

Is Sex Safe?

There is a lot of talk going around about safe sex, and many people have varying opinions about it. Some will tell you to save sex for your long-term relationships, to limit your number of sexual partners, to get tested and treated regularly, or to use a condom. *Ultimately, you are responsible for your health with the choices you make!*

Truthfully, the only sure way to avoid STD/STIs and practice safe sex is not to have sex until you are in a mutually monogamous, exclusive relationship such as marriage.¹

This means choosing not to have vaginal, oral, or anal sex.¹

Pam Stenzel mentioned that in “the CDC’s latest stats that we have from 2019, there are 22.5 million new infections with STD/STIs in this country.” And the CDC reported that combined cases of syphilis, gonorrhea, and chlamydia reached an all-time high in the United States in 2018!² Those are only the *reported* cases. Since many STD/STIs are asymptomatic (don’t present symptoms) or people ignore the symptoms or are uncomfortable talking to their doctors about them, there are potentially many, many unreported cases!

If you’re in high school, one in four of the students at your high school is infected!³

Most Common STD/STI in the United States

The most common STD/STI is **human papillomavirus**, or HPV. The street name for human papillomavirus, or HPV, is genital warts. Genital warts need to be burned off periodically either through laser surgery or chemicals.⁴ HPV is one of the primary, if not 100 percent of the time, cause of cervical cancer.

What does this mean to you? Pam says, “So, what they’re now saying is there’s no way anyone under 22 can have sex with someone who is not in fact a virgin and not get an STD/STI!” There is not a condom in the world that can completely protect you from HPV. Why? *Because condoms cannot cover all infected areas on the skin.*

What Are Your Boundaries?

What are your boundaries for protecting yourself from getting an STI? Oral sex only? *No, because STD/STIs can be spread through oral sex.* Condoms? *No, because condoms can fail and can only protect the area they cover.* Anal sex? *No, because STD/STIs can be spread through anal sex.*

Then what? Here is the boundary—*absolutely no genital contact of any kind.*

That means NO:

1. Hand to genital
2. Genital to genital
3. Mouth to genital

***The only safe sex is a safe partner,
and saying no to sex
WON'T HURT YOU!***

A word cloud of sexually transmitted infections and diseases. The words are arranged in a roughly rectangular shape. The most prominent words are 'sexually transmitted diseases' at the bottom, 'STIs' in the middle, and 'gonorrhea' and 'bacterial' on the left. Other words include 'syphilis', 'hepatitis', 'HIV', 'STDs', 'HPV', 'Trich', 'viral', 'human papilloma', 'diseases', 'gonor-', 'bacterial', 'vaginosis (BV)', 'chlamydia', and 'infections'.

Sources:
1. “The Lowdown on How to Prevent Stds.” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, www.cdc.gov/std/prevention/lowdown/.
2. “Record High Stds Threaten Millions of Americans Std Prevention ...” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019, www.cdc.gov/nchhstp/newsroom/docs/factsheets/std-trends-508.pdf.
3. “11 Facts about Teen Pregnancy.” DoSomething.org, Do Something.org, 2015, www.dosomething.org/us/facts/11-facts-about-teen-pregnancy. Accessed March 10, 2015
4. Mayo Clinic Staff. “Genital Warts.” Mayo Clinic, Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research, 14 Jan. 2022, www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/genital-warts/diagnosis-treatment/drc-20355240.