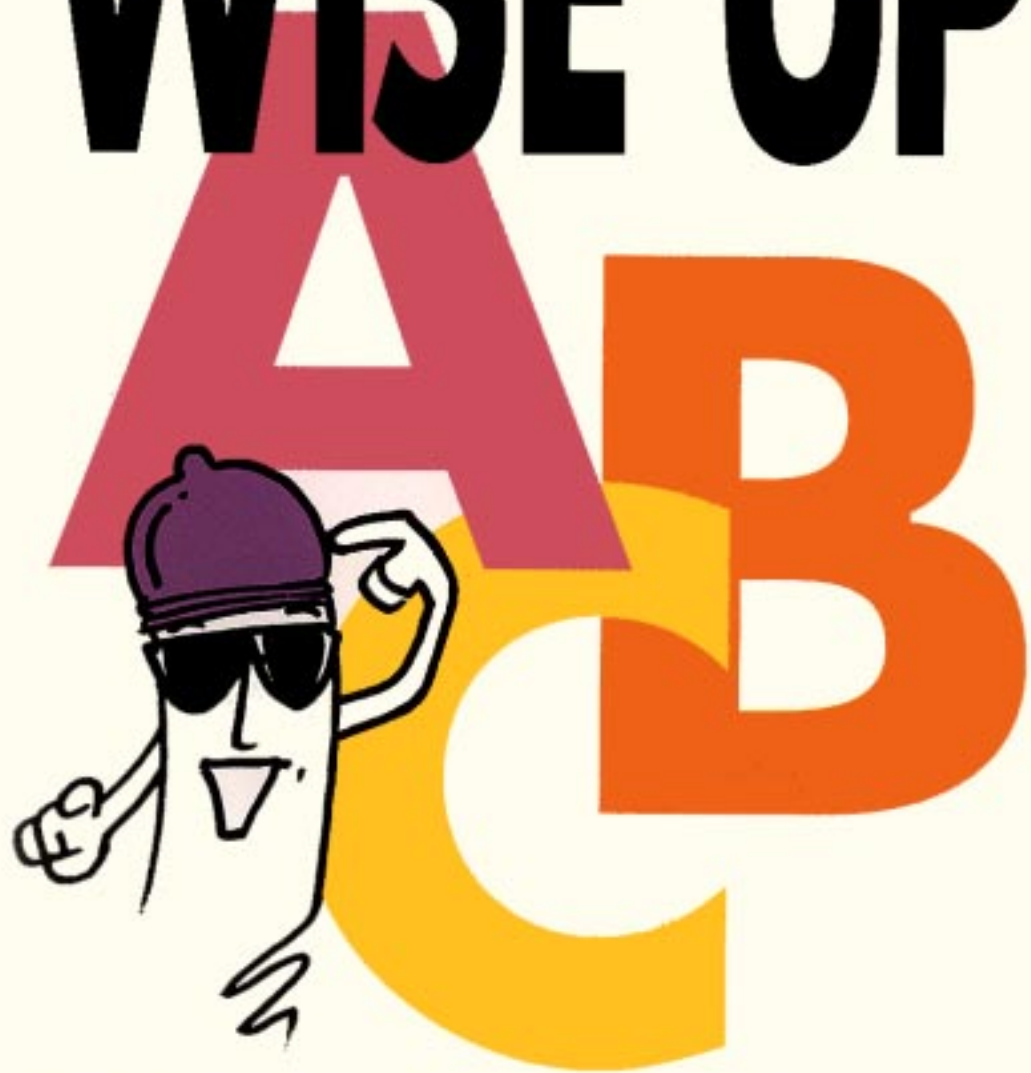


**WISE UP**



**TO THE ABCs OF STDs**

# What Are STDs?



STDs or Sexually Transmitted Diseases are diseases caused by STD germs. This happens during close sexual activity, mainly:

- penetrative or oral sex – that is, any sexual activity that allows the transfer of body fluids like semen, vaginal fluid or blood,
- contact with sexual organs that are infected with STD germs.

STD germs need to live in warm, moist areas. This is why they infect the sex organs, rectum and at times, the mouth.



## How Serious Are STDs?

If left untreated, STDs can cause damage to sexual organs, the brain and heart, sterility, infertility, even death. A mother with an STD can pass it to her baby during childbirth. So, contrary to common belief, STDs ARE NOT minor diseases.

# Could You Be At Risk?



You could be if....



you have sex with a casual partner or someone whose health status you're unsure of.



you have sex with several partners.



your partner is practising risky behaviour that may put him or her, and in turn you, at risk.

AND IF, WITH ALL THE ABOVE SITUATIONS, YOU DON'T USE CONDOMS.



**“So WISE UP  
and learn all  
about the  
ABCs of STDs!”**



# SIGNS and SYMPTOMS

## To Watch Out For

Most STDs are curable. Sometimes STDs are symptomless. Other times symptoms go away on their own. Whichever the case, you still have to seek treatment.

### ULCERS

Painful and itchy sores that appear on and around the sex organs could be herpes or chancroid. Painless ulcers could be syphilis.

### GROWTHS

Flat or cauliflower shaped growths that grow on or around sex organs or the throat may be genital warts.

### ITCHING

In men and women, itching in and around sex organs or mouth could be herpes or other STDs. In women, it may be vaginitis.

### BURNING SENSATION

It may be an STD like gonorrhea, chlamydia or vaginitis. However, it could be just a bladder infection. Either way, you need to get medical care.





## DISCHARGE

In men, a white or clear, often thick discharge from the penis may be a sign of gonorrhea, chlamydia or other STDs. If infected through anal sex, discharge may also appear at the rectum.

In women, an unusual discharge usually accompanied by itching, burning or odor may be signs of gonorrhea, chlamydia or vaginitis.



## ABDOMINAL PAIN

Cramps and pain in the lower abdomen or stomach may be a complication of chlamydia, or vaginitis.



## NO SYMPTOMS

Symptoms for some STDs may take approximately three months to appear. In women especially, signs of infection inside the vagina or cervix may not even be felt, let alone, seen.



# SOME OF THE MORE COMMON STDs

## URETHRITIS

An infection of the lower urinary tract, there are two types of Urethritis:

### Gonorrhea and Non Specific Urethritis (NSU)

that affects people the most, Chlamydia, can remain symptomless for some time – especially in women. For both types of urethritis, complications may cause sterility in men and infertility in women. Women may experience an infection of the entire reproductive system. Chlamydia can be passed from a woman to her child during birth, causing eye infections or pneumonia. In up to 70% of urethritis cases, a gonorrhea infection is almost always followed by an NSU infection. If you are diagnosed with gonorrhea, it's best to get tested for NSU infection as well.

### Treatment

Both gonorrhea and NSU are caused by bacteria. Treatment involves either an injection or course of antibiotics.

## GENITAL HERPES

Caused by a virus that attacks the skin and resulting in painful ulcers. These break into sores which heal over 1-2 weeks. Even though the sores go away, there may be further attacks at a later date. A pregnant woman with sores in her vagina can pass the virus to her child during childbirth.

### Treatment

As yet, there's no treatment to cure herpes infection. However, the doctor may prescribe anti-viral cream which helps treat the sores. Keep sores clean and dry at all times. Refrain from sexual activities during an ulcer flare-up.





# SYPHILIS

Caused by a bacteria. Syphilis sores may disappear even without treatment. But if left untreated, syphilis can cause heart/brain damage, even death. It can also be passed from a pregnant mother to her child.

Because of its chronic nature, it is important to ascertain whether or not any sores are indeed syphilis. This can be done through a smear and simple blood tests.

## Treatment

In the early stages, syphilis can be cured with penicillin or other antibiotics.



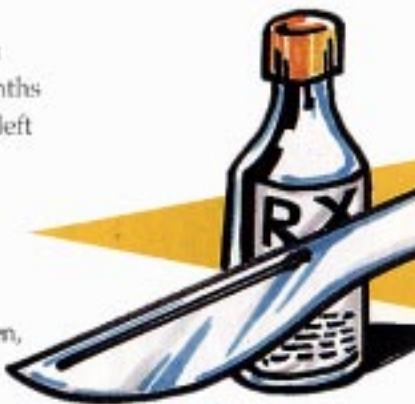
# GENITAL WARTS

Caused by a virus, producing warts which appear in a cauliflower-like shape on the skin. They may take months to develop after the infection has actually occurred. If left untreated, it can cause cancerous conditions.

## Treatment

Warts can be removed, but the virus may still exist to produce further warts.

Warts can either be treated with certain chemicals, frozen, or cauterized or sometimes surgically removed.

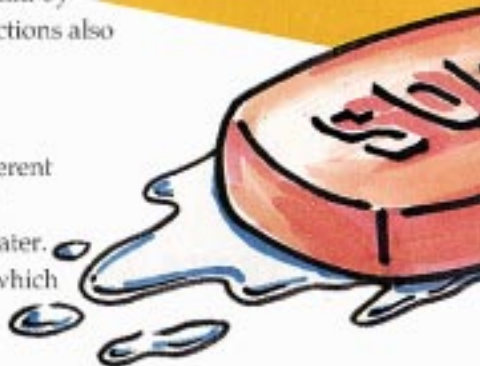


# VAGINITIS

A group of diseases that cause vaginal infection in women. However, the germs can also be carried and spread by men. Some forms of vaginitis, such as yeast infections also occur in women who are not sexually active.

## Treatment

Different forms of vaginitis are treated with different medication. It is possible to prevent vaginitis by washing the vaginal area daily with soap and water. Cotton underwear provides better circulation, which discourages infections.



# WHEN SHOULD YOU SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION?



- If you feel you've engaged in sexual behaviour that may put you at risk for STDs.
- Immediately when you recognise any symptoms or anything unusual on/ around your sexual organs.
- If your partner has been diagnosed with an STD.

**REMEMBER IT IS DANGEROUS TO SELF-DIAGNOSE AND SELF-TREAT!**

## HOW DO YOU KNOW FOR SURE IF YOU'RE INFECTED?

Go for a medical check-up. This may involve tests such as:

- Smears. In the case of women, this involves a painless, internal vaginal examination. For men, a simpler test where samples are taken from the urethra or ulcers.
- Culture or laboratory tests.
- Blood tests.



**THESE TESTS MAY NEED TO BE REPEATED.**



# WITHOUT EARLY TREATMENT, YOU RISK FACING SERIOUS COMPLICATIONS.



See your doctor – don't self-diagnose. Often, you may be infected with more than one STD at the same time. Or you may develop another STD even after you're cured of the previous one. So, one STD medication may not be effective for the combination of STDs that you may be infected with.

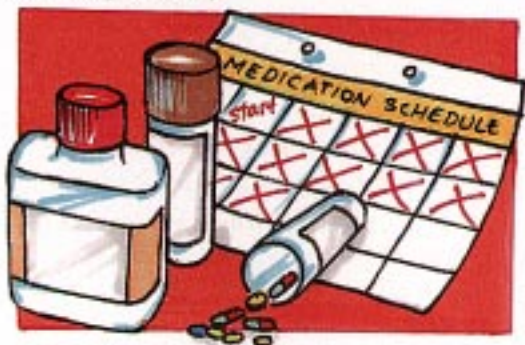
Tell your partner to get treatment. If you're infected, you can infect your partner through sex. So, abstain from sex until you are fully recovered - or use condoms!



Even if you feel better, the STD germs may still be in your body.



Take all your medication.



Go back to your doctor for follow-up a week after finishing your medication to make sure you've fully recovered.



# PRACTISE PREVENTION

**ALL STDs CAN BE PREVENTED - SIMPLY WISE UP  
AND PRACTISE A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE!**

That means - don't forget the ABCs of STDs!

## **A**bstinence

No sex, the best protection!  
You'll have virtually no risk  
of getting STDs\*



## **B**e faithful

If you and your partner have sex  
only with each other, you're at a  
low risk of infection - unless you or  
your partner have been infected  
through other means.\* The more  
often you change partners, the  
greater the risk.

## **C**ondoms

If used correctly, every time you  
have sex, condoms can effectively  
protect you against STDs.



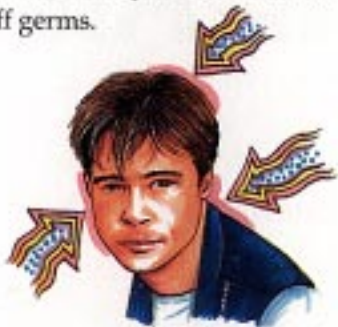
\*STDs can also be transmitted through the transfer of body fluids like blood, this can occur when dadah users share needles.

# IS AIDS AN STD?

Yes – because AIDS can be spread through sex. AIDS is the deadliest STD of them all. As yet there's no cure or vaccine. A person with AIDS will eventually die.

AIDS is a condition that develops amongst people infected by the AIDS virus, HIV. HIV destroys the body's natural ability to fight off germs.

A person may be unaware of being infected because HIV infection can remain symptomless for months, even years. They can look perfectly healthy and unknowingly, pass HIV on to others.



When the immune system breaks down completely, an infected person becomes vulnerable to rare cancers and infections which would normally be harmless. For someone with AIDS, normal, harmless infections become life-threatening.



## WHAT IS THE TEST FOR HIV INFECTION?

This involves a special blood test called the HIV Antibody Test which is available at any clinic or hospital. Make sure the facility you choose offers counselling before and after the test.





# HOW DO YOU CATCH THE AIDS VIRUS?

There are only 3 ways:

**1** By having sexual intercourse with an infected person.

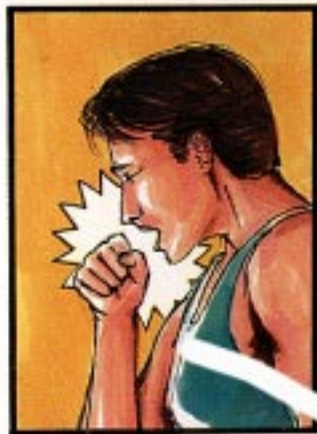
**2** From infected blood, as happens when dadah-users share needles or syringes, or blood products,

**3** From an infected pregnant mother to her child, where infection happens in the womb or at childbirth.

## SIGNS & SYMPTOMS FOR AIDS:



Night sweats, swollen glands in the neck, groin and armpits, unexplained sudden loss of weight, persistent fever/diarrhoea, whitish coat on tongue and mouth, persistent dry cough.



# WHY DO STDs PUT YOU AT RISK FOR AIDS?

Having an STD increases the chance of HIV transmission by as much as 100 times. It is easier for HIV to enter the body when a person has open sores on his/her sexual organs or discharges caused by another STD. So, prevention or early treatment of STDs can help reduce the risk of HIV infection.

**IF YOU DON'T PRACTICE SAFER SEX, YOU COULD BE AT RISK! SO REMEMBER YOUR ABCs, WITH AIDS IT COULD SAVE YOUR LIFE!**

**A**bstinence      **B**e faithful      **C**ondoms

## HOW CONDOMS PROTECT YOU AGAINST AIDS/STDs.

Latex (rubber) condoms act as a wall which stops fluids like blood, semen and vaginal secretions from entering your body. Never use condoms that break or have holes in them. When used correctly and every time you have sex, condoms can effectively protect you from AIDS and other STDs. Make sure you choose condoms that conform to international standards for maximum protection.

# HOW TO USE CONDOMS



- Don't use a condom if it has gone beyond its expiry (use-by) date.
- Put the condom on the penis when it is erect. Pinch the nipple end of the condom and continue pinching while you roll the condom over the penis as far as it will go. (This will expel air bubbles that can make condoms break.)
- After the man ejaculates, he should hold firm the rim of the condom so that no semen spills – and withdraw from his partner. Never re-use condoms.
- Dispose of condoms hygienically.

Keep condoms in a cool, dry place. If using lubricants make sure you use those which are water-based. Oil-based lubricants like moisturizing cream or baby oil can cause condoms to break.



For additional protection you may also want to choose condoms which contain a spermicide like Nonoxynol 9.

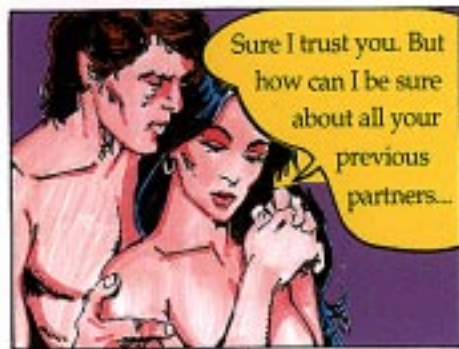




Anything new takes a little getting used to. It's better wearing a condom instead of worrying about AIDS and STDs - anytime! It doesn't just protect you, it also protects the one you love!

## TALKING ABOUT CONDOM-USE...

Talking with your partner about using condoms doesn't mean that you don't trust him or her. Your partner may be just as concerned as you are... or may not know about AIDS or STDs. Talk about it.



Remember, its never too late to practise safer sex.

# SO WISE UP!

Practise the ABCs of STDs.



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