



SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES (STDs) A United States Epidemic

PREVENTION, PROTECTION & DETECTION

COMMON SENSE RULES

1. If you have sex, this is best done in a committed monogamous relationship. The more sex partners you or your partner has, the higher the risk one of you will contract an infection.
2. Use condoms. Condoms provide *some* protection against transmission of diseases. However, the pores of latex condoms are large enough to allow some infectious viruses through. They lessen the risk of viral infections like HIV Aids and Herpes, but do not entirely prevent them.
3. If you have oral sex, you should report this to your physician, as oral sex has the same risks as genital sex.
4. If you are in a sexual relationship, you should have regular checkups with your health care provider.
5. If you have concerns about STDs, you should communicate this to your gynecologist or health care provider so they may properly test you.

YOUR REGULAR CHECKUPS

WOMEN - You should have regular pelvic exams and pap smears. Pap smears can detect the presence of Human Papillomavirus (HPV), the virus which causes abnormal pap smears and which in rare cases can lead to cervical cancer.

MEN - You should see your health care provider on a regular basis and report any symptoms which could indicate a STD, such as discharge from the penis, burning with urination or growths or sores on the penis.

COMMON STDs AND THEIR CHARACTERISTICS

Chlamydia – a common STD caused by bacteria. It often has no symptoms and is diagnosed by a routine STD check. It is easily treated in most cases by a single antibiotic dose. If not properly treated, it can cause scarring of the female fallopian tubes and sometimes difficulty becoming pregnant. It can also cause infection in a newborn's eyes during childbirth.

Gonorrhea – an STD also caused by bacteria. Like Chlamydia, it can have no symptoms. It can also cause fertility problems in some women. If left untreated it can lead to pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), a serious infection which may require hospitalization. It requires potent antibiotics and close follow up to make sure it is cleared.

Both Chlamydia and Gonorrhea can present with symptoms especially if they are not treated shortly after becoming infected. ***If you have any of the following symptoms you should seek medical care:***

- Yellow vaginal discharge
- Painful Urination
- Soreness of the genital area
- Pain in the lower abdomen
- Discharge from the penis.

Syphilis – a less common infection which can become quite serious if not treated properly. It is most often diagnosed by a blood test. It often appears as a painless ulcer in the genital area. Later it can cause a rash

on the palms or soles. If not treated, it can advance to a third stage with symptoms throughout the body.

Herpes – About one in every five people will contract this viral infection. It causes painful sores or blisters either in the mouth or genital area. Although in most cases it is not a serious health problem, it can sometimes reoccur with painful sores. These can be controlled by antiviral medicine. It can be spread to others even when there are no open sores.

HPV – The virus which causes abnormal pap smears, genital warts, and/or condyloma. An estimated 50% of twenty year olds are infected. Most cases disappear with time as the body mounts an immune response. Cases can rarely progress and cause cancer of the genital tract, especially cervical cancer in women. The Vaccine (Gardasil) prevents transmission of 4 strains for HPV (there are over 100 strains) and therefore Provides partial protection against HPV.

HIV – A virus which causes AIDS. It can be transmitted through sex and contaminated needles. It is diagnosed by a blood test. All pregnant women should be tested for infection. Testing is confidential. HIV/AIDS is not curable but can be controlled by anti-viral medicine.

HEPATITIS – Especially Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C can be transmitted sexually. If your partner has had Hepatitis you should be vaccinated and use condoms. Hepatitis can lead to serious liver disease.

*There are many other less common STDs. Be sure to report any symptoms or concerns to your health care Provider. **Remember anyone who has sex can get an STD.***

*You are your most important health care advocate...
The choices you make affect your health and well-being.*