

from chancroid to chlamydia and back, it's important to remember with all STD's that treatment is necessary for both (or all) partners. Symptom-free infections can hit anybody. Don't assume that infected partners will recognize their problem, sooner or later. It really is up to you to pass the glum word, if you find out first.

For advice on how to do it, try the American Social Health Association's toll-free national STD hotline: 1-800-227-8922.

If herpes is a problem, call ASHA's Herpes Resource Center at 1-919-361-2120. If you're worried about AIDS, call the national AIDS Hotline at 1-800-342-AIDS.



Go for the gold. No matter which color you go for, go with a condom if you plan on going all the way.

Still, the latest word in sexual etiquette is to pass up the chance for infection altogether.

That means *staying* monogamous, if you're already monogamous. It means being careful and smart, if you're not. Remember to use a condom *every* time you make love. Staying STD-free can be as simple as that.

Because even though the fear of sex — and STD's — is shaping up as the leading indoor game of the early 21st Century, it's not the only game in town.

In fact, it's a game you don't even have to play at all. ♀



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Do It Now Foundation

Box 27568 ■ Tempe, AZ 85285-7568 ■ 480.736.0599

STD Blues



A Self-Defense Guide

■ A Do It Now Foundation Publication by Judy Ismach

You know the feeling, if you're sexually active. It starts as a vague unease, then rises to a crescendo of fear and dread as you encounter each new itch, blister, or drip. Even news reports have been known to inspire terror in some, as evidence mounts about the terrible reach and toll of AIDS, and the HIV virus that causes it. And HIV is something we all have to consider these days as we choose our sexual lifestyles.

Still, it's not the only factor, not by a long shot. A herd, brood, or gaggle of other bugs, microbes, and viruses is out there, too, waiting to hit us right where it hurts most: in the bedroom.

Call the swarm of sexually-transmitted diseases VD, call them STD's, call 'em whatever you like — just call a doctor or a clinic if you suspect you have one.

Because while the Big Two of VD fame, syphilis and gonorrhea, are still in business, a group of once-obscure love bugs are jumping into the sexual spotlight.

The result? More and more of us are discovering we have things in common that we never *wanted* to have in common — everything from chancroid and chlamydia to genital warts.

That's why we've put together this pamphlet.

In it, we'll be checking out some of the main sexual bugs making the rounds today. We'll also review their symptoms and possible complications and list the best prospects for treating them — or beating them before they get started.

Because while the fear of AIDS is at the top of everybody's sex-fear agenda these days, non-HIV STD's are as bad as they've ever been. And in some cases, they're getting worse.



Moment of truth. If you're sexually active, you'd better be proactively protective — or else.

STERILE STATISTICS ■

Just *how* bad have things gotten? Bad enough — way bad enough. In fact, each year, more than 13 million Americans quietly pass along sexual diseases.

And the numbers are up sharply. By the 1990's, a once-rare bacterial infection called *chlamydia* had become the most common STD in America.

In fact, reported cases of chlamydia exploded during the preceding decade by **5800 percent** (from 3.2 to 188.4 cases per 100,000 population).

And that's not all. At last count, 28 different viruses, bacteria, fungi, and parasites were being shared with awesome frequency.

And while some STD's cause more embarrassment than serious illness, others can be downright *treacherous*. Consider:

- ▶ STD's are a major cause of sterility. In women, chlamydia and gonorrhea account for 20 percent of all cases of infertility. Simple treatment can reduce the damage—if given promptly. Too often, it's not.
- ▶ Genital sores and ulcers—caused by syphilis, herpes, and chancroid—are a contributing “co-factor” in the spread of AIDS.
- ▶ The list of STD's tied to cancer is long and growing. Examples? Genital warts are linked with cervical cancer, and hepatitis B—often spread through sexual contact—is a cause of liver cancer.

And if that's not bad enough, STD's affect more than the afflicted. Infected women pass them to their children, before birth or during delivery, with consequences that can be disastrous: from blindness and eye damage (chlamydia, herpes) to miscarriage and premature birth (chlamydia, syphilis).

Herpes may be the most serious. It's linked to retardation, blindness, and death in 60-70 percent of infected newborns. Doctors now promote Caesarian delivery in actively infected mothers to avoid passing herpes to children at birth.

CAREFUL LOVE ■

So STD's can be bad, disastrous even. Still, there *are* ways to get around what's going around.

For starters, lovers should look before they leap into a new intimate relationship. Any obvious sore, growth, or discharge in a partner should instantly cool passion.

Both men and women can improve their odds of avoiding STD's by urinating within a few minutes after intercourse. Urine washes away many germs. So can soap and water. But douching is debatable. It may force organisms up into the cervix, or mask STD symptoms.



Short of abandoning sex altogether, the next best bet in beating STD's is to use condoms religiously. (That means regularly—not with a TV evangelist.)

Some sexual practices can increase risk. Oral-anal contact transmits hepatitis A and other intestinal infections. Oral-genital contact or anal intercourse can also spread disease to other parts of the body, including the throat and anal canal. One hint here: A physician isn't likely to test those sites without a tip from the patient.

Short of abandoning sex altogether, the next best bet in beating STD's is to use condoms—religiously. (That means regularly—not with a TV evangelist.) Because the one time you do without protection may be the only time you need their protection at all.

Adding a spermicidal jelly (including *nonoxonyl-9*) is now officially overkill, though, after research proved that it doesn't kill HIV on contact, as had been rumored.

If you choose to use a condom, be sure you know how, why, and when. (See “Basic Condom Sense,” below.) Using a condom the wrong way can be as bad as not using one at all.

VIRAL INVADERS ■

If you're not already one of the 20-million-plus Americans with genital herpes, you'll know it if you become one.

Besides blisters, the first attack of herpes usually causes a flu-like illness with swollen glands in the groin.

Until a vaccine or a real cure is developed, the best news about herpes is that it tends to ease over time, with most sufferers reporting fewer recurrences of symptoms during the second year.

As few as 14 percent may wind up with chronic herpes. For them, the drug *acyclovir* can relieve symptoms and shorten the duration of each bout.

Still, treatment is one thing, and prevention is quite another.

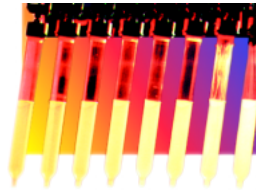
But what increases the need for prevention is the fact that the herpes virus, which remains in the body permanently, can be spread without open sores or blisters.

These so-called “silent” infections only reinforce the need for the type of protection that condoms provide.

BASIC CONDOM SENSE

The logic of latex may *seem* slippery, but condom care is as easy as 1-2-3. Just keep these points in mind:

- 1 Roll the condom all the way down before any sexual contact, not just ejaculation.
- 2 Use water-based, non-greasy lubricants. Oily lubes (like baby oil or Vaseline) can make condoms stretch or break.
- 3 Hold onto the condom at the base of the penis during withdrawal to prevent spills and keep the condom from slipping off. ☞



Pop quiz. Condoms are tested for leaks before they leave the factory. But in the real world they can fail, often due to operator error.

Even more common than herpes today are genital warts, caused by the *papilloma* virus. These little buggers can take the form of flat or cauliflower-like growths that hide in the vaginal walls, cervix, or anus.

Once fairly rare, genital warts have become one of the fastest-growing STD's in the United States today.

The good news about genital warts? Sometimes they go away. The bad news? More often, they spread and become uncomfortable and disfiguring.

Treatment choices include surgery, burning, freezing, or chemical removal. (*Ouch!*)

► SPLOTCH WATCH

Okay. Prevention is better than treatment, and caution is better than cure. *Yadda-yadda-yadda*. But no matter what anyone says, millions of people (Not *you*, of course, but others) who either don't practice safe sex or don't do it well, might be wondering how to recognize an STD if and when they get one.

The answer is: *Very carefully*. Most STD's fall into one of two groups. The first (which includes herpes, syphilis, chancroid, and genital warts) produces blisters, growths, or sores on or near the sex organs.

The second is marked by a discharge or “drip” from the urethra in men or from the cervix in women, often with urinary discomfort. Gonorrhea is a classic example.

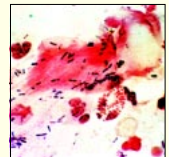
But blisters and drips alone do not a diagnosis make.

Symptoms of some STD's can overlap with others, making accurate ID difficult—and a trip to the doctor crucial, if you suspect an infection.

How tough does it get? Tough *enough*. Chancroid, for example, is often misdiagnosed as syphilis, while chlamydia can cause gonorrhea-like symptoms. And other STD's produce no symptoms at all.

All of which brings us to one key point: Since STD signs and symptoms can be indistinct or just plain fail to appear, identification is a job for a doctor or a lab.

Your job is to get yourself to one or the other if you think you may be infected. ■



Gonorrhea-infected cells.