

Health Tidbits

Data from a national study suggests that about one in four U.S. females between the ages of 14 and 59 years may have the sexually transmitted infection human papillomavirus (HPV), according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). HPV is estimated to be the most common sexually transmitted infection in the U.S. High-risk HPV types can cause cervical, anal, and other genital cancers, as well as genital warts. Nearly 3/4 of new HPV infections occur among 15-24 year-olds. While most HPV infections don't cause any symptoms and go away on their own, between three and six percent of the infections can lead to genital warts or to precancerous abnormal cell changes that can lead to cervical cancer. A highly effective vaccine against four of the types of HPV was licensed in June 2006. The vaccine is safe and effective for females 9 to 26 years old, regardless of their sexual history. It is most effective if given before the onset of sexual activity. However, females who are sexually active also may benefit from the vaccine. The four major types of HPV are responsible for 90% of genital warts and 70% of cervical cancers. The vaccine is given as a three-dose series with the second dose given two months after dose one and the third dose given six months after dose one. Females don't need a Pap test or screening prior to starting the vaccine, but should continue such testing per the usual schedule after vaccination.

Looking for more information?
Click on HPV..

HPV

Check out the women's health program on February 26th or 27th in alum hall from 7 p.m. to about 8:30 p.m. Discuss some "Sex in the City" clips and hear from a health professional.

How's Your Sexual Health IQ?

Sexuality is a natural and healthy part of living, a core component of personality. We are born with the need for touch, nurturing, warmth and love and meet these needs in part through our sexuality and sexual experiences. But, we are not born knowing and understanding everything about sexuality and sexual behavior. We need to learn about it. Throughout our lives, we seek and experience different dimension of sexuality—biological, social, psychological, spiritual, cultural, etc. Parents, family, peers, schools, religion, and the media influence the messages we receive about sexuality at all stages of life. We develop our values about sexuality as part of becoming an adult. We explore our sexuality as a natural process of achieving sexual maturity. Then, why is it we have such a hard time talking about sex and sexual health? I believe part of it is that we see our sexual selves as very personal, not for public discussion or display. And, the differences in values and mores surrounding sex and sexual practice make it a difficult subject to broach for many people. The problem with both of those points is they contribute to ignorance. We become embarrassed to ask questions, to seek information that would help us understand our sexual selves and make choices that pro-

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mote sexual health. We pretend we know more than we do, have more experience than we do, and understand the consequences (both positive and negative) more than we do. So, what do we need to know and do to become or remain sexually healthy and sexually responsible? Responsible sexual behavior includes the ability to understand and weigh the risks, responsibilities, outcomes and impacts of sexual actions and to practice abstinence when appropriate. Sexual responsibility begins with values, communication and knowledge.

Some tips:

- Know and understand what your own sexual values are. Consider your values and goals in your decision making process.
- Make sexual health a priority. Whether you are having sex or not, both men and women need to have regular check-ups to make sure they are sexually healthy.
- Understand what is involved in a healthy relationship.
- Know the risks involved with a sexual relationship. Understand what you can do to reduce risks.
- Understand and respect sexual boundaries.
- Understand STD/STI's—what they are, how to prevent them, and what to do if you are at risk for them.
- Respect everyone's right

to make his/her own personal decision regarding sexual activity. There is no imaginary "deadline", no ideal age, and no perfect point in a relationship where sex has to happen. It is everyone's ultimate right to decide when and how they have sex—be it the first time or the tenth time.

- Communication is key—for making choices about sexual activity, for consent, for discussing protection if you and your partner have made a choice to be sexually active.
- Protection is essential. While sexual activity always involves some risk of pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases, there are ways of making your sexual experiences safer.
- Don't let the "heat of the moment" make the decisions for you.
- Understand what abstinence is. (conscious decision to not engage in oral, vaginal, or anal sex)
- **ABSTINENCE IS THE ONLY WAY TO BE 100% PROTECTED.**



Be informed and visit CSB/SJU Counseling & Health

Promotion online:

<http://www.csbsju.edu/chp/>

Ingredients of a Healthy Relationship

Respect

A healthy partnership means learning about the other person and valuing what is important to them. A person who respects a partner listens to what they have to say. If they disagree with each other, they try to understand the other's point of view. Respect reflects the value, validation and the worth of another person.

Honesty

Presenting the genuine you is what it means to be honest in a relationship. Deceit and manipulation aren't cornerstones for a strong relationship. Honesty is difficult and scary at times, especially without the presence of trust.

Trust

Trust is something that typically "needs to be earned over time and in a number of experiences." Trust is about having the feeling that you can count on someone, that the person will be there for you. You believe in them and you believe in their feelings for you.

Communication

Communication is how we show our honesty, our respect, our trust. Listening to others and really "hearing them" so we respond and follow through on what they are requesting is a sign of a strong relationship. But, with good communication we also have the responsibility of letting the other person know what we think, wish and need.

In a healthy relationship:

- Both partners have the motivation and support of the other to work on aspects of their lives that they want to improve.
- Partners give themselves time to get to know one another, to develop a friendship, to gain respect and trust.
- Decisions are made when both partners are thinking clearly and not under the influence of alcohol or other drugs.
- Both partners understand and believe they each are valuable, worthy of respect and deserving of love.
- Both partners understand that neither can always live up to the other's expectations.
- Sex would be guilt free. If either of you is feeling uncomfortable, wait.
- Sex would be something you can talk about. If you can't talk about sex, you're not ready for it. Issues such as protecting each other, likes and dislikes, and what makes each feel comfortable need to be discussed.
- Sex happens at a time that can build intimacy and deepen a relationship rather than preventing intimacy.

STI's/STD's

Sexually transmitted infections/diseases (STI's/STD's) are infections passed from one person to another during sexual activity. They can be serious, painful, and may have long term effects, especially if left undetected and untreated. They infect your sexual and reproductive organs. The most common STI's/STD's on college campuses identified in young adults include: Chlamydia, genital herpes and genital warts (HPV). Bacterial STI's like gonorrhea, Chlamydia and syphilis typically easy to cure with antibiotics when detected and treated early but there has been evidence of super bugs with gonorrhea. Genital herpes, genital warts, Hepatitis B and HIV are viral infections that cannot be cured, but the symptoms can be treated. Sometimes you can have an STI with no signs or symptoms. Other times, the symptoms spontaneously go away, but you still may have the infection. STI's/STD's can be spread during vaginal, oral and anal sexual contact with an infected person. Anyone who is sexually active can get or transmit an STI, so it's important to reduce your risk.

Protect & Prevent

Abstain from sexual contact to eliminate all risk; or engage in behaviors that don't involve skin to skin contact, or contact with the bodily fluids of your partner. If you choose to engage in other sexual behaviors, consider the following:

- **Use a condom!** While not 100% effective, condoms provide the best protection now available. For oral sex, use a condom or latex square.
- **Think about your alcohol and drug use.** Alcohol and drugs are often factors when people have risky sex.
- **Talk with/examine your partner.** Share sexual histories and past diagnosis of infections. Look closely at your partner for any signs of STI's—rash, sore, redness or discharge in the genital area but remember that people infected with STI's don't always show symptoms.
- **Get a Hepatitis B immunization.** The vaccine is safe and effective. Hepatitis B is a serious and sometimes fatal disease. A series of three vaccinations is required to obtain protection.
- **Request** that your sexual partner(s) be tested for STIs before you engage in sexual activities with them. Screening tests for STIs usually include tests for Chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis, hepatitis B and HIV. If a partner was infected with one of these recently, the tests may be negative.
- **There is no routine screening test** for human papilloma virus (HPV) or genital herpes. The diagnosis for warts is made by visual check or biopsy

It's normal to feel guilty, ashamed or embarrassed if you think you have an STI but don't let those feelings prevent you from getting tested. If you are sexually active, make testing a regular part of your medical care.