

SEXtalk)))

Answers to Your Questions about Sex and Relationships

Have a ??? Email sextalk@u.arizona.edu

factoid

The majority of STDs in the U.S. occur among 15- to 25-year-olds (Centers for Disease Control, 2000)

Q. *If you sleep with a new sexual partner, are they obligated to inform you about any STDs they have?*

A. Ethically, if a person knows that he/she is infected with a sexually transmitted disease (STD), it is his/her duty to tell a sexual partner. Does this always occur in reality? -- No. While failure to disclose the existence of an STD may result from embarrassment or deception, sometimes it is due to a person honestly not knowing that they are infected, either because they have no symptoms or because they do not recognize the meaning of their symptoms.

Here are some tips to protect both yourself and your new sexual partner:

- **Assess the risk:** Before initiating sex with your new partner, ask -- Have you or your partner (or a previous partner) ever had an STD? Have you both been tested for STDs? Are either of you currently having sex with other partners? Knowing the risk factors up-front is a necessary step for STD prevention.
- **Get tested for STDs:** For any new couple starting a sexual relationship, it's wise to get tested before engaging in any skin-to-skin contact.
- **Use condoms:** Used correctly and consistently, condoms and latex dams are your best defense against transmission of STDs. While not 100% effective, condoms greatly decrease the likelihood of transmitting bacterial vaginosis, candidiasis, trichomoniasis, chlamydia, gonorrhea, NGU, syphilis and HIV. Condoms are less effective for preventing spread of herpes, genital warts, pubic lice and scabies.
- **Have fewer sexual partners:** The more people you have sex with, the greater your risk is for becoming infected with an STD. People who have many sexual partners generally don't know their partners well and thus are more likely to get an STD.
- **Inform your partner if you have an STD:** Saying something as simple as, "There is something we should talk about first," will help open the lines of communication. Make sure your new partner understands the nature of the infection and knows what both of you can do to prevent further transmission.

If you are concerned that you may have contracted an STD, visit a health care provider immediately. Most STDs are curable, especially if they are diagnosed and treated early. To get tested at the Campus Health Service, call 621-9202 for an appointment.

Reference: Crooks & Baur, Our Sexuality (2002).

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