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What is SWANzine?

The SWANzine newsletter is a guide to health, legal, social, employment, and community information for women engaged in indoor sex work in the Lower Mainland. English and Chinese versions are available. If you require SWANzine in another language, please let us know.



If there is a topic you would like to see in SWANzine, please send us your questions or comments.

Getting Connected Spotlight on Community Partner



This month, SWAN talked to sexual health educator, sex work activist and dominatrix Velvet Steele and asked her about lube.



SWAN: Which lubes are safe and which ones should you avoid? Which ones are compatible with condoms?

Velvet: Ask yourself these questions for starters. Do I have allergies? Will I need it for external use (outside the body), internal use (inside the body) or both? Can I use it with my favourite toy? Is it for solo play or for use with a client or partner? What are their needs? Personally, I love water-based lube because I find it easy to wash off and it works well with all toys! However, clients or partners find it dries out too fast and they need the longer lasting hybrid (a mix of silicone and water-based). Let's break it down.

Water-based. Good for use with all toys and is condom compatible, generally don't stain and can be flavoured. Thicker than silicone, it cleans up easily with soap and water. They do dry out faster but that's nothing that can't be cured with a spray bottle on hand to reactivate. Now available in gel forms and good for anal use. To make them good to taste, some have glycerin or aspartame added. Glycerin can turn into a sugar in the vagina and lead to possible yeast infections. Not good! Aspartame, according to some documentation, affects the brain and has been shown to be linked to Alzheimers. The thickening agent (hydroxyethylcellulose) is derived from plant cellulose extracted either from aloe vera, flax seed and in some cases beechwood so be careful of allergies. Read the labels as some have parabens (preservatives known to be carcinogenic).

Silicone. Good for use with all activities and is condom compatible. The choice of toys starts to diminish here because of a bonding reaction between the silicone in the lube and with the silicone in the toys and is not recommended, even with use on medical grade items; simply put, it makes them melt. That includes "silagel" "silaskin" tpr, jellies. Silicone-based lube is clear, odourless, thinner in consistency and feels oily. It has a tendency to stain but can be fixed with a couple tablespoons of Oxyclean. It doesn't dry out and can be hard to wash off leaving a lingering feeling on the skin. Smaller molecules here mean a better feel. Good for anal play.

Oil-based. Thicker consistency, of a vegetable, petroleum, mineral or animal base that can be a clear or coloured liquid or solid depending on the temperature. Not recommended for vaginal use because of the high risk of yeast infections. Best for external masturbation and according to recent studies, not recommended for rectal use. It is incompatible with latex condoms and latex toys; it will make them dry out, crack or break. On the increase is the use of coconut oil, a natural, anti-bacterial, anti-fungal that tastes great and is absorbed into the body without the risk of yeast infections, although still not compatible with latex and does have a risk of allergic reactions.

SWAN: Thanks Velvet. We are happy we asked!



SWAN: What We Do

You may know us as the “condom ladies” or “the nurses” but our staff and volunteers do a whole lot more than distribute condoms.



Health Services

We are NOT nurses but we can connect you with one. We can also provide translation or accompaniment to an appointment on request. We work hard to ensure that the health care providers we refer you to are non-judgmental and do not ask intrusive questions that are beyond what is necessary to provide health care. SWAN does not feel it is always necessary to disclose the work you do when visiting a health care provider; we work with health care providers to ensure they are mindful of the type and amount of information they are asking and why. If you visit a health care provider and receive discriminatory or judgmental health care, please let SWAN know. Without disclosing your name, we can follow up with the clinic to advocate for better health care services for not only you but other women as well.

Bylaws & Business License Information

SWAN can find answers to your bylaws or business license questions. We can also advocate on your behalf if you feel you have been treated unfairly by a bylaws inspector or the business licensing department.

Police and Immigration Accountability

Massage parlour 'visits' or raids by authorities are ongoing. SWAN takes a position that raids are an unnecessary use of force and cause a lot of stress. Since our outreach area is extensive, SWAN can piece together what authorities are doing in the Lower Mainland despite receiving no clear answers from the authorities themselves. SWAN seeks accountability from authorities as to why and how raids are carried out and if this is a good use of tax payers' dollars since it is rare that a woman is ever detained or arrested. SWAN will be meeting with a legal team to discuss accountability around authorities' enforcement actions in massage parlours. Help us help you! If you have been raided or visited by authorities, please let us know. In our efforts to hold authorities accountable, we do not disclose your name or workplace without your permission but rather speak generally or use hypothetical situations in these conversations. We are mindful of the fear and intimidation authorities create with these raids but you do have rights. Such raids are unacceptable in other types of businesses and we work hard to stop this practice in the sex work sector too.

Reporting Violence

If you have been a victim of workplace violence, SWAN can help you explore your options. This may include discussing personal or workplace safety measures to prevent future incidents. If you are considering reporting to the police, SWAN can discuss the risks and benefits of doing so, provide information about what reporting would entail and accompany you to report. For incidents that have been reported to police, you may qualify for the Crime Victim Assistance Program (www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/victimservices/financial/) and we can help you with the application if necessary.

General Questions

If you have other work-related questions, give us a call at 604 719 6343. We will try our best to answer them. If we do not know the answer, we will coordinate with trusted partners in order to respond to your concerns.

Legal News

Bill C-36 Canada's Proposed Prostitution Laws

On June 4, 2014 the federal government introduced Bill C-36, new laws that will replace the prostitution laws that were struck down by the Supreme Court of Canada in December 2013.

The new laws will criminalize (i.e. make illegal)

- communicating for the purpose of selling sex anywhere someone under the age of 18 might be present
- the purchase of sex (i.e. clients who pay for sex)
- advertising sexual services online or in print (with the exception of advertising one's own services)
- those who gain material benefits from sex work (does not apply to those in "legitimate living arrangements" or with "legal or moral obligations" to sex workers).

So far the response to this Bill has been overwhelmingly negative particularly among many sex workers who are angry and argue the new laws will make it harder to work safely (see SWAN Facebook page for articles that summarize sex workers' opposition to Bill C-36). SWAN is equally concerned about the effects these laws will have on sex workers, your workplace and working conditions. If you would like to voice your concerns regarding Bill C-36, please let SWAN know and we can discuss your options.

Throughout the summer, Bill C-36 will make its way through the parliamentary process. It will likely be Fall 2014 before the proposed legislation becomes law. At that time, SWAN will meet with law enforcement to seek clarification as to how the new laws will be enforced and will communicate that information to you through outreach, on our website and in SWANzine. In the meantime, please access the Question & Answer document on our What's New webpage to find out how new laws may impact your work.



Health Enhancement Center Bylaw Changes (Vancouver)

On May 27, 2014 the City of Vancouver made the following changes to Health Enhancement Center License Bylaw No.4450.

Section 4.(7) If the Chief License Inspector determines [...] that the operation of a business will be significantly safer (a) if more than one employee is present at the business during regular hours, then the Chief License Inspector may require as a condition of the business license that a minimum of two employees be present on the business premises at all times, (b) if locking devices are installed in an interior room of the business, other than a washroom, then the Chief License Inspector may require as a condition of the business license that no locking devices may be installed in any interior rooms of the business.

Section 4.(9) [...] the operator must maintain a current record of all employee names, dates of birth, and either a BC Driver's Licence Number or BC ID and make that record available to the Chief Constable upon request.

If you have questions regarding these changes, please call the City of Vancouver at 311.

email: info@swanvancouver.ca | web: www.swanvancouver.ca



Supporting Women's Alternatives Network of Vancouver

SWANzine Newsletter Summer 2014 Issue

If there are any issues dropping condoms off at your workplace, SWAN can meet you at a location nearby. 604 719 6343

SWAN has a drop-in space with computers. We can also provide help with resume writing.

SWAN Announcements

New Staff

SWAN is expanding again! In July, we hired one new staff member. Ying joins our online outreach team. Ying will connect with women working in private residences through text, email and telephone. Ying speaks Mandarin, Cantonese and English and can be reached at netreach@swanvancouver.ca/604 875 6343. SWAN did not fill the position of Outreach Coordinator. This position will be posted until a suitable candidate is found. Please check our website for details.

Website

Have you checked out our website recently? We have updated health, safety, legal, social and employment information specifically for indoor workers. Over the past two months, we have increased Chinese information on our website too. Check out our new and improved website at www.swanvancouver.ca

Facebook

Want the most up-to-date news on the laws that may change the way you work in the coming months? Check out our Facebook page www.facebook.com/SwanVancouver. You do not need a Facebook account to take a peek. You can visit the page anonymously without 'liking us'.



Health Service

Have health questions?



Call HealthLink BC **8-1-1 (free)** from anywhere in British Columbia to speak with a nurse any time of the day or night. On weekdays, you can speak to a dietitian about nutrition and healthy eating. At night, **8-1-1** has pharmacists available to answer your medication questions. **8-1-1** provides translation services on request in more than 130 languages.

HEALTH CLINICS

VANCOUVER

Women's Health Collective BC
Women's Nurse Practitioners 29
West Hastings 604-736-5262
www.womenshealthcollective.ca
All ages. Women only. *Check-ups *Diagnosis and prescriptions *Specialist referrals *Birth control *Pap tests *STI & HIV testing.
Monday 9:30 am – 4:30 pm
Tuesday – Thursday 1:00 pm – 4:30 pm Friday 9:30 am – 1:30 pm. Free services. Will not share results with family doctor if requested.

BCCDC Clinic Drop-in Clinic
1170 Bute St. 11-6:30 Mon-Fri.
All ages. Offers: *STI & HIV Testing *Birth Control *Hepatitis B Vaccine. Free and confidential. No MSP required.
www.bccdc.ca/dis-cond/az/_s/SexuallyTransmittedInfection/s/clinprog/default.htm

BURNABY

Options for Sexual Health Clinic
4734 Imperial 604-731-4252
www.optionsforsexualhealth.org/providers/opt-metrotown-formerly-new-westminster
All ages. Offers: *Birth control *Pregnancy testing and options *STI & HIV testing. Wednesdays 7pm-9pm
Youth Clinic 4734 Imperial 604-293-1764. 21 and under.
www.fraserhealth.ca/find_us/services/?program_id=9998 *STI testing, treatment and counseling *HIV counseling, testing and referral *Pregnancy testing *Emergency contraception. Monday, Tuesday, Thursday 1 p.m. - 5 p.m.

RICHMOND

Youth Clinic 8100 Granville 604-233-3204. 21 and under. *STI & HIV testing *Birth control *Morning after pill free for all ages. Mondays 3:30 p.m. - 5:30 p.m. / Wednesdays 3:30 p.m. - 5:30 p.m. / Fridays 1 p.m. - 4p.m.

For clinics in **other municipalities**, check SWAN's website (health).



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