

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES

Anyone who is sexually active can get sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), also known as venereal diseases (VD.) The main way to get an STD is through sexual intercourse or through any other sexual contact with someone who already has it. Included in these diseases are the AIDS virus, syphilis, gonorrhea, herpes, urethritis, chlamydia, and venereal warts.

Sexually transmitted diseases are not shameful or punishing – they are simply diseases that, if not treated, can seriously damage your health.

FACTS ABOUT STDs

You do not catch STDs from toilet seats, door knobs, or through “casual” contacts like handshakes.

You can get STDs at any age. AIDS/HIV and herpes you get once, and have always; other STDs you can get rid of if you get treatment, but you can get them again and again if you are exposed to them.

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES ARE CONTAGIOUS

Most STDs are treatable. Herpes can be controlled but is not curable. At the present time, AIDS/HIV can be treated, but not cured. It is believed to be fatal in all cases. For more information about AIDS, see page 1.

PROTECTING YOURSELF

The best way to prevent STDs is to have no sexual contact at all. If you choose to have sex, there are ways to protect yourself.

- Use a latex condom during intercourse – EVERY time, with EVERY partner, whether or not you feel you know your partner well.
- Do not have sex with a lot of partners.
- Do not have sex with people who have sores, discharges, or blisters around their mouth or sex organs.

WARNING: Latex condoms can provide significant protection against many STDs when used properly and consistently.

However, some STDs are not preventable by condom use.

WARNING: If not treated, STDs can result in serious damage (even if the outward symptoms disappear) including sterility (inability to have children,) heart disease, damage to unborn baby, blindness, deafness, non-healing skin sores, paralysis, and even death.

TESTS

STD tests are confidential. Your parent’s permission is not required.

If you are concerned about STDs, go to a doctor or clinic and ask them to test you for STDs. You will have a medical exam and a lab test; blood tests determine the presence of AIDS/HIV.

It is possible to have STDs without feeling sick or noticing any changes in your body. If you think you may have an STD, do not be embarrassed to see a doctor. The longer it goes untreated, the more damage it will do to your body. Remember: most STDs can be treated, and most can be cured.

If you do find out that you have an STD or AIDS/HIV, you need to tell any sexual partners because they have been exposed to the disease as well. They deserve to know of your condition so they can seek appropriate medical attention.

For more information about preventing or treating STDs, see your family doctor, or call:

Sexually Transmitted Disease Clinic 261-1900

Long-distance callers may call toll-free. . . (800) 236-0153

Ask for the Public Health Nurse, who will explain how to get confidential low-cost STD testing.

Family Planning Health Services 675-5395

Long-distance callers may call toll-free. . . (800) 246-5743

Provides STD testing and treatment for by appointment on an ability-to-pay basis.