

SWANzine



SWAN Newsletter

Fall 2016

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What is the 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 the SWANzine, please send us your questions or comments.

Announcements and Updates

Red Umbrella March

The Red Umbrella March for Sex Work Solidarity took place this year on June 11th in Vancouver. This is an annual event that brings together sex workers and allies to build community and raise awareness about sex workers' rights. 2016 is the first year that SWAN was a partner in the event. SWAN staff and volunteers attended the rally, and had a great time with people who strongly believe that sex work is work and therefore should be afforded the same protection and rights as other forms of work. This march happens every year so you are welcome to join us next June!

"I am so grateful to have found this community of like-minded people. I didn't even realize that this could be available to me" - from a woman who attended for the first time



SWAN staff member Jane and Elene from Butterfly (Asian and Migrant Sex Workers Support Network) in Toronto



SWAN staff members Kim & Jane

Women's Self-Defense Workshop

SWAN is considering hosting a free self-defense workshop. At the workshop, women can learn practical skills and safety tips on how to avoid and deal with potentially violent or unsafe situations. The instructor will teach women simple techniques that could be used to ward off assaults. The workshop would be open to all women connected to SWAN, your friends, SWAN volunteers and staff. If you are interested, please let your SWAN outreach worker know, or text/call us at 778-865-6343, or message us on Wechat (SWANnetreach). If there's enough interest, we will organize it for Fall or Winter 2016.



SWAN Volunteers – About Us

Do you ever wonder who SWAN is? Here are some fun and interesting facts about our wonderful volunteers who you may see dropping off supplies!



Leala is an Outreach Volunteer and connects with women who work in massage shops as well as in apartments. She works as a Registered Nurse in a few different hospitals all over Vancouver. In her spare time, Leala can be found playing team sports, enjoying the great outdoors or organizing a potluck. So if you know of any good outdoor adventures or a fun party theme idea, be sure to let Leala know!

Keri is an Outreach Volunteer and connects with women in massage shops as well as in apartments. Between work and volunteering, Keri can be found at a local pottery studio playing in the mud. She gets around by bicycle, and loves getting out of the city for camping and adventure.



A note on condoms and the police

We have noticed that some massage shop managers and a few women are reluctant to take condoms in fear of authorities. We understand your concern and have inquired about local law enforcement policies on taking condoms.



Both the RCMP and VPD have informed us time and time again that they are not in the practice of taking condoms as evidence of sex work; this is consistent with what is reported to us from your interactions with police. If police have ever taken condoms from your workplace, please contact SWAN.

Law enforcement should not affect your ability to work safely.





GetCheckedOnline is a new, easy way to get regular HIV/STI check-ups that is free and is anonymous. All you need to do is fill out an online form, print it, and go to Lifelabs to get your samples taken. Your results will be emailed to you.

<https://getcheckedonline.com/Pages/default.aspx>

If you'd like to learn more about GetCheckedOnline, feel free to call, email, or text us for the **access code**.



Non-payment and asserting your right to be paid



Some women have told SWAN about clients who refuse to pay after they have received services. The clients use excuses such as "I left my wallet in the car". This is not acceptable behavior, and it is not normal in the service industry. Everyone deserves to be paid for their time and services.

To ensure you get paid, many women have told us to first make sure the client agrees to the price and services at the start of the session to avoid misunderstandings and disagreements. They also insist that clients pay in full first, **no exceptions**, even if he looks like a nice guy or is a regular. Some women have told us that speaking in a sweet, warm, friendly manner, "let's take care of the money first, so we can relax together/enjoy our time together/focus on the fun without worrying after", can make the client feel more comfortable paying first.

SWAN asked JJJ, a support organization in Hong Kong, what they suggest. JJJ said that women sometimes bring up the issue with their client during showering (if showering together is a part of the service) in a gentle way, and the clients often pay before any other services are provided. After the money is received, many women put it somewhere safe and out of sight, separate from where they keep the rest of their cash. They also try not to put it somewhere obvious such as a pocket, wallet, or purse. This way, even if the client turns bad, he won't be able to take away all the money the woman has with her.

Women have also told SWAN there are clients who ask for their money (e.g., room fee, tip) back after the session is over if they did not 'finish' or if they were dissatisfied with the service. Regardless of these stated responses, a customer cannot legally ask for a refund when a service has already been provided.

If you've experienced non-paying clients and want to warn other women, please let us know. SWAN takes information from women about non-paying clients through our confidential online reporting system that is easy to use. The information we receive includes the client's description, phone number, city, etc. and details about the client's behaviour. If you are interested in being notified about non-paying or other types of bad clients, please subscribe to our abuser alert (<http://swanvancouver.ca/abuser-alert/>). You can do this anonymously. We can share information about bad clients so that everyone helps each other to stay safe.



Checking your client for STIs

Women understand the risks of getting a sexually transmitted infection (STI) from a client. While your health and safety can be compromised, it also means that you may have to take time off work to fully recover. Although some STIs do not have visible signs, women can protect themselves by performing a brief STI screening on a client. Here is what women suggest.

- Do the health check before providing any services, especially full-service. Some women like to use an LED flashlight for a more thorough check. Some frame it as a sexy nurse check-up to lighten up the mood.
- It is best to check your client after you have taken the money and before he has a shower or goes to the toilet. Urinating can clear discharge and will take about half an hour for it to build before it is visible, and showering can wash away any discharge.
- Try and make your client feel comfortable by explaining that the check is for his health as well as yours. Tell him you do a health check with everyone including regulars. Develop a routine that works for you. Clients often expect to receive a health check from seeing other women. Clients usually appreciate the health check and sometimes say, "I feel safe with you—and that's why I come back".

Where to look

- Thoroughly examine the entire genital area, looking for sores, blisters, rashes, redness and warts. This includes under the client's penis, testicles, foreskin, around the anal area, and the area between his anus and penis.
- Gently squeeze along the shaft of his penis to see if a discharge emerges. Discharge should be clear. If there is coloured or smelly discharge, your client may have an STI.
- Look through the pubic hair and around the genitals, thighs and buttocks. Ingrown hairs can easily be mistaken for herpes and vice versa, so be wary of an ingrown hairs that appear yellowy or crusted. Normal ingrown hairs should have white-coloured buildup.
- Look over the mouth and lips for blisters and sores, especially if you kiss your clients. Ingrown facial hair or pimples should be white or red. Be wary of any crusted yellow or weeping sores, which may be herpes.
- Check over the rest of the body, looking for sores, just to be sure.

What to look for (for images, you can visit <http://www.thebody.com/content/art2307.html>)

- Sores, blisters, rashes, and warts.
- Itching, redness, swollen glands, unpleasant odour.
- Discharge—if it is milky, thick, yellowish, grayish and/or smelly it could be gonorrhea or chlamydia.
- Crabs—these are brown or white and look like freckles.

If you find something that looks like an STI, the client may or may not be aware that he has a STI. If possible, you may want to ask a coworker to back you up, especially to double check if the client thinks they're "clean". Recommend the client visit a clinic for tests and treatment before they come back. It can be useful to know where to refer your client. If you work at a massage shop, find out how management can support you in these situations. If you have to or want to provide a service, offer hand relief (using a glove) or an erotic "act" or fantasy while they masturbate themselves.

Sources: <http://www.swop.org.au/sexual-health/checking-clients>
<https://missmadisonmissina.wordpress.com/category/safe-sex/>

HEALTH CLINICS

VANCOUVER

Women's Health Collective

BC Women's Nurse
Practitioners 29 West Hastings
604-736-5262 All ages. Women only. *Check-ups *Diagnosis and prescriptions *Specialist referrals *Birth control *Pap tests *STI & HIV testing.
Monday 9:30am-4:30pm
Tuesday-Thursday 1:00p,-4:30pm Friday 9:30am-1:30pm.
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.

BURNABY

Options for Sexual Health Clinic
4734 Imperial 604-731-4252
All ages. Offers: *Birth control *pregnancy testing and options *STI & HIV testing. Wednesdays 7pm-9pm

RICHMOND

Youth Clinic 8100 Granville 604-233-3204. 21 and under. *STI & HIV testing *Birth control *Morning after pill free for all ages. Monday & Wednesday 3:30pm-5:30pm, Friday 1pm-4pm

For clinics in other municipalities, check SWAN's Health Page on our website. Click "Resources" and select the health section from the drop down menu options.

