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EDUCATION



Prevention of STIs

Using condoms for vaginal or anal sex is the most effective preventive method. Practice safer sex and have regular check-ups to protect you and your partner. Practicing safer sex every time can help you avoid sexually transmitted infections and some of the complications they can cause if left untreated.

Some common STI's and their Signs and Symptoms

There are many infections that both men and women can get in their genital area. Germs that live in or on a person's genitals cause these diseases. These germs can be passed from one person to another during sex.

Here are some common symptoms of genital infections:

- Unusual discharge from the penis or vagina. (This may be a fluid or mucus that is bloody, looks cloudy or smells bad)
- sores
- itching
- painful intercourse
- frequent or painful urination

Even if you don't have any of these symptoms you could still have an infection. Even infections that have no symptoms can cause damage and may affect your ability to have children. Some of the symptoms of STI's can be quite embarrassing and a person may feel shy and shamed to go and see help, let alone tell their partner. S'dumo felt the pain, saw the signs and overcame his shame and after confiding in his father told his sexual partners about his STI.

You should let your sexual partners know so that they also act quickly to go to the clinic and get treatment.

We'll discuss four sexually transmitted diseases although there are many more. Make it a point to find out as much as you can about them so that you know the symptoms.

Chlamydia

Chlamydia is a very common STI that affects both men and women even though the majority of people infected do not have symptoms. Chlamydia can affect the urethra (urine passage in the penis),

cervix, rectum, throat and eyes. Chlamydia is most often transmitted through unprotected vaginal and anal sex.

How would I know if I have Chlamydia?

Symptoms may appear between seven to 21 days after infection, but are often mild or absent. Symptoms may include a discharge from the penis, pain when passing urine, abnormal vaginal bleeding, pelvic pain or pain during sex.

How do you test for Chlamydia?

Chlamydia can be detected by a swab collected from the cervix, urethra or anus or by a urine sample. It is important not to pass urine for a minimum of two hours prior to having this test.

Genital warts

Genital warts are caused by a virus (human papilloma virus – HPV) which is transmitted directly from skin to skin during sexual with an infected person.

How would you know if you had genital warts?

You may notice lumps on the genitals which start as tiny swellings and sometimes develop into ‘cauliflower-like’ lumps. Others are flatter and more difficult to see. They are often painless. Some women may have warts inside the vagina or on the cervix and be unaware of them. The first signs of genital warts may not show up until months after the infection.

In men, the warts are generally on the penis and are usually more obvious. In both sexes, warts can also appear in and around the anus.

How do you test for genital warts?

Genital warts are detected by careful examination of the genital skin in both men and women. A pap smear can also detect the virus that causes genital warts if it is on the cervix of women.

What is the treatment for genital warts?

Warts can be removed by freezing, burning, laser or by applying liquid wart paints or creams. There is a chance that if the warts are not treated that they may spontaneously resolve, but they may also multiply.

HIV and AIDS?

HIV (Human immunodeficiency virus) is a virus that causes damage to the body’s immune system. AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome) is a later form of infection with HIV.

AIDS conditions (serious infections or cancers indicating a damaged immune system) occur on average, about 10 years after becoming infected with HIV. However, the time taken to develop AIDS may range from between 1 and 20 years or more.

How does someone get infected with HIV?

HIV is commonly transmitted by:

- vaginal intercourse without a condom (man to woman and woman to man)
- anal sex without a condom (both partners are at risk – man to woman or man to man)
- sharing drug injecting equipment
- an infected mother to her baby during pregnancy, at birth or by breastfeeding

HIV has not been reported as being transmitted by: kissing, cuddling, shaking hands, sharing cutlery, cups & glasses, toilet seats or mosquito bites.

How do you test for HIV?

HIV is tested through conducting a blood test. In our day results are available to you immediately. It may take up to three months for HIV to register on a blood test after someone has been infected so the blood test should be performed after this three month window period.

How is it treated?

New anti-viral drugs have been developed that are helping people with AIDS live longer. The new single dose drug is a combination of three drugs; Tenofovir, Efavirenz and Emtricitabine. This means that patients will take one pill a day instead of the current dose of three tablets three times a day.

Although these drugs help control the virus they also have side effects that can interfere with a person's life and wellbeing.

It is also important for HIV positive people to have any other opportunistic infections treated promptly.

- *Throughout the talk show make the link to the TV drama episode synopsis and what audiences saw on their screens on Tuesday night.*
- *Advertise that the repeat of Intersexions can be watched on www.intersexions.co.za*

The video will only be displayed for 7 days.

- *Refer to Resources for people who may need help and information about STIs:*

www.safersex.co.za E-mail: disa@icon.co.za Tel: 011 787 1222 / 886 2286

Brothers for life: Website: www.brothersforlife.org Telephone: 012 366 9300 Email: joinbrothers@jhuccp.co.za

AIDS HELPLINE: 0800 012 322

Provincial Department of Health: [insert the relevant provincial contact details here]