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INTRODUCTION

Chances are you've heard of **STD**. You may know that the letters **STD** stand for sexually transmitted diseases - diseases passed from one person to another through intimate physical contact, usually sexual intercourse.

SEX is a normal and healthy part of our lives. When you are sexually active, this booklet can help you have a healthy, safer sex life and avoid the infections that can make it unhealthy.

STD are common today, particularly among young people. They are a serious health problem. The highest rates of infection occur in females 15 to 19 years of age. For example, in 1988, the rate of reported cases of gonorrhoea in 15- to 19-year-old females was 367.5 per 100,000; the highest rate in males, 345.2 per 100,000, occurred in those 20 to 24 years of age. These reported cases account for only a proportion of the total number, as many cases of infection are never reported.

STD in general can cause many long-lasting complications if they are not treated soon enough - especially in women. Scarring of the Fallopian tubes may result in blockages that can cause ectopic pregnancies (pregnancies outside the womb) or even infertility. Some women may develop cancer of the cervix from **STD**. Infections can also be passed on to the children during pregnancy or during childbirth, sometimes resulting in defects or even death.

[REDACTED]

The only sure way to avoid STD is not to have sex.

To reduce your risk of getting or spreading STD:

- Limit your number of partners.
- Use a condom - it's the most important thing you can do to make sex safer.
- For injection drug users - avoid sharing needles.
- If you think you might have an STD, see your doctor or go to an STD clinic and ask for an STD check-up; remember - any information you give is treated with the strictest confidence.
- Tell your partner if you know you have an infection - help stop the spread of STD.
- Avoiding infection is one thing; of course, you've got to think about contraception if you want to avoid pregnancy.
- Remember! birth control pills don't prevent STD.

You owe it to yourself to learn the dangers of STD. Only you can reduce your risk of getting or spreading STD.

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How are STD spread?

In several ways:

- STD are usually spread sexually because the germs travel with semen, vaginal fluids and blood.
- Infected mothers can pass STD to their babies during pregnancy and at childbirth.
- Infected blood on needles and syringes can spread certain STD germs such as those causing hepatitis B and AIDS.

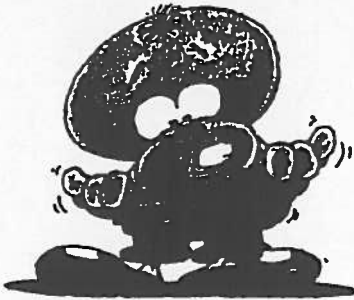
With the exception of hepatitis B, there are no vaccines for sexually transmitted diseases. If you get an STD once, you can get it again. And you can have more than one STD at a time.

Most sexually transmitted diseases are easily treated; all can be dangerous if not treated. For some, like AIDS, there is no cure at this time.

[REDACTED]

What are the signs and symptoms?

Some people with **STD** have no signs or symptoms at all. But be on the lookout for abnormal discharges from the vagina or penis, burning when urinating, unusual sores and itching around the sex organs, unexpected rash or swollen glands in the groin. These can appear alone or together.



What are the risks?

You risk catching **STD** if:

- you have unprotected sex (without a condom) with an infected person
- you have more than one sex partner
- you have a new sex partner
- you know little about your partner
- your partner has sex with others
- you are an injection drug user
- you share needles for injection

If you have no signs or symptoms but have taken risks, see a doctor and ask for an **STD check-up.**

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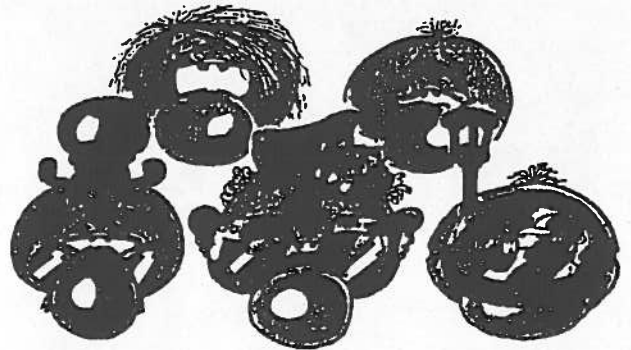
How can I avoid **STD**?

The only sure way to avoid **STD** is not to have sex.

By staying with one sex partner, you can feel safer. The more people you have sex with, the greater your chances of catching **STD**.

If you do have sex with more than one person, you can still take steps to protect yourself. Here are some things you can do.

- Before having sex with someone, get to know that person first. Be prepared to talk about previous sexual experiences, injection drug use, avoiding **STD** and using "safer sex" methods.



- Use a latex condom (safe, rubber) the first and every time you have sex: germs cannot pass through a condom in either direction.
- Never use the same condom more than once.
- Insist on "safer sex" even if your partner says he or she is safe. Say NO to anyone not willing to practise "safer sex."

What's safer sex?

Safer sex is the way to continue to enjoy your sex life while protecting yourself and your sex partner(s) from infection with any sexually transmitted disease.

How to use a condom

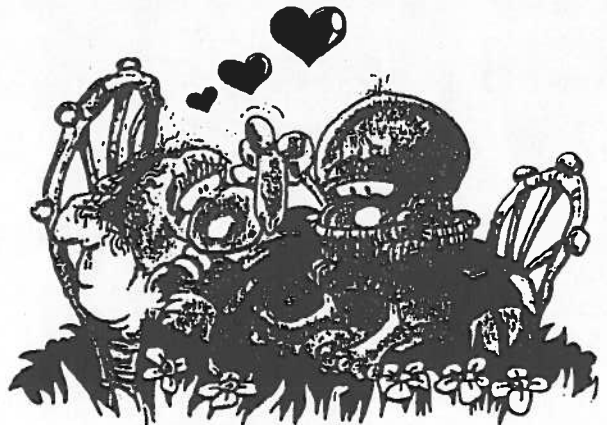
When used correctly, condoms help to protect against STD and pregnancy. Use condoms coated with "Nonoxynol-9"; this can kill the germs which cause gonorrhoea, AIDS and other STD, as well as sperm.

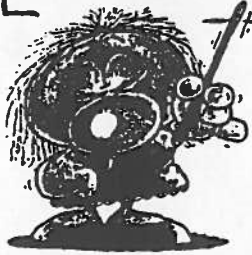
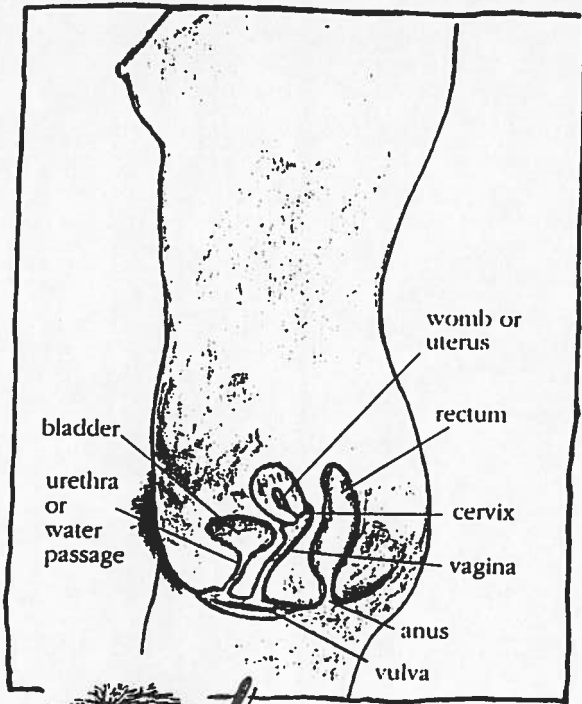
Be sure to check the expiry date before you buy or use a condom. It will not be effective after the expiry date.

- Use a new condom every time you have sex - vaginal, anal or oral sex.
- Put it on before sex and handle it carefully to avoid tearing.

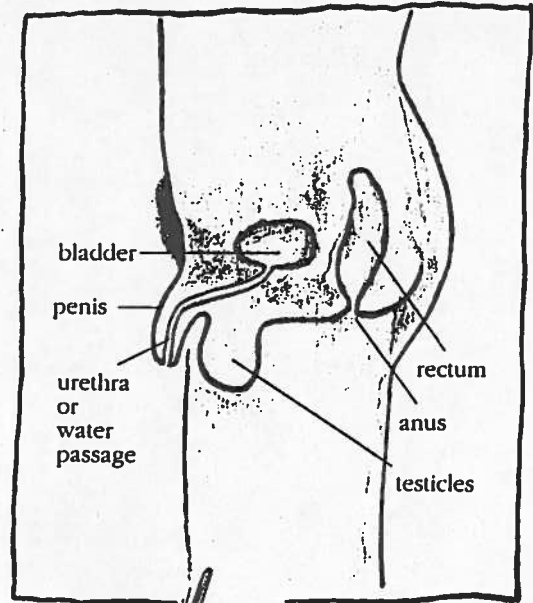
- Press the air out at the tip leaving enough space (about one centimetre, or one-half inch) to hold the semen.
- Unroll the condom over as much of the erect penis as possible.
- To avoid tearing the condom or irritating a dry vagina, use a water-based lubricant on the condom or in the vagina. Avoid oil-based products, as they weaken the condom and make it more likely to break.
- Remove the penis and the condom from the vagina while the penis is still erect. Hold the base of the condom firmly so the semen doesn't spill out of the condom.

Using a condom is the most important thing you can do to make sex safer. Condoms also protect against cancer of the cervix and infertility caused by STD.





This is the area of the body where women can get a sexually-transmitted disease.



This is the area of the body where men can get a sexually-transmitted disease.

[REDACTED]

I think I have STD. What should I do?

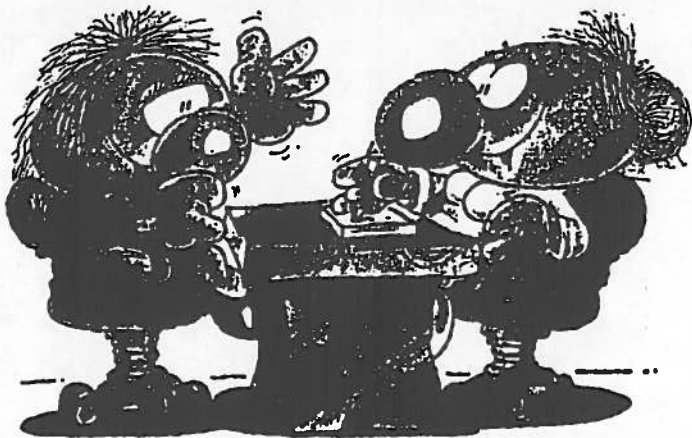
Don't be shy or afraid to seek help. See your doctor and ask for an **STD** check-up, or go to an **STD** clinic. They will test you and treat you if necessary.

Be sure to do as the doctor says and take all your medication. Return for a follow-up visit to be certain you are cured.

When you have **STD**, tell your sex partners so they can be checked and treated if necessary.

You must do this to

- protect them from illness
- prevent them from passing **STD** to others
- avoid getting **STD** again



[REDACTED]

How soon can I have sex after treatment starts?

If you or your partner are being treated for **STD**, do not have sex. Wait until your doctor or nurse says it's okay.

There are many kinds of STD: learning the facts about them is the first step in prevention. Here is what you should know to reduce your risk of getting **STD**.

[REDACTED]

PUBIC LICE AND SCABIES

What are they?

Scabies (itch mites) and pubic lice, often called crabs, are tiny insects that live on the skin. They are often, but not always, spread sexually. You can also pick them up by using the bed linen, clothes or towels of an infected person.

Scabies, an itchy rash, is caused when a female mite burrows into a person's skin to lay her eggs.

Pubic lice infect hairy parts of the body, especially around the groin and under the arms. Their eggs can be seen on the hair close to the skin, where they hatch in six to eight days.

Both scabies and pubic lice are treated by special creams, lotions or shampoos which you can buy in a drug store. You might have to apply them more than once. Follow the directions carefully.

What are the signs and symptoms?

- **Scabies**

Mainly itching, especially at night. A rash usually appears in skin folds, between fingers or on wrists, elbows, abdomen and around the genitals.

- **Pubic lice**

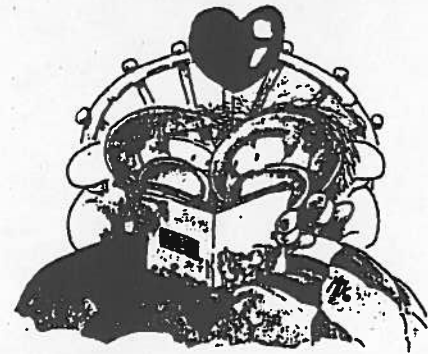
You may not have symptoms, although an itch might occur around the genitals.

Light brown insects the size of a pin-head can often be seen moving on the skin.

Oval-shaped eggs attach firmly to the hairs.

What can they do to me?

Scratching may cause an infection requiring medical attention. Itching can persist for some time after treatment.



Can I prevent them from spreading?

Avoid close body contact with others if you have scabies or pubic lice. Get treatment to avoid passing them to others.

Wash clothes and bed linen in hot water or dry-clean or press them with a very hot iron. Freezing clothes, fabrics and blankets or storing them for two-week periods will destroy insects and eggs.

If you have scabies or pubic lice, be sure to tell your sex partners. Anyone with whom you have had close contact or who has shared your bed linen, clothes or towels should be treated, even if they don't have an itch or rash.

HEPATITIS B

What is it?

Hepatitis B is an infection of the liver caused by a virus. Often, there are no symptoms. It is the only STD that can be prevented by a vaccine. Treatment includes rest, eating a healthy diet and avoiding alcohol.

What are the signs and symptoms?

They usually appear within two to six months after contact. They can include:

- poor appetite, nausea, vomiting
- headaches
- a general unwell feeling
- jaundice (yellowing of eyes and skin)
- dark, tea-coloured urine
- light-coloured stools

Even without symptoms, you can pass the virus to others. Some people carry the hepatitis B virus for the rest of their lives and unknowingly pass it to their sex partners.

What can it do to me?

Most people recover, but a few have serious problems later on, such as permanent liver disease, including cancer of the liver.

How is it spread?

The hepatitis B virus is spread through infected blood and saliva. It can also be passed from an infected mother to her baby during childbirth.

Do not:

- share needles and syringes
- share instruments used in ear-piercing, tattooing and hair removal
- share toothbrushes or razors

If you are infected, avoid sex and other close contact, such as kissing, until your doctor says it's okay.

If your regular sex partner has had hepatitis B, check with your doctor to find out if you should be vaccinated against it.

CONDYLOMATA (GENITAL WARTS)

What are they?

Condylomata (pronounced con-dil-ome-ata) are warts that grow on or around the genitals. They look very much like ordinary skin warts. Both are caused by similar viruses.

[REDACTED]

What are the signs and symptoms?

Genital warts appear from two weeks to eight months after contact with an infected partner.

They are fleshy, sometimes like a cauliflower, and grow on moist areas such as the penis, vagina or anus. They do not hurt. After oral sex, warts may appear around or in the mouth.

Some people may not have any visible signs of infection and may therefore unknowingly infect their partners.

What can they do to me?

If not treated, genital warts can be dangerous, particularly for women. There is a link between genital warts growing inside the vagina and cancer of the cervix. People with anal warts also have a greater chance of getting anal cancer. Children born to mothers with condylomata may develop warts in the throat.

How are they treated?

If you notice genital warts, you must see a doctor or go to a clinic. You will need to be checked for warts inside the vagina, anus or on the penis. The doctor will apply medication, or you may need surgery to remove internal warts.

[REDACTED]

VAGINITIS

[REDACTED]

Vaginitis is an inflammation of the vagina sometimes caused by germs transmitted while having sex.

What are the signs and symptoms?

Symptoms vary depending on the cause of the inflammation. They include:

- an abnormal, often foul-smelling, vaginal discharge
- itching or pain inside, or outside, the vagina
- redness and swelling on the outside of the vagina
- pain during sex or when urinating

What are the causes?

These include:

- **A yeast (or fungus) infection**

Yeast or fungi can grow in the vagina without causing problems. But an overgrowth can cause vaginitis.

Pregnancy, birth control pills, diabetes or antibiotics can sometimes cause yeast to overgrow.

[REDACTED]

If you have sex when you have a yeast infection, chances are your partner won't catch it. However, some men, usually those who are not circumcised, can get an itch and redness of the penis.

- **T (for *Trichomonas*) vaginalis**

This germ is not normally found in the vagina and is passed while having sex. Men often have no symptoms and can spread it without knowing they have it. Some men have a slight discharge from the penis and/or a burning sensation when urinating.

How is it treated?

Vaginitis is usually treated by creams or pills. If it is a sexually transmitted vaginitis, then your partner must be treated as well, even if he has no symptoms. If he is not treated, you may become infected again.

What else should I do?

Do not wear tight pants, panty hose or synthetic underwear (nylon, polyester, acrylics).

GENITAL HERPES

What is it?

Genital herpes is an **STD** that causes painful sores on and around the genitals. Members of the same virus family can cause fever blisters or cold sores on the mouth. Oral sex can spread the virus. After healing, the sores may reappear from time to time. There's no cure for genital herpes, but medication may shorten the attacks and make them less painful.

What are the signs and symptoms?

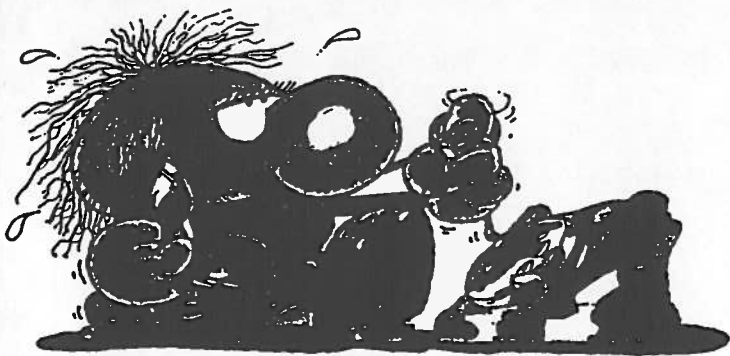
A tingling or itching in the genital area may be experienced a few days to one week after having sex. A cluster of tiny blisters soon appears. The blisters burst and leave painful sores, which can last from two to four weeks. A fever and headaches may be associated with the first attack.

Females may find herpes sores inside or around the vagina, near the anus, or on the thighs and buttocks. On males, sores can appear on the penis, around the testicles, near the anus, or on thighs and buttocks. Both males and females can get sores in the mouth after oral sex.

Many people never have repeat attacks, but those who do find they are usually less severe than the first one.

What can it do to me?

Herpes is not a serious problem for most people. It can be serious, however, in pregnancy. A mother can pass the virus on to her baby during or after childbirth, and the baby can become very sick. To prevent complications, if you are pregnant and you or your partner has had herpes, tell your doctor.



Can it spread?

Genital herpes is spread by direct contact with the open sores, usually during sex. If you touch herpes sores, wash your hands with soap and water to avoid spreading the disease to sensitive areas like your eyes.

Herpes is not spread by toilet seats, bathtubs, swimming pools or whirlpools.

It is possible to pass the virus on to your sex partners when symptoms are not present.

I think I've got Herpes.

What should I do?

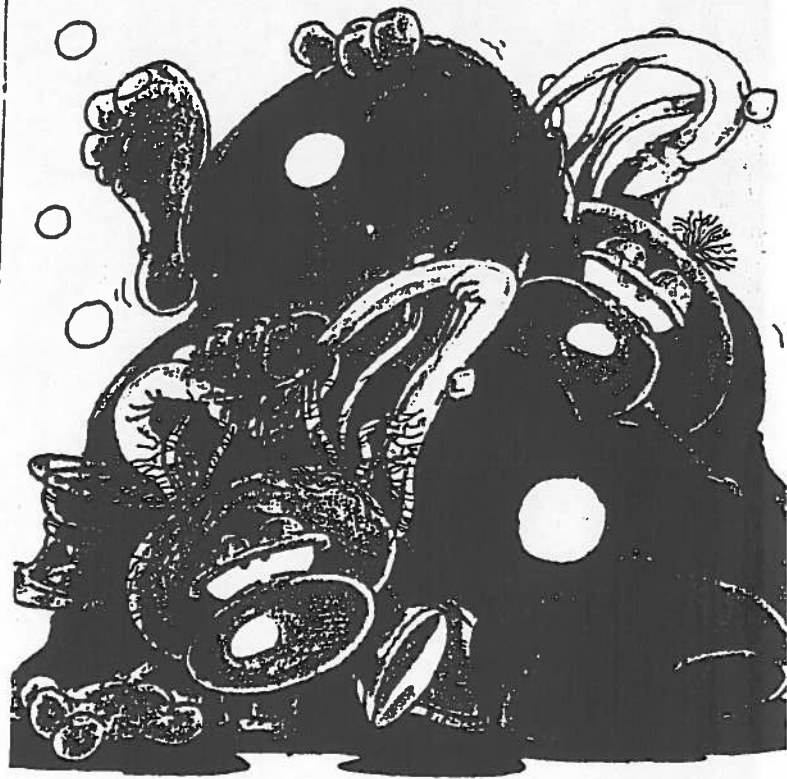
- Don't panic, but see a doctor.
- Keep the infected area clean and dry.
- Bathe quickly. Use a hair dryer instead of a towel to dry around the sores.
- Do not wear tight pants, panty hose or synthetic underwear (nylon, polyester, acrylics).

If urinating is painful, try to do so while bathing. Pouring warm water over the infected area may also help. Do not use medication unless it is given by your doctor or nurse.

CHLAMYDIA

What is it?

Chlamydia (pronounced cla-MID-ee-a) is a common STD and one of the more serious. It can spread in your body and cause sterility (inability to have children) in males and females. Mothers can pass the germ to their babies at childbirth; many of these babies will get infections of the eyes or lungs.



What are the signs and symptoms?

Symptoms usually appear from one to three weeks after sex with an infected person. Some people have chlamydia but have no signs or symptoms.

Signs to look for are:

in females

- a new or different discharge from the vagina
- a burning feeling when urinating
- a pain in the abdomen, sometimes with fever and chills
- a pain during sex

in males

- a watery or milky drip from the penis
- an itchy feeling inside the penis
- a burning feeling when urinating
- pain or swelling of the testicles

As with other **STD**, you can catch and spread chlamydia through anal as well as vaginal sex. Any symptoms may include pain, discharge and bleeding from the anus.

What can it do to me?

Most females with chlamydia have no symptoms. Infected males usually have symptoms, but some don't. If treated, chlamydia can be cured. If left untreated, it can cause serious problems, particularly for females. If you have chlamydia and do not get treatment, the following may happen:

in females

- development of chronic lower abdominal pain
- spread of the germ to the uterus (womb) and Fallopian tubes, possibly requiring hospitalization and later causing sterility
- tubal pregnancy (pregnancy in the Fallopian tubes), which can rupture and cause serious internal bleeding

in males

- sterility due to spread of the germ to the testicles

GONORRHEA

What is it?

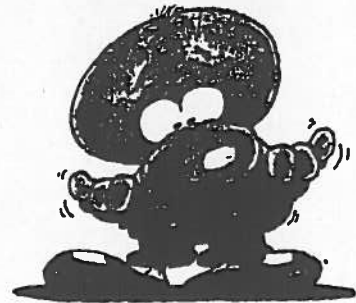
You've probably heard of "the clap" or "a dose" or "a drip." They are all names for gonorrhea, a common STD which, if not treated early, can cause serious problems, especially for women. As with chlamydia, a pregnant woman with gonorrhea can pass the germ on to her baby's eyes during birth, possibly causing serious eye infection. Gonorrhea is treated with antibiotics.

What are the signs and symptoms?

If you catch gonorrhea, you may not have noticed any symptoms. If you do, they will likely appear from three to five days after having sex. With or without symptoms, you can pass the germ on to others during sex. This is what to look for:

- a new or different discharge from the vagina
- a burning feeling when urinating
- pain in your abdomen, sometimes with fever and chills
- pain during sex

- a discharge from the penis, which may be thick, creamy and yellow-green in colour
 - a burning feeling when urinating
 - pain or swelling of the testicles
- You can get and spread gonorrhea through oral, anal and vaginal sex. Anal symptoms may include pain, discharge and bleeding from the anus.



What can it do to me?

Most females with gonorrhea have no symptoms. Infected males usually have symptoms but some don't. If treated, gonorrhea can be cured. Otherwise, you can have serious problems later, such as:

- chronic lower abdominal pain
- spread of the germ to the uterus and Fallopian tubes, possibly causing sterility

- tubal pregnancy (pregnancy in the Fallopian tubes), which can rupture and cause serious internal bleeding
- painful joints

in males

- sterility due to spread of the germ to the testicles
- painful joints

SYPHILIS

What is it?

Syphilis is a serious disease that can affect the entire body. You can have it without knowing it and pass it on to others. Pregnant women with syphilis can give it to their unborn child, sometimes causing birth defects and death. If you have no symptoms but have taken risks, you should see a doctor. Syphilis is treated with antibiotics.

What are the signs and symptoms?

Syphilis has three stages:

- **Stage One**

A painless sore may appear at the spot where the germ first enters the body - usually from nine to ninety days after sexual contact with an infected person. This sore may appear around or in the vagina, on the penis, or inside the mouth or anus. Sores inside the vagina or anus are often unnoticed and may disappear on their own if not treated, but the germ remains.

- **Stage Two**

From six weeks to six months after infection, flu-like symptoms may be experienced. Sometimes a rash appears on the palms of the hands and soles of the feet, as well as over the body generally. In the second stage, symptoms can go away on their own, but the germ remains in the body.

- **Stage Three**

Years later, if untreated, syphilis may cause serious health problems, such as heart disease, blindness, paralysis, brain damage, or death.

AIDS

What is it?

AIDS stands for Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome. Sound serious? It is. AIDS is caused by the HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) which attacks the body's immune system - your defence against infections. Without this protection, people with AIDS suffer from fatal infections and cancers.

How is it spread?

HIV is spread from an infected person to someone else when there is an exchange of semen, vaginal fluids or blood. This occurs during sexual intercourse, through the sharing of needles for injection or from an infected pregnant mother to her child, at or about the time of birth.

How is HIV not spread?

HIV is not passed by everyday social contact. Touching, hugging and shaking hands with an infected person is safe. Pets and biting insects, such as mosquitoes, do not spread HIV.

Some people think they may get HIV by donating blood. This is not so, as a new needle is used for every donor. You do not come into contact with anyone else's blood.

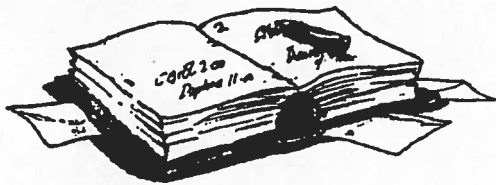
Donated blood is always screened for HIV; therefore, the risk of getting it from a blood transfusion is very, very low.

How can I tell if I have HIV infection?

There is a simple blood test that will tell you if you are infected with HIV. It's called the HIV antibody test. Your body reacts to the presence of the virus by producing antibodies. A test that discovers these antibodies indicates that you are infected.

A positive test result means that you have the antibodies and are infected with HIV. A negative test result means that no antibodies were found in your blood at the time of testing. However, HIV antibodies can take up to twelve weeks or longer to appear. In other words, you can test negative but actually have the virus.

AIDS is the last stage of HIV infection. Infected people may get attacks of an unusual and serious pneumonia, or develop skin or other cancers. But these are not necessarily due to the HIV. Only your doctor can find out!



How can I avoid HIV?

Short of avoiding sex entirely, you can protect yourself by having "safer sex." Stay with one partner with whom you have discussed AIDS and who is prepared to have "safer sex."

As in the case of hepatitis B, avoid using instruments that pierce the skin unless you are sure they have been sterilized. Personal items such as razors and toothbrushes may be blood-contaminated. Do not share them with an infected person.

Kissing an infected person on the cheek or with dry lips is not a known risk.





Is deep (French) kissing safe?

No cases of AIDS or of HIV infection due to kissing have ever been reported. Deep or "French kissing" is essentially a no-risk activity.

I think I may be infected with HIV or AIDS. What should I do?

See a doctor if you think you may be at risk or if you have symptoms. You may need to have a blood test. A positive result means that you have been exposed to the virus and could pass it on to others. It does not mean you have AIDS or that you will get it.

How is it treated?

There is no cure for HIV infection or AIDS; the virus remains in the body for life. Several drugs are being tried. One of these, AZT, arrests the progress of the HIV infection but is not a cure. There are other drugs to treat the infections and cancers which could develop.



What about sex partners?

If you have been exposed to HIV, then your sex partners and anyone with whom you have shared needles and syringes must be told that they too may have been exposed to the virus. After the infection has been explained to them, they will have to decide if they wish to be tested for HIV infection.

But who will tell them they may have been exposed?

You may wish to tell them yourself. If you are unable to do so, talk to your doctor or nurse. They can help.

For more information on HIV and AIDS, contact:

Federal Centre for AIDS
Health and Welfare Canada
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0L2