

## ABOUT SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES (STDs)

STDs are diseases that are spread from one person to another during sexual activity. There are many different types of STDs. Some of the more common ones are herpes, chlamydia infection, gonorrhea, pubic lice, syphilis, condylomas (sexual warts), trichomonas infection, HIV (the human immunodeficiency virus that causes AIDS), and hepatitis B (a liver disease). We have treatments for some of them, but not all. Some can be deadly or make you very sick.

Often a person can have one of these diseases and not know it because he or she doesn't have any signs of it and doesn't feel sick. The person can unknowingly spread the disease to a sexual partner if careful precautions aren't always used (read on). Sometimes a person suspects or knows that he may have an STD, but is too embarrassed to talk about it with his sexual partner. If safe sex isn't practiced every time, then the sexual partner is also at risk for getting the disease.

## DECIDING TO HAVE SEX

Having sex can be a very loving and special experience between two people. However, there are several important issues you must think about before you decide to have sex. Sexual intercourse not only has the potential for giving you a sexually transmitted disease but you also can get hurt emotionally, since it involves such strong feelings between two people. Decide ahead of time what is right for you. Find an adult with whom you can discuss your feelings and opinions, and ask questions. Some teens know that they can discuss these things with their parents, even though it is sometimes awkward to start the conversation. Other adults who may be able to give you valuable information include officials at your church, school counselors or teachers, or adult relatives. Also the trained staff in your doctor's office can help you; you can usually ask questions of them confidentially.

## SAFER SEX

When talking about sex and sexual diseases, the only absolutely risk-free activity is to not have sex (also known as abstinence). Many teens decide to delay having sex until they are older, married, or feel more comfortable. There are also many sexual activities that are almost always safe without taking any special precautions. These include holding hands, hugging, touching, and kissing.

Other sexual activities, especially having sex, are very risky if precautions aren't taken and if you don't think things through and talk with your sexual partner. If you have vaginal or anal intercourse, you can protect yourself against almost all of the STDs by using condoms each time (see "Using Condoms").

## USING CONDOMS

1. Hold the condom at the tip to squeeze out the air.
2. Roll the condom all the way down the erect (hard) penis. (Don't try to put a condom on a soft penis.)
3. After sex, hold onto the condom while the penis is being pulled out.
4. Other information about condoms follows:
  - Never reuse the same condom. It is a good idea to have two available in case one breaks.
  - If a condom breaks, as soon as you realize it, take it off and put on another one. If you don't have another, stop having sexual intercourse until you can get another condom.
  - The man should pull out of his sexual partner while he is still hard. If his penis gets soft first, the sperm can leak around the condom.
  - Condoms are sold in drug stores. Buy latex rubber or plastic condoms. Never use condoms made from animal skins, which can leak.
  - If you use a lubricant with condoms, make sure it is water-based (like K-Y jelly). Do not use petroleum jelly or Crisco; these can cause the condom to break.
  - There is a female condom, one that lines a woman's vagina, but it is more difficult to use and you should talk with a doctor or nurse before you try it.

## OTHER INFORMATION ABOUT SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES

- Your chance of getting an STD is greater if you have more than one sexual partner.
- Douching the vagina or showering after sex does not prevent STDs.
- Withdrawal (when a man pulls his penis out before he ejaculates) is not a way to prevent STDs or pregnancy. However, if a man is not wearing a condom, it reduces the risk somewhat if he withdraws before he ejaculates.
- You can get the same STD again, even if you have had it once and been treated.
- You can get an STD even if you have sex just once.
- Other birth control methods, such as the birth control pill or "Depo" shots, don't prevent you from getting an STD. You still need to protect yourself with condoms.



## CALL OUR OFFICE

### *Within 24 hours if*

- You are having any symptoms that you think might be an STD.
- You think you might have been exposed to someone with an STD.
- You had sex without a condom and might need emergency contraception (the "morning after" pill) to prevent a pregnancy.

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