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Sexually transmitted diseases - The Price of Sexual Freedom

By Anne Wolski

In this modern era, sexual freedom is taken for granted and little is thought of promiscuity as it was in past generations. However, the reality is that this sexual freedom also carries with it the very real threat of sexually transmitted disease. Because not all sexually transmitted diseases are curable, it is essential to take steps to avoid them.

A sexually transmitted disease or STD is actually a combination of several different conditions that are all acquired through sexual intercourse. AIDS, a disease caused by the HIV virus, is the most serious of the sexually transmitted diseases and, despite some progress in recent years, is still incurable and is usually fatal.

Some of the other problematic STDs include syphilis, gonorrhea, genital herpes, and non specific urethritis. There are also a few other diseases such as pubic lice, genital warts, trichomoniasis, and monilia that are classed as STDs but are of a less serious nature.

The incidence of sexually transmitted diseases has increased over time and today there are more recorded cases than at any time in the past three decades. This is because people, especially young people, feel that the use of contraception allows more sexual freedom and has led to a change in the views of sexual behaviour. It is also a fact that this sexual freedom has led to people becoming sexually active at an increasingly younger age. However, not all contraception can stop the spread of infections caught during sexual intercourse.

Syphilis

One of the most serious STDs is syphilis which is highly infectious and, if it remains untreated, can result in death. Even if it is not fatal, the probability of disability is high.

Not only can the syphilis bacteria be contracted during sexual intercourse, but it can also be passed to the unborn child of an infected mother. The baby is then born with a condition known as congenital syphilis. This is quite uncommon in this era as all pregnant women undergo routine blood testing.

The incubation period for syphilis varies. The first symptoms can also vary, thus making early

diagnosis difficult. Usually, the first symptom is a painless ulcer around the genital area, the anus, or the mouth. Because this ulcer heals without any medical intervention, the person doesn't normally do anything about it, thinking that it is nothing important.

If this disease is not treated early, it is likely to result in death. It is therefore essential that, if a person believes he or she may have been in contact with an infected person, that medical advice is obtained immediately.

Gonorrhea

Another serious and very common disease contracted by sexual intercourse is gonorrhea. Often, the female is unaware that she is infected because around eighty percent have no symptoms. Other women suffer from dysuria (pain while urinating) or from lower abdominal pain. This is because it involves the fallopian tubes and can therefore lead to sterility.

The disease is more obvious for the male, resulting in dysuria followed by a discharge from the penis. This occurs within a week of contracting the infection. Gonorrhea in the male is usually confirmed by laboratory testing of the discharge.

A dose of penicillin is the normal treatment for gonorrhea in both male and female sufferers. It is also vital that the person abstain from alcohol and from sexual intercourse for a period of several weeks. Although the treatment relieves the symptoms quickly, it is essential that the person continues to have medical maintenance to ensure that the cure is complete. A responsible person should inform any sexual partners of their infection so that they may be examined and treated if necessary.

NSU

The most common sexually transmitted disease is nonspecific urethritis or NSU which continues to increase at an remarkable rate. Many cases of NSU are caused by the Chlamydia germ but not all. NSU is an inflammation of the urethra and has no identifiable cause.

The primary symptom is a discharge from the penis. This may be nothing more than moistness at the tip of the penis but this can vary. The discharge is different to the discharge in gonorrhea and makes it easier to recognize. There is also pain on urinating.

Genital herpes

Genital herpes, another sexually transmitted disease, has reached epidemic proportions in the Western world. This is because the herpes virus cannot be cured and so, once infected, the person carries the germ permanently. Thus, any person infected adds to the population of carriers.

There are two herpes viruses. The first one, HSV 1, is normally found around the mouth and is known as cold sores. The second one, HSV 2, is an infection passed by sexual contact and is normally found in the genital area and the anus, as well as on the bladder, the buttocks, the thighs and the legs of both male and female sufferers.

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After the first attack the virus lies dormant in the body. It will then recur time and time again, usually in the same place, appearing as a painful blister. When any of these blisters are open, the carrier is extremely infectious. Usually, the attacks are linked to emotional or physical lows such as depression, stress, or injury.

Genital herpes causes pain and distress to an adult but is not fatal. However, if the herpes virus is passed to an infant during its journey down the birth canal of an infected mother, it is often fatal. It is important for the mother to inform the medical professionals so that they can monitor her pregnancy and possibly advise her to have the baby by cesarean section.

Genital herpes cannot be cured but there are ways of making the attacks more bearable. By keeping the affected area clean and dry, the carrier can ward off secondary infections. Pain can be kept to a minimum by the application of cold compresses and also by taking salt baths.

Female sufferers need to have a pap smear annually as genital herpes has been linked to cervical cancer.

In women, vaginal discharge may constitute reasons for concern. However, if the discharge is clear, it

is unlikely to be the result of disease. If the discharge is offensive and discolored and causes irritation to the vagina and vulva, it would suggest the presence of infection which may need to be investigated. It is essential that this is not allowed to continue and medical advice should be sought as soon as possible, especially if this is accompanied by abdominal pain and fever as it may be an indication of a sexually transmitted disease.

Prevention

Obviously, the best way to avoid sexually transmitted diseases is by abstinence or monogamy. However, if considering sex with a new partner, it would be wise to use a condom until you are sure about the person. If you are worried, cleaning the genital area thoroughly with soap and water after intercourse will kill many of the bacteria. This is true for both males and females.

It is extremely dangerous to apply antiseptic lotions to the genital area and particularly to pour strong antiseptic into the urethra or vagina as it can cause serious and permanent internal damage.

If you believe there is any possibility that you may have an STD, do not hesitate to seek medical attention. Everything that happens is confidential and no information is given to anyone without your permission.

Remember that the staff are there to help you, not to judge you, and the atmosphere is usually very friendly and helpful.

Anne Wolski has worked in the health and welfare industry for more than 30 years. She is a co-director of

<http://www.magnetic-health-online.com>

and

<http://www.betterhealthshoppe.com>

which are both

information portals with many interesting medical articles. She is also an associate of

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which features many articles on internet marketing and resources.

Mum – I Have STD

By Ciara McGrath

STD, sexually transmitted diseases have been called the 21st century plague.

Sexually transmitted disease includes well-known diseases like gonorrhea and syphilis, but also genital warts, genital herpes and chlamydia.

The stigma of what used to be called venereal diseases has largely gone, partly because everyone knows someone who has had to visit the STD clinic. Nice girls catch STDs, too.

STDs are transmitted by sexual contact. The more people you have sexual contact with, the greater your chance of having sex with someone who has STD and the greater the chance that you will be infected too. You can catch STD if the first person you have sexual intercourse with is infected, so it is not necessarily a sign of sexual license. Check out

<http://www.std-testing.info>

for more information.

Most sexually transmitted diseases respond to treatment if caught in the early stages. Some, like syphilis and gonorrhea respond to antibiotics. Genital warts may need to be frozen off with liquid nitrogen. Not all hepatitis infections are treatable.

Many of these diseases have no symptoms. Gonorrhea may cause painful urination in males, but no immediate symptoms in females. Chlamydia has no immediate symptoms in males or females, yet if left untreated will cause infertility and pelvic inflammatory disease in females.

Because of the lack of symptoms, it is advisable for any adult who is sexually active to be tested for STDs. The consequences of a night of passion could be life-long and result in insanity or death at an

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early age if STDs are not detected and treated.

Diagnosis is simple; a swab is taken and sent for analysis. If the laboratory finds a positive result you will be asked back for treatment. If the result is positive you may be asked for a list of sexual contacts, or be asked to contact anyone you have had sexual relations with, so those people can also be treated.

AIDS/HIV is the sexually transmitted disease that everyone is aware of, but many people forget the older and more common diseases that also kill. Condoms help reduce the risk of STD transmission; they do not remove the risk entirely.

Ciara McGrath is a full time mother to four teenage daughters between 13 and 19, including 17 year old twins. For more information for parents of teenagers check out

<http://www.abortion-help-now.info>

or

<http://www.hiv-aids-testing.info>



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