

# SAFE SEX

## *How To Lessen The Risk Of STDs*



Safe sex used to mean using a birth control method to prevent pregnancy. Today it has a totally different meaning. You can minimize your risk of catching and spreading sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) by knowing the facts and taking steps to protect yourself.

### **What Are STDs?**

Sexually transmitted diseases are those which can be caught and passed on to others through sexual contact. Some of these diseases, such as herpes and AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) are currently incurable. Some others, such as gonorrhea and syphilis, are curable if both partners are treated promptly with antibiotics.

### **How Do You Know If You Have An STD?**

Some STDs such as active herpes or genital warts can be seen on physical inspection. But many times, symptoms are not visible.

There are STDs which cause symptoms in women but not in men, such as trichomoniasis or certain yeast infections. Other infections, such as chlamydia, may not show any symptoms for months.

If you think you might have been exposed to an STD, or if you have any active symptoms of one, such as genital itching, discharge or a burning sensation while urinating, see your physician for diagnosis and treatment.

### **Does Your Partner Have An STD?**

When you first meet someone, it's impossible to be certain if your partner is free of STDs. In general, it's best to rely on safe sex techniques to minimize the risk of STDs rather than to rely on the reports of a partner.

### **What Is The Safest Sex?**

Although safe sex has come to mean protected sex and low-risk sex practices, the only risk-proof sex is none at all. Celibacy is the safest sex practice.

### **How Can I Prevent STDs?**

To minimize your chances of contracting an STD, explore other types of intimacy and tenderness such as massage or mutual masturbation. Genital contact can be made safer by avoiding sex practices which can cause even minor tearing of the vagina or anus. Also avoid unprotected intercourse, oral sex without condoms (on men) or without rubber dams (on women), and any oral anal contact.

Men should use latex (not lambskin) condoms. Any lubricant should be water-based (such as K-Y jelly), not oil-based (such as Vaseline or baby oil). Oil-based lubricants can damage latex. Or use condoms treated with a spermicide containing nonoxynol-9, which kills the AIDS virus.