

SAFE SEX vs. UNSAFE SEX

The "sexual revolution" of the 1960's has been stopped dead in its tracks by the AIDS epidemic. The danger of contracting AIDS is so real now that it has massively affected the behavior of both gay and straight folks who formerly had elected to lead an active sexual life that included numerous new sexual contacts. The safest option regarding AIDS and sex is total abstinence from all sexual contact. For those who prefer to indulge in sexual contact, this is often far too great a sacrifice. But it IS an option to be considered.

For those who wish to have sexual contact with folks on a relatively casual basis, there have been devised rules for "safe sex". These rules are very strict, and will be found quite objectionable by most of us who have previously enjoyed unrestricted sex. But to violate these rules is to risk unusually horrible death. Once one gets used to them the rule for "safe sex" do allow for quite acceptable sexual enjoyment in most cases.

Note that even when one is conscientiously following the recommendations for safe sex, accidents can happen. Condoms can break. One may have small cuts or tears in ones skin that one is unaware of. Thus, following rules for "safe sex" does NOT guarantee that one will not get AIDS. It does, however, greatly reduce the chances. There are many examples of sexually active couples where one member has AIDS disease and the other remains seronegative even after many months of safe sex with the diseased person. It is particularly encouraging to note that, due to education programs among San Francisco gay males, the incidence of new cases of AIDS infection among that high risk group has dropped massively. Between practice of safe sex and a significant reduction in the number of casual sexual contacts, the spread of AIDS is being massively slowed in that group. Similar responsible action MUST be taken by straight folks to further slow the spread of AIDS, to give our researchers time to find the means to fight it.

Despite a veritable blitz of AIDS information, experts claim that too few are changing their lifestyles or behavior sufficiently to protect themselves from AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. A recent Canadian poll revealed widespread ignorance of the fact that AIDS is primarily a sexually acquired infection, not caught by touch. The survey showed that although sexual intercourse has risen steeply in the past 10 years, less than 25 percent of adults aged 18 to 34 have altered their sexual behavior to protect themselves against AIDS, i.e. by consistent use of condoms and spermicide. THE CENTRAL MESSAGE IS CLEAR: UNLESS ABSOLUTELY SURE THAT YOUR SEX PARTNER IS HIV-FREE, USE A CONDOM (latex, not made of animal material) plus a reliable spermicide. Studies with infected hemophiliacs show that condom use by a regular sex reduces infection risks, compared to unprotected sex. And regular use may bring the added reward of preventing other sexually transmitted-diseases such as gonorrhea and chlamydia or unwanted pregnancy. Many educators say that, by whatever means, AIDS information must get out to young people at an early enough age for them to absorb it before becoming sexually active. The best way to avoid AIDS is to regard it as a highly lethal disease and treat it common sense prevention. Avoiding infection is IN ONE'S OWN HANDS. To halt its spread, people are encouraged to and apply accurate AIDS information to their living styles and sexual partners in order to reduce the risk of getting or transmitting the virus. Health promoters claim that "reaching the

many who don't want to know" is no easy task. They suggest that educators must learn how and to communicate AIDS information. Many Public Health Departments are now taking the lead in education about AIDS with large scale public awareness programs.

Premarital sex is also bad for your physical health. Sexually transmitted diseases have received abundant attention from the press in recent years. Equal time has not been given to the opinion held by many medical experts that extra-marital abstinence is without a doubt the best way to avoid these diseases. Premarital sex is hardly an expression of freedom. Young people who become sexually active in response to peer pressure to be sophisticated and independent are actually becoming victims of current public opinion. No one is really free who engages in any activity in order to impress the majority.

As of now, no other current methods of contraception are considered effective enough to count on. The only sure way to avoid pregnancy is not to have intercourse at all. Put another way, the only 100% effective oral contraceptive is the word "NO!" Since going all the way to intercourse involves such serious risks, how can one deal with all those sexual urges? You have a number of options.

1. ABSTAIN. You can use will power. No one has to have sex. Many go without having sex for years or even a lifetime without negative results.
2. PLAN. Plan ahead and decide how far down the "road to arousal" you think you should go. Go no farther. Express your emotions up to that point, and then just call a halt.
3. SUBLIMATE. You can firmly decide to engage in some other kinds of things as a deliberate substitute for giving in to your sex drive. It could be sports, exercise, art, or some hobby - almost anything that really holds your interest. This can distract your attention away from thoughts of sex.
4. AVOID. Avoid all the kinds of things that can tempt you.

Some other very serious STD's besides aids are: Gonorrhea, Syphilis, Genital Warts and Human Papilloma Virus, Genital Herpes, HSV, Crabs, Pubic Lice, Nonspecific Urethritis (NSU) or Nongonoccal Urethritis (NGU), and Hepatitis B.

