perret-Gentil 4
1205 Geneva
Weekdays after 6 p.m. and weekends.

Duration of treatment

This is an intensive course of treatment that must be taken for four weeks. It includes follow-up care and regular blood tests for a period of three months.
PrEP « pre-exposure prophylaxis »

It is a medication which HIV-negative individuals who are at a higher risk of contracting HIV can take to protect themselves, providing a doctor’s prescription. PrEP protects from HIV just as some medications prevent from malaria or as a contraceptive pill prevents pregnancy (cf : infotestvih.ch)

However, PrEP protects only against HIV, and not against other sexually transmitted infections such as gonorrhoea, chlamydia, syphilis, papillomavirus or hepatitis.

It is important to be under regular medical supervision, to make sure vaccines are up to date and to monitor any side-effects.

When to start ?

You should talk about this medication with a doctor, who will provide you a prescription. The doctor will also check you are not HIV positiv or infected with Hepatitis B.

Where to get it ?

The Swiss health insurance does not cover the costs of PrEP medication itself. It usually costs around CHF 900, but Aspasie or Groupe Sida Genève can provide it for CHF 200 monthly. For any further information, you can contact Aspasie or Groupe Sida Genève
**STI screening**

Regular STI tests are necessary, since the majority of STIs do not cause any symptoms. Early detection allows the infection to be treated quickly, and most STIs can be successfully treated if this is the case.

In Switzerland, screening usually tests for the “BIG 5” infections: syphilis, gonorrhoea, chlamydia, hepatitis C and HIV.

**Where can I be tested?**

a) At Aspasie:

Aspasie organises regular STI screening (around twice a month) at its premises.

The tests are free of charge and are only for sexworkers.

It can detect HIV/AIDS, hepatitis B, syphilis, gonorrhoea and chlamydia infections.

To find out the dates of forthcoming screening sessions, call Aspasie on +22 732 68 28 or send an e-mail to aspasie@aspasie.ch
STI screening can also be carried out at private laboratories or in hospitals.

b) In an Aspasie partner laboratory:

Aspasie works in partnership with a laboratory that offers services at reasonable prices. They are priced as follows and available only to sex workers with an Aspasie voucher:

- HIV test: 30 CHF
- BIG 5 STI test (HIV, hepatitis B, syphilis, gonorrhoea and chlamydia): 80 CHF

Types of samples taken:

- blood sample for HIV, hepatitis B and syphilis screening
- swab taken by the patient from the vagina, throat and/or anus to test for gonorrhoea and chlamydia (urine sample also possible).

To take advantage of these services you can obtain a voucher from Aspasie on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. or by making an appointment on +22 732 68 28.

c) At the Hôpitaux Universitaires de Genève:

The anonymous HIV screening service at Geneva University Hospitals (Hôpitaux Universitaires de Genève – HUG) offers consultations and anonymous testing for HIV and STIs by appointment on Monday to Friday from 9.30 a.m. to 5.30 p.m.

Appointments can be made:

- by telephone on +41 22 372 96 17 (in French or Spanish)
- online at www.testvih.ch (enter the appointment language you require)

Prices:

- HIV: 55 CHF
- HIV, hepatitis B, syphilis, gonorrhoea and chlamydia: 155 CHF

Types of samples taken:

- blood samples to test for hepatitis A, B or C and syphilis
– Urine PCR test for chlamydia and gonorrhoea (it is important that you do not urinate for two hours before taking the test)

You will receive the HIV result straight away (approximately 20 minutes after the test).

Address:

HUG, consultation des tests anonymes HIV (anonymous HIV screening consultations)

Rue Gabrielle-Perret-Gentil 4, 1211 Geneva 14

Main entrance, 2nd floor

d) At Checkpoint Genève:

A service offered only to men who have had sex with men, as well as transgender people and their partners.

Consultations are without an appointment and provide information and advice, screening, treatment and follow-up care on an anonymous and confidential basis on:

- Mondays 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.
- Wednesdays 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.
- Fridays 12 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Sexual health medical consultations are by appointment during opening hours. For an appointment, telephone +41 22 906 40 30.

Mental health appointments are also available (psychological, psychiatric and psychotherapy consultations):

Checkpoint Genève
Rue du Grand-Pré 9
1202 Geneva

Tel: 022 906 40 30
e-mail: geneve@mycheckpoint.ch
How often is it necessary?

Sex workers and their clients who protect themselves against risks are advised to seek sexual health screening once per year.

More regular tests (every six months) are advised for those who frequently participate in risky practices.
Vaccinations

Recommendations are in place for:

- basic vaccinations,
- additional vaccinations,
- vaccinations for at-risk groups

Adults, and especially young adults aged between 20 and 40, are recommended to have vaccinations against:

- Diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough: 25-29 years
- Hepatitis B: 3 injections at intervals of 1, 2 and 6 months (free of charge from Aspasie)
- Flu: free for people in at-risk groups (people with chronic illnesses, older people, pregnant women, etc.)
Many methods of contraception exist in order to prevent unwanted pregnancies.

Each method has its advantages and disadvantages, so it is up to you to choose a method that suits your age, way of life, health and preferences.

Caution: Contraception does not protect you from sexually-transmitted infections.

The most frequently-used methods are listed below. Do not hesitate to find out more information about them from your doctor or gynaecologist so you can choose the one that works best for you.

**Contraceptive pill:**

One pill is taken every day for 21 or 28 days, depending on the type of pill. It is a very effective method of contraception, providing the user always remembers to take one pill every day.

Note: The pill cannot be used by women who have liver or cardiovascular disease. Cut down on cigarettes while taking the pill. It is not advised for breastfeeding mothers. The pill reduces menstrual flow and alleviates premenstrual syndrome.

Cost: 6-25 CHF per month on prescription.

**Implant**

The implant is a small plastic rod inserted under the skin of the upper arm. The procedure is carried out by a doctor under local anaesthetic.

The implant can be worn for up to three years.

Note: The implant can be used during breastfeeding and by women advised not to take
medication containing oestrogen. It can cause irregular bleeding or your periods to stop.

Cost: approx. 345 CHF

**Coil (IUD)**

This is a small device placed inside the womb during your period by a doctor. Both copper coils and hormonal coils are available.

Coils can be worn for up to 3-5 years, depending on the model.

Note: Periods tend to be light or disappear with IUDs that release progestogen, whereas the copper coil is associated with heavier periods.

Cost: 47-229 CHF (according to type of coil)

**Contraceptive patch**

This is a square measuring 4cm that the user sticks on dry skin (not on the breasts).

You must use one patch every week for three weeks, followed by a break for seven days. Your period will arrive during this time.

Note: Effectiveness levels are comparable to the pill. The patch reduces menstrual flow and alleviates premenstrual syndrome. Its contraindications are identical to those of the combined pill.

Cost: 26 CHF for 3 patches

**Male condom**

Protects against HIV, STIs and pregnancy.
Condoms are available in various sizes and models and with or without latex, to suit penis size and sexual practices.

Use a water-based lubricant to minimise the risk of a split condom.

For single use.

Cost: 0.50 CHF per condom

**Female condom or FEMIDOM**

Protects against HIV, STIs and pregnancy.

The female condom is a condom that is inserted into the vagina or anus. It does not contain latex. It is more durable than the male condom and does not break.

It must be put in place before sexual intercourse.

For single use only; it must be changed between partners.

Cost: 1.50 CHF each from Aspasie, or 5.00 CHF in sex shops

**Emergency contraception**

To avoid an unwanted pregnancy if you have had a risky sexual encounter (split condom, unprotected sex, no contraception), you can take emergency contraception.

You can take the morning after pill up to five days after unprotected sex, but it is preferable and more effective to take it as early as possible.

Cost: 30-50 CHF (10 CHF from family planning clinics). Available over the counter from pharmacies.

If your period arrives late, carry out a pregnancy test (tests cost 20 CHF each from pharmacies or supermarkets).
We advise that you are screened for HIV and STIs six weeks after the sexual encounter in order to check that you have not contracted a sexually-transmitted infection.

**Termination of pregnancy (abortion)**

In Switzerland, terminations are permitted up to a limit of 12 weeks following the first day of your last period.

Once this date has passed, a termination can only be carried out if a medical professional demonstrates that it is necessary to prevent a grave risk of physical harm or severe psychological distress to the pregnant woman.

Abortions may be carried out using medication (up to the ninth week) or by vacuum aspiration.

Terminations are refunded by basic health insurance policies following deduction of the excess and a further 10% of the fees due, irrespective of termination chosen.
Intimate hygiene: products, sponges, Ellen tampons, sex toys

Our vaginal flora is the best protection against infections. The inside of the vagina is able to clean itself, and the secretions of the mucous membranes form a natural barrier against infection (vaginal flora). This is why it is important to avoid disrupting the balance of this protection through vaginal douching.

Vaginal douching is generally carried out after sex, and aims to clean the inside of the vagina and reduce the risk of pregnancy by eliminating sperm present in the vagina (if no condom or other method of contraception was used). Yet not only is the practice completely ineffective as a contraceptive, it also encourages the development of fungal and other infections such as vaginosis. This internal cleaning actually destroys the balance of the vaginal flora and promotes the growth of yeast or bacteria. So beware of excessive cleaning rituals.

Besides vaginal douching, an imbalance in the vaginal flora may also be caused by hormonal deficiencies (e.g. during the menopause), excessive rubbing of the mucous membranes, the use of abrasive products or certain types of medication such as antibiotics, corticosteroids, etc.

Should you nevertheless wish to practise vaginal douching, we advise you to choose your
products carefully. It is important to steer clear of abrasive or disinfectant products, which are too aggressive. Do not use your usual shower gel for this purpose. Instead, choose a gentle, soap-free, unperfumed cleanser that has a neutral pH value and respects your intimate areas. Products specially formulated for intimate hygiene are sold in pharmacies and health and beauty stores. Avoid applying general cosmetic products such as deodorants, oils and other moisturising creams on the genital areas.

Wipes may be used infrequently, providing they have a gentle action and do not contain alcohol.

Sponge: This is designed to collect the menstrual blood but is not a method of contraception. It must be inserted as far as possible into the vagina, then removed and discarded after every client. Do not reuse! It can be worn for up to six hours.

It is the only possible method of collecting menstrual blood; do not use cleansing pads or tissues that can lead to infections. If you find you cannot remove the sponge, the most effective solution is to crouch down and use a shower to rinse your vagina with warm water. This will make the sponge swell with water and encourage it to make its way down.

Ellen probiotic tampons: These tampons are worn during your period, and release probiotics designed to restore your vaginal flora. Wear at least three tampons per day for three days of your period, ideally for three consecutive cycles. They come in several sizes, so you can decide which suits you best.

Sex toys: Remember to clean these with alcohol between every use. Shared sex toys must be covered with a condom, which must be changed before every new partner. You should preferably have your own toys and keep them for your use only, so that you control how they are used and cleaned. Any items used to practise sado-masochism must be explicitly disinfected and/or replaced after every session – especially needles.
Substance use
If you are a sex worker, for your own safety it is important to remain vigilant and in full control of all your mental faculties.

Using substances such as alcohol, cocaine, cannabis or amphetamines, for example, can adversely affect both your awareness and your behaviour. This can place you in danger, since you will not react as you usually would and you cannot act or protect yourself if you get into difficulty.

Sex work is a tough profession. Those who do this work, need courage and a certain degree of availability.

There may be evenings when you would really rather not work, and you might be tempted to use alcohol or drugs to boost your morale.

If you take substances with other people, be careful not to share equipment such as straws, injection kits or pipes, as some viruses (for example hepatitis C, HIV and herpes) are transmitted very easily. Aspasie provides straws and injection kits free of charge, as do other organisations such as Première Ligne.

If you need support or feel your substance use has become out of control, you can turn to Aspasie for advice. You can also contact Première Ligne if you need clean equipment to use drugs (http://www.premiereligne.ch).
Specific needs of transgender workers

Transgender sex workers may have specific health needs. In Geneva, a network of professionals including doctors and voluntary sector organisations exists to help all transgender individuals live well today and in the future.

It is important to be monitored by medical professionals and to use products such as hormones or silicone injections in controlled medical settings only. Some products are dangerous, and it is better to have regular consultations with a doctor.

Aspasie can provide you with assistance in various domains, so do not hesitate to contact us.

Male Sex Work

Male Sex Work is a project of the Aspasie Association. This is an information and support program for male sex workers. The Aspasie team regularly visits the streets where sex workers meet their clients and provide them with advice, information and prevention materials (condoms and lubricants). They are a relay to the consultations proposed in Aspasie’s offices. The MSW team also offers individual coaching and screening as well as administrative support.
Mental health

It is normal to experience problems as a result of the challenges and changes that life brings. Difficult events, loneliness or relationship breakdowns can cause instability and leave us feeling sad, anxious or alone. It is important not to try to cope with these situations on your own and to seek support from Aspasie or elsewhere. We would also advise you not to take medication without first consulting a doctor, as doing so could harm your health.
Fundamental rules of sex work

Your safety

Think about the clothes you wear and be careful to avoid jewellery or accessories such as necklaces or scarves that could be pulled off or used to strangle you. We advise you to wear clothes and shoes you are comfortable in if you work on the streets, so that you are able to run away if necessary (or run barefoot). Additionally, we recommend that you store your money in several secret locations. When a client pays you, avoid putting the money away in the same place as the rest of your earnings.

Always take condoms and gel with you wherever you go. Be careful with products used for self-defence such as aerosols or knives, as they could be used against you.

The use of drugs or alcohol can impair your awareness. Make sure you are never
incapacitated and that you do not work when under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

If you are working in a property alone, you can create the impression that somebody else is present by leaving the TV or radio on.

Particular knowledge is needed to engage in BDSM practices with clients (bondage, domination and sado-masochism), and this work is often demanding. Take extra care if you allow yourself to be tied up or blindfolded. Do not hesitate to take sensible advice from colleagues before accepting work involving submission. Always take care of your own safety.

Remain vigilant at all times, even if the client is known to you.

Never forget that you are the person in charge.

Clients
Always take payment before you begin, and hide the money away.

If you have a bad feeling about a client, the best course of action is to politely refuse.

Do not work with clients who are drunk or under the influence of drugs, who may subsequently cause you problems.

Be clear but firm in the way you negotiate. If the service requested seems too problematic, do not go ahead. To avoid unpleasant surprises, it is better not to visit a client without first obtaining their telephone number and an address that you can verify.

Before you get into a car with a client, first check that there is no other person or dog on the back seat of the vehicle. Do not sit in the back – if the child locks are activated, the doors will be locked from the inside.

When performing fellatio, do not allow the client to hold your head.
Place of work

Consider the layout of your place of work, so that you are not prevented from escaping (for example, do not place the bed against a wall).

Choose a well-lit room, and use a mirror to watch what the client is doing.

When you are starting out in sex work, try to associate with others in the trade.

If possible, insist your client has a shower before you begin or at least washes their hands.

Hide your money away in several secret locations. Also ensure you keep your identity documents and personal belongings hidden.

While at work

Whenever you work away (escort work), ensure you carry protective items with you such as condoms and lubricants. Be careful with items for self-defence such as aerosols or knives, as they could be used against you.

Ideally, you should give the contact details of the client you are visiting to an emergency contact. Let this person know by phone that you have arrived safely, and give them the time you are due to finish.

To improve your safety at work, draw up a blacklist of bad clients and if possible, share it with other sex workers.
Advertising

Whether you advertise on the internet or in print media, the basic rules are the same: your text should reflect the services you offer. Every word you choose is very important in order to target a certain kind of client or particular request. The same applies to the images you use. So that your clients cannot feel deceived in any way, it is better to use photographs of yourself (not somebody else) that are recent and have not been edited. Do not include the address of your place of work or the building entry code in your advertisement in order to avoid causing a disturbance to other occupants.

Remember that anything published online can never be entirely removed.

Should you be the victim of harassment or blackmail, contact Aspasie for advice.

Work telephone

We advise you not to use your personal telephone for work purposes or answer calls from hidden numbers.

Do not call clients back in order to respect confidentiality rules.
BDSM (bondage, domination and sado-masochism)

These are practices which require specific knowledge and techniques. Research and learn about these types of services before you offer them to clients.

Exploitation and profiteering

The costs associated with working as a prostitute are many and expensive. Our advice is to draw up a simple budget by working out how much you earn per day and what you spend, so that you can determine whether your work is making a profit. It is important to know what the market rates are for a room to ensure that nobody can take advantage of your lack of knowledge. If you think you are being offered poor working conditions, take your business elsewhere.
Pricing and negotiation

The art of negotiation is one of the most crucial tricks of the sex work trade.

Negotiations with clients allow you to fully comprehend the service requested and find out if you will be able to satisfy their requirements.

You could be placed in danger if a client is annoyed or frustrated because you did not properly understand or perform what was agreed. So negotiations are a question of safety!

While negotiating the service, it is important that you do not promise something that you cannot or do not want to do.
Take payment before you begin – prices and durations should no longer be discussed during the sexual encounter.

If it proves necessary to renegotiate the service or the price to be paid, do so calmly and firmly.

You must also make clear before the sexual service anything that your client is forbidden to do, for example kissing with tongues or holding your head during fellatio, etc. If the client does not respect your conditions, stop and restate the rules. If the client continues to ignore you despite the warning you have given, stop once again and tell the client clearly that this is their last chance before you halt the service entirely.
We recommend that you align your prices with those of other prostitutes working in the same geographical area. Doing so helps sex work remain viable and increases your self-esteem.

Safety and acts of violence
If you are assaulted:

Go to a place of safety, call the police, and ask an emergency contact to come to your assistance.

Keep all evidence of the assault, do not wash your body (including intimate areas) and keep the clothes you were wearing at the time of the incident. If a condom was worn, keep this as well.

Try to find potential witnesses.

If you have been raped, you can seek emergency treatment (PEP) to prevent HIV, as well as emergency contraception to avoid an unwanted pregnancy.

We advise you to consult a doctor about your injuries and obtain a medical certificate.
Contact Aspasie or another relevant organisation to support you through the process.

You are not in any way responsible for what has happened to you.

Useful addresses

- Ambulance and medical emergencies
• Police emergencies
  117
• Brigade contre la Traite et la Prostitution Illicite (BTPI)
  17-19 boulevard Carl-Vogt
  Genève
  022 427 71 40

Organisations providing support for sex workers

• Aspasie
  11 Rue des Pâquis
  Genève
  www.aspasie.ch
  022 732 68 28

• Appart 74
  Portable 06 40 17 55 81 (whatsapp aussi)
  Fixe 09 81 37 89 11
  Lappart74@gmail.com
  16 rue de Vallard, bat B
  74240 Gaillard

• Fleur de Pavé
  32 rue Sévelin,
  Lausanne
  www.fleurdepave.ch
  021 661 31 21

Violence

• Centre LAVI
  72 boulevard Saint-Georges
  Genève
  www.centrelavi-ge.ch
  022 320 01 02
Exiting prostitution

- SOS-Femmes
  10 rue de la Madeleine
  Genève
  sosfemmes.ch
  022 311 22 22

Health

- List of Aspasie partner gynaecologists and general practitioners
  022 732 68 28

- Gynaecology department (Hôpitaux de Genève)
  www.hug-ge.ch/consultation/gynecologie
  022 382 44 00

- Gynaecology emergencies
  022 382 68 16

- HUG emergency department
  4 rue Gabrielle Perret Gentil
  Genève
  022 372 81 20

STI screening and treatment, PEP treatment

- Aspasie
  Tests de dépistages gratuits, 2 fois par mois
  022 732 68 28

- Anabio
  67, rue de Lausanne
  Genève
  022 738 18 18

- Hôpitaux de Genève, service VIH
  4, rue Gabrielle Perret Gentil
  Genève
  022 372 96 17
Healthcare without insurance

- CAMSCO
  4 rue Hugo-de-Senger
  Genève
  022 372 53 11
- PASS, Centre hospitalier Alpes Léman
  74130 Contamine sur Arve, France
  +33 450 82 26 58

Contraception

- Family planning and sexual health service
  47, boulevard de la Cluse
  Genève
  022 372 55 00

Drug and alcohol services

- HUG addiction clinic
  022 372 57 50
- Quai 9 Needle exchange and risk reduction service
  6, rue Pépinière
  Genève
  022 748 28 78

Support for transgender workers

- 360°
  36 rue de la Navigation
  Genève
  022 741 00 70
- Agnodice, Lausanne
  079 855 78 42

Legal assistance
• Permanence juridique Rive Droite
  Rue des Pâquis 35, 1201 Genève
  022 908 15 06

• Center Social Protestant
  14 rue du Village-Suisse
  Genève
  022 807 07 00

• Caritas
  Rue de Carouge 53, 1205 Genève
  022 708 04 44

• ASLOCA tenants rights
  12 rue du Lac
  Genève
  022 716 18 00

Office cantonal de la population et de la migration

• Office cantonal de la population et de la migration
  88 route de Chancy
  1213 Onex
  022 546 46 46
Rue des Pâquis 11 – 1201 Genève

Tel : 022 732 68 28

www.aspasie.ch

With the support of :