

sex talk.

answers to your questions about sex and relationships

wildfact

75% of UA students had 1 or 0 sexual partners in the past school year. (2013 Health & Wellness Survey, n=3,055)

Q Which STIs are curable?

A. To understand which sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are curable, we first need to look at their pathogenic, disease-causing origins. The most common STIs are viruses, bacteria, parasites, and protozoa. Among these, bacterial and protozoan STIs such as chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis and trichomoniasis are readily curable, and have been since the development of antibiotics. In fact, one of the first antibiotics to be developed was *Salvarsan*, an early treatment for syphilis that also gave us the term “magic bullet” based on its effectiveness.

Because antibiotics have no effect on viruses, however, herpes, genital warts (HPV), and HIV have been more problematic, despite huge leaps in modern medicine. Some types of HPV can be prevented through vaccination (Gardasil®), herpes and HIV can both be “managed” through a variety of drugs, and molluscum contagiosum (and some strains of HPV) can be treated by freezing off infected bumps, but at present none of these viral STIs can be cured outright. Many individuals will have no visible signs or symptoms of viral

STIs, which can delay treatment in some cases (HIV) and make it unnecessary in others (HPV, genital herpes). As for pubic lice (also known as “crabs”) and scabies, creams or lotions containing permethrin are the standard, first-line treatments that are effective at removing these parasites.

Even better than curing STIs is preventing them in the first place. Protect yourself and your partner by talking about STIs before you have sex, getting tested, and protecting yourself through the consistent and correct use of condoms. Keep in mind that even sex with a condom is not risk-free. Only through abstinence or mutually monogamous sex with an uninfected partner can you lower your risk to around zero.

Confidential STI testing and treatment are available at the Campus Health Service. Call 621-9202 to schedule an appointment or stop by the Highland Commons building near 6th St. and Highland Ave. For more information on STIs, check out www.health.arizona.edu.



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

SexTalk is written by Lee Ann Hamilton, M.A., CHES, David Salafsky, MPH, and Carrie Hardesty, BS, CHES, health educators at The UA Campus Health Service.