

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES (STDs)

BASIC INFORMATION

STD FACTS:

- Sexually transmitted diseases affect more than 12 million men and women in the United States each year. Many are teenagers or young adults.
- Using drugs or alcohol increases your chances of getting STDs because these substances can interfere with your judgment and your ability to use a condom properly.
- Intravenous (IV) drug use puts a person at higher risk for HIV and hepatitis B because IV drug users usually share needles.
- The more sexual partners you have, the higher your chance of being exposed to HIV or other STDs. This is because it is difficult to know whether a person is infected, or has had sex with people who are more likely to be infected due to intravenous drug use or other risk factors.
- Sometimes, early in the infection, there may be no symptoms, or symptoms may be easily confused with other illnesses.
- You cannot tell by looking at someone whether he or she is infected with HIV or another STD.
- Sexually transmitted diseases include HIV, chancroid, chlamydial infections, trichomoniasis, genital herpes, pubic lice, genital warts, gonorrhea, lymphogranuloma venereum, syphilis, viral hepatitis, scabies, candidiasis, molluscum contagiosum and others.

STDs CAN CAUSE:

- Pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), which can damage a woman's fallopian tubes and result in pelvic pain and sterility.
- Tubal pregnancies (where the pregnancy grows in the fallopian tube instead of the womb), sometimes fatal to the mother and always fatal to the fetus.
- Death or severe damage to babies born to all infected women.
- Sterility—the inability to have children—in both men and women.
- Cancer of the cervix in women.
- Damage to major organs, such as the heart, kidney and brain, if STDs go untreated.
- Death (e.g., with HIV infection).

RISKS:

High-risk behaviors include having sex—vaginal, anal or oral — with:

- A person who has an STD. This is the riskiest behavior. If you know your partner is infected, avoid

inter-course (including oral sex). If you do decide to have sex with an infected person, always be sure to use a new condom from start to finish, every time.

- Someone who has shared needles to inject drugs with an infected person.
- Someone whose past partner(s) were infected. Because the AIDS virus can be in the body a long time before a person feels sick, if your partner had inter-course with a person infected with HIV, he or she could pass it on to you even if the sexual contact was a long time ago—even as long as 10 years—and even if your partner seems perfectly healthy.

PREVENTION:

- To lessen the chance of being infected with AIDS or other STDs, people who take part in risky sexual behavior should always use a condom.
- Use of a condom is also important for an uninfected pregnant woman because it can help protect her and her unborn child from STDs.

SEE A DOCTOR IF YOU HAVE ANY OF THESE STD SYMPTOMS:

- Discharge from the vagina, penis or rectum.
- Pain or burning during urination or intercourse.
- Pain in the abdomen (women), testicles (men), and buttocks and legs (both men and women).
- Blisters, open sores, warts, rash, or swelling in the genital or anal area, or mouth.
- Persistent flu-like symptoms—including fever, headache, aching muscles, or swollen glands—which may precede STD symptoms.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR INFORMATION:

- National AIDS Hotline (800) 342-AIDS; web site <http://www.cdcnac.org>.
- Sexually Transmitted Diseases Hotline (800) 227-8922.

NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

You or a family member has questions or concerns about STDs.

Adapted from Instructions for Patients, Sixth Edition, H. Winter Griffith, M.D., W.B Saunders Company.