

sextalk.

answers to your questions about sex and relationships

factoid Two-thirds of all STDs occur in people 25 years of age or younger. (American Social Health Association, 2004)

Q. I'm in love with a girl (I'm a female myself) and I love having sex with her. I've been hearing about STD's daily and do not understand how STD's are transmitted. Are they transmitted only if the person is infected or do STD's happen from solely having unprotective sex? I don't like the idea of using the 'rubber' (though it makes sense to use rubber for anilingus). Help! I'd like to have safe and enjoyable sex.

A. The good news is that STDs do not spontaneously erupt just because a person has unprotected sex. Somebody has to have an infection that they bring into the relationship. Granted, some people who are infected will not exhibit symptoms of the STD, and may not even be aware they have one. For that reason, we always tell people to err on the side of caution (i.e., use protection like condoms or latex dams) when having sex with someone new or someone whom they don't know as well. Keep in mind that condoms and dams will not guarantee safety (only abstinence is 100%) but they will *significantly* reduce your risks of disease.

Knowing someone "well" isn't as easy as people think. It means having spent significant time with them, knowing about their history with other sexual partners, knowing whether they have a history of injecting drug use, knowing whether they have ever been infected with an STD (and if so, what STD it was and whether it was treated), and knowing the results of any STD tests. This calls for lots of talking, honesty, and caring between two individuals.

Being in a loving relationship, such as the one you are in, should make it easier to talk about these issues with your partner. Committed partners sometimes go together to Campus Health (621-9202) or to the Teresa Lee Clinic (791-7676) to get tested for the most common STDs. If you and your partner are both STD-free and are completely monogamous (no skin to skin sexual contact with anyone else) in your relationship, then you are certainly on the way to "safer sex" which can reduce your risk of acquiring an STD. If however, you are not sure about your partner's STD status, or your relationship is not mutually exclusive, then continue to use protection (i.e. latex dams) when engaging in oral sex or anilingus (oral-anal sex).

Have a question? Send it to sextalk@email.arizona.edu

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