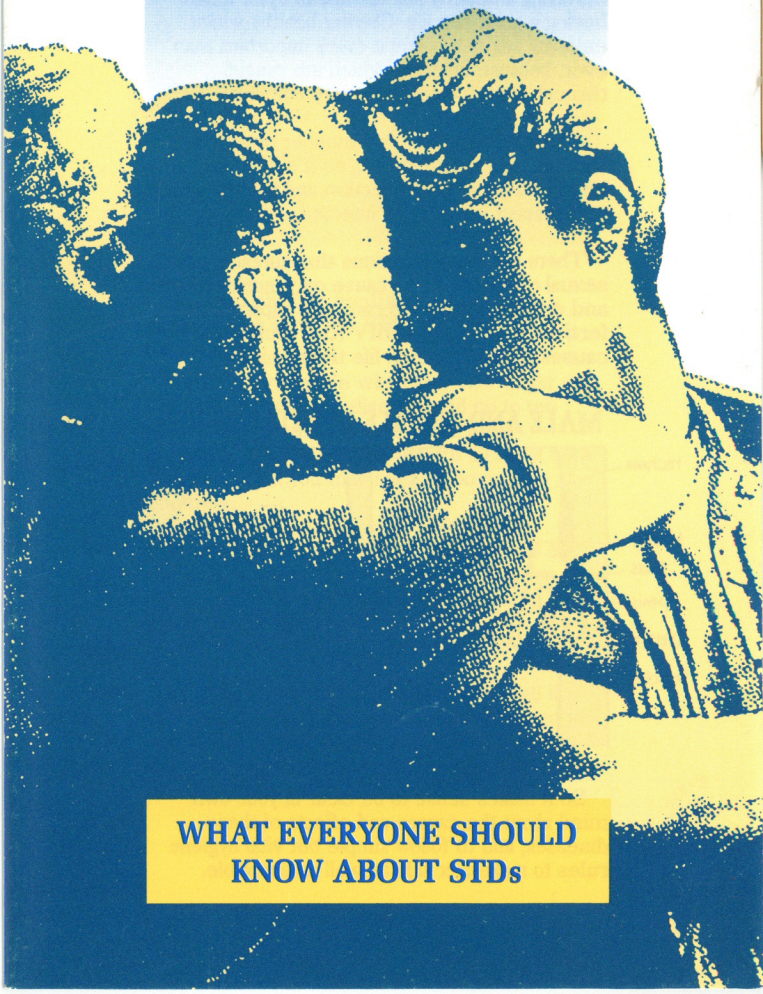
GOOD SEX: HEALTHY SEX



WHAT EVERYONE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT STDs

SO SIMPLY 'BEING CAREFUL' IS NOT ENOUGH

You should always make sure that you practise safer sex (that is use a condom and avoid dangerous sexual activities).

If you are at all concerned, then do have a check-up.

Having sex with different people means that you are more likely to catch something, so if you do have more than one partner, it's a good idea to have a check-up every three months, even if you think you are OK.

WHERE CAN YOU GO FOR HELP?

You may be able to find out about an STD clinic through friends, your GP or from a family planning clinic. Some telephone directories have numbers to ring for information under 'VD' or Venereal Diseases.

Most general hospitals have a clinic just to deal with STDs. These are often called SPECIAL CLINICS but are also known by other names. These include:
Department of Genito-Urinary Medicine
Department of Venereology
STD Clinic
Special Treatment Centre
Department of Genital Medicine

At some clinics you can just turn up and be seen. At others you have to ring up and make an appointment.

You may feel very embarrassed about this sort of illness, but remember that the staff working in these clinics are not. They deal with such patients all the time – so there is no need to worry.

Any information given at the clinic will be kept strictly confidential. No one will be told about your visit to the clinic (not even your GP – unless he/she sent you there in the first place or if you want him/her to be informed).

WHAT WILL HAPPEN AT THE CLINIC?

At the clinic, the doctor will ask you to describe your symptoms and general health and you will also be examined. Details of your examinations and any tests you may have will be held separately by the clinic and will not be passed on to your GP or any other doctor you might be seeing.

To stop the infection spreading and for the sake of the person you may have caught something from, it is very important that anyone you have had sex with in recent months should be contacted. They should go to a clinic for an examination and tests.

Specially trained health advisors or other members of the clinic staff will help you to find the best way of contacting those of your partners considered to be at risk. This is called contact tracing. Contact tracing is important because it can stop your previous partners from spreading the infection further (perhaps even giving it back to you) and help them get any treatment they might need.

WHAT IS THE TREATMENT FOR STDs?

Different STDs have to be treated with specific medicines. Different infections need different treatments; these may be tablets, creams, pessaries or very occasionally, injections. It is important not to give up your treatment as soon as you feel better. You should finish any course of treatment you are taking and return to the clinic as requested to make sure the treatment has worked.

There is no treatment for HIV/AIDS at the moment. It is an incurable disease and can be fatal.

IF YOU SUSPECT YOU MAY HAVE AN INFECTION,

VISIT YOUR DOCTOR IMMEDIATELY

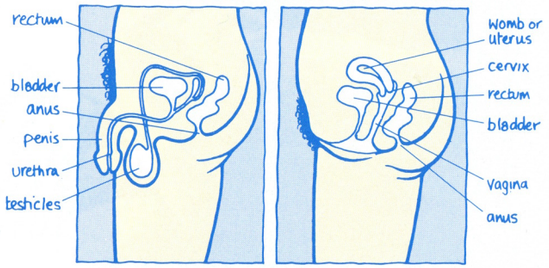
GOOD SEX: HEALTHY SEX

Having a healthy sex life doesn't just mean having a good sex life. Staying healthy whilst enjoying sex has become more important than ever, because diseases which are caught through sex have become more common.

A new relationship, or a number of partners, can put your health at risk, so it's important to know how to prevent infection and what to do if you suspect you may be infected.

There are many infections that spread through sexual contact – some cause only inconvenience and discomfort. Others can have implications for fertility. In the case of HIV (the virus which causes AIDS) it is even life threatening.

MALE AND FEMALE GENITAL AREAS



So it makes sense to be clear in your own mind about the causes and effects of these diseases, and to follow simple but vital hygiene rules to make sex safe as well as enjoyable.

WHAT ARE SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES (STDs)?

Another name for STD is venereal disease (VD) – ironically named after Venus the goddess of love. STDs are usually caused by bacteria or viruses being passed on by an infected person during sexual intercourse.

- Conditions such as pubic lice (crabs or nits) and scabies (the itch) can be sexually transmitted, but scabies is more commonly passed on in other ways – such as sharing towels and bed linen.
- There are other conditions which are sexually transmitted but can also arise quite naturally without sexual contact. For instance, many girls and women may get cystitis (when there is pain passing water), and thrush, (a yeast infection which causes a white discharge, itching and soreness around the vagina), for a number of reasons at different times in their lives. They can be brought on by stress, a course of medicine such as antibiotics or even something as simple as a change of diet.
- You've probably heard of some of the sexually transmitted diseases, such as syphilis ("the pox"), gonorrhoea ("clap"), hepatitis B, non-specific urethritis (NSU), herpes, chlamydia and genital warts. Some of these conditions, if not treated quickly, may develop into more serious diseases.

Warts around the vagina and penis are not just ugly. There is some evidence to suggest that the wart virus can cause cancer of the cervix, so it is important that both sexes have treatment for warts straight away.

- Probably the one that you will have heard most about is AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome). HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) is the virus which causes AIDS.

HIV can be caught by contact of your own blood with the blood, semen or vaginal fluid of an infected person. Blood contact can occur when drug users share needles, but the great majority of cases result from having sex.

Currently, there is no cure for HIV but most other infections can be cured especially if you see a doctor as soon as possible. If you suspect you are infected, see a doctor at once as some STDs can become more serious and cause permanent damage to your general health or even your fertility.

HOW CAN YOU AVOID GETTING AN STD?

If you only have sex with one person and both of you are faithful, you are not likely to catch an STD.

However, if you feel you are at risk from HIV or any other STD, you should follow some healthier sex guidelines .....

... HEALTHIER SEX

1. The most dangerous type of intercourse is anal sex and this is particularly risky if there is a possibility that your partner is carrying HIV, hepatitis B, gonorrhoea or syphilis. Because condoms are designed for vaginal sex they are not suitable for this form of intercourse. Remember there is a higher risk of infection if you have anal sex.
2. For vaginal sex, doctors have recommended using the condom (also known as "sheath", "French letter", "rubber", "johnny"), as it offers protection against STDs, including HIV, and can help to provide protection against cancer of the cervix.
3. Women who use a diaphragm (also known as a cap), may find it helps to provide protection against cancer of the cervix, and some STDs. In addition, spermicides, which contain Nonoxynol, used in conjunction with the diaphragm, help to inactivate some viruses including HIV.
4. There is also some risk of infection from oral sex. The risk is highest for the woman giving oral sex, even if the man withdraws before orgasm. Some couples use condoms, and flavoured varieties are now available. However, there is still a risk for men giving oral sex to women particularly if the man has any sores or ulcers in his mouth or if the woman has a discharge or sores from a vaginal infection.
5. Mutual masturbation is a safe practice, provided neither you nor your partner have cuts, scratches or open skin on your hands, penis or vagina.
6. A man can ejaculate on his partner's body, provided the semen does not come into contact with a body opening or an open cut, sore or rash.
7. If you suspect that you or your partner may have developed an STD of any type you should not have sexual intercourse. If you do, you must ensure that you are protected by using a condom. Both of you should consult a doctor immediately in order to be tested and get any necessary treatment. You must not have sex with your partner until the doctor has given the all clear.
8. If you have sex with anyone you think may be infected, it may help to prevent infection from cystitis and NSU (and only these diseases) if you pass water as soon as you can after sex, and wash your genital area. Then see a doctor for a check-up as soon as you can.
9. Above all, DO NOT TAKE RISKS. It's better to be safe and use a condom, than risk your health.

HOW CAN YOU TELL THAT YOU MAY HAVE AN STD?

There are a number of symptoms which may mean that you have got an infection:-

FOR WOMEN

- the normal slight, white vaginal discharge may become a different colour, smell nasty and/or your vagina may become itchy and sore
- a painful burning or stinging feeling while passing water, and a feeling of wanting to go again almost straight away
- a rash, sores or warts around your vagina
- pain when you have sex

FOR MEN

- a painful burning or stinging feeling on passing water
- a discharge from the end of your penis
- a rash, sores or warts on or around your penis and testicles

But you should realise you or your partner can have an STD without knowing it.

In particular, people who carry HIV might not show any signs of the disease until up to ten years after infection. So it is particularly important to think carefully before sleeping with anybody whom you may not have known for a long time.

Although the first cases of AIDS were diagnosed among homosexual and bisexual men and injecting drug users, there is increasing evidence that the virus is rapidly spreading through the heterosexual population. HIV has been contracted through vaginal as well as anal sex.

Remember, it can be very difficult to tell if someone is a drug user or has been involved in a homosexual relationship in the past – or whether they have had partners who were infected in this way.

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FACT OR MYTH?
Your questions answered

Q Once you have had an STD and it has been treated, can you catch it again?

A Even when you have had treatment you can catch an STD again from an infected person.

Q Can you catch an STD from a toilet seat?

A It is very unlikely that you will catch an STD from a toilet seat. The viruses and germs which cause STDs cannot live for very long (a few minutes at the most) away from the warmth of the body. This makes it practically impossible to catch an STD from toilet seats, door knobs, drinking cups etc.

Q Can you get an STD by heavy petting?

A You can catch an STD by heavy petting as the viruses and germs may be passed on during any very close contact with the oral and genital areas of an infected person.

Q Can an STD affect an unborn baby?

A STDs can infect a baby at birth (as it is passing through the birth canal). Some STDs, including HIV/AIDS, can also infect the baby during pregnancy.

Q Is it true that only homosexuals or drug users sharing needles can get AIDS?

A No. An increasing number of cases of HIV and AIDS are being diagnosed and they have caught the virus through conventional vaginal intercourse.

Q Do you need to tell your partner if you have an STD?

A Yes, it is important to discuss a problem, however minor. Not only might you prevent the disease from being passed on but if your partner has already caught it, you may both need treatment. You may also prevent re-infection.

Q Is it possible for one person to obtain treatment for an STD for both partners?

A No. Each patient should be prescribed their own treatment because one course of treatment might not be suitable for the other partner.

Q Is it expensive to go to an STD clinic?

A Treatment is free for all patients in NHS STD clinics. If you go to your family doctor you will have to pay a prescription charge.

HEALTHY SEX
MEANS BETTER SEX

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