

# Health News You Can Use - Teen Edition

## SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES

***"I'd say the most popular discussion among my peers is sex. We talk about whose doing it but we never talk about sexually transmitted diseases..." - BQLI summer intern/STD researcher***

### THE FACTS:

- Nearly half of U.S. high school students have had sexual intercourse; the average age of first intercourse for boys and girls is 15
- Condom use is usually highest at the beginning of a relationship, declining once the partner is perceived as "safe"
- Only 35 percent of males and females ages 15 to 17 use a condom during every act of sexual intercourse
- More than 20 diseases can be transmitted sexually. Very few are "reportable" infections due to lack of diagnosis and treatment, but many have serious and costly consequences
- Adolescents 15 to 19 years old have some of the highest reported rates of gonorrhea and chlamydia among sexually active people
- 50% represent young people ages 15-24
- 19 million sexually transmitted diseases are reported annually
- According to the U. S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), an average of 40,000 to 80,000 new cases of HIV are reported each year in the U.S. It is estimated that half of all new infections are among people younger than 25
- Compared to the general population, adolescents have one of the fastest increasing rates of HIV infection; an average of two young people are infected with HIV every hour of every day
- In Brooklyn, HIV cases rose 41% between 2004 and 2006

#### ABOUT SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES

A Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) is a disease caused by a virus or bacterium that is spread from person to person primarily through sexual contact.

STDs can be painful, debilitating and even life threatening. Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) result from complications caused by a sexually transmitted infection (STI) that has progressed. Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are also spread primarily through person-to-person sexual contact. There are more than 30 different sexually transmissible viruses and bacteria. While STDs are preceded by STIs, not all STIs develop into STDs.

#### What Research Shows...

- Some STDs that are caused by bacteria can be treated and cured with medication such as antibiotics. STDs in this category include: Trichomoniasis; Gonorrhea; Chlamydia and Syphilis.
- STDs caused by viruses can be controlled but not cured. Some viral STDs include: HIV/AIDS; Hepatitis B Virus; Human Papilloma Virus (HPV); Genital Herpes, Genital Warts and Cytomegalovirus.

#### What Are Some Of The Symptoms...

The bacteria that cause STDs can enter the body through tiny cuts or tears in the mouth and anus, as well as the genitals. It is also important to know that sexual activity at a young age, numerous sex partners and unprotected sex all increase a young persons chances of contracting an STD.

Common symptoms often include:

- Unusual discharge; burning while urinating
- Sores or warts on the genital area
- Itching and redness in the genital area
- and anal itching, soreness, or bleeding

### Influences

In light of these staggering facts, it is evident that young people need to make better decisions in regard to their physical health. In a day when HIV/AIDS is most prevalent, young people need to be more aware about the risks of early sexual behavior and the consequences involved.

**With STDs and unwanted pregnancy as a possibility, why are young people engaging in unprotected sex?**

This can be attributed to a number of issues including, but not limited to:

1. Lack of sex education (at home and in schools)
2. Peer pressure in relation to sexual activity
3. The obsession with sexuality in popular culture

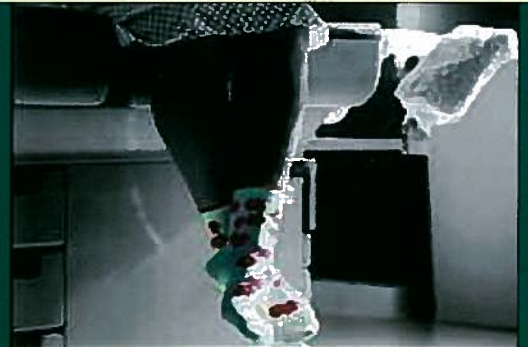
*Other risky behaviors that may make unprotected sex an option include: drug use and/or alcohol abuse.*

**But most importantly, research shows that more and more teens submit to sexual pressure in effort to fit in, feel more valued, and/or to fill an emotional void. It is imperative that teens make their decisions more responsibly and unprotected sex should never be an option.**

### What You Should Know...

The only way to completely prevent STDs is to abstain from all types of sexual contact.

- The decision to be sexually active is a serious one and should be guided by parental communication, education, the proper medical advice and a significant level of maturity.
- Responsible behavior includes: regular gynecological or male genital examinations and protection. These exams give doctors a chance to teach people about STDs and protecting themselves.
- Regular examinations give doctors more opportunities to check for STDs while they're still in their earliest, and most treatable stage.



### How to Get Help

**If you think you may have contracted an STD or STI, seek medical attention immediately. Do not let shame or embarrassment prevent you from seeking the help you need. Waiting may cause more damage if the condition goes untreated.**

Your family doctor can help, but if you prefer alternative treatment, there is a National STD Hotline that can recommend regional intervention and calls are confidential (see the list below).

#### National STD Hotline at 1-800-227-8922

##### CDC National STD Hotline

Provides STD information and referrals to clinics nationwide. (800) 227-8922 or (800) 342-2437

En Español (800) 344-7432

English - 24 hours per day, 7 days a week

Spanish - 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 a.m. 7 days a week

TTY - 10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. Monday through Friday

<http://www.ashastd.org/NSTD/index.html>

##### CDC National AIDS Hotline

(800) 342 - AIDS (2437) (Eng.) (24 hrs, 7 days a week)

(800) 344 - SIDA (7432) (Spanish) (8 am - 2 am EST)

(800) 243 - 7889 (TTY for hearing impaired)

(Monday-Friday 10:00 am - 10:00 pm EST)

<http://www.ashastd.org/nah/index.html>

##### National Herpes Hotline

Provides herpes information and referrals to clinics or support groups. Mon-Fri 9:00 am-7:00 pm (EST)

English (919) 361-8488

Written Materials (800) 230-6039

Recorded Information (800) 653-4325

<http://www.ashastd.org/hrc/index.html>

##### Pierre Toussaint Family Health Center

###### Designated HIV/AIDS Center

Provides HIV/AIDS Quick Testing, treatment and counseling

1110 Eastern Parkway, Bklyn NY (718) 735-1900

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday & Friday - 8:30am-5:00pm

Thursdays - 8:30am-7:00pm