Did you know:

- there are now more than 25 sexually transmitted infections (STI’s) out there.
- Every year, there are about 18.9 million NEW cases.
- Almost ½ of these occur in people 25 years of age or younger.
- That translates to about 10,000 teens/young adults affected PER DAY!

You should know that if you are sexually active, you are exposing your body not only to each partner, but also to all the previous partners of that person as well. Increasing numbers of sexual partners dramatically increases your risk for contracting a sexually transmitted infection. Several of these infections can occur without symptoms to alert you.

What kinds of symptoms do these infections cause? If you experience any of the following, you should seek medical attention right away:

- anal pain or itching,
- itching, sores or warts in the genital area,
- an unusual widespread rash, abnormal vaginal discharge for more than 5 days,
- bleeding after sex,
- female with daily lower abdominal pain not during a menstrual period,
- male with discharge from the penis,
- burning with urination or severe testicular pain.
The STI’s mentioned above can be tested for by swab or blood test, but testing is sometimes uncomfortable. The bacterial infections are treatable with antibiotics. Your body can usually eventually fight off infection with HPV, although in the long-term, it does cause nearly all cases of cervical cancer in women. The other viral infections, however, stay with you for life.

So how can you protect yourself?

1. The safest and surest way to guarantee you do not become infected with a potentially life-long disease is not to be sexually active outside of marriage, or if you are, to resume sexual abstinence.
2. Condoms may reduce the transmission of HIV by 85% (IF USED 100% CORRECTLY) but are MUCH LESS EFFECTIVE in preventing transmission of the other STI’s. Furthermore, they are estimated to fail (break or slip) 1-4% of the time.
3. Sexual activity before marriage also increases your risk for substance abuse, dropping out of school, getting arrested, thoughts of suicide, depression, future infertility and may make bonding with a future marriage partner more difficult.

Remember, 63% of teens who have had sexual intercourse say they wish they had waited and 82% say they hope to have one marriage partner for life in the future.

YOU are in charge of your future. Consider the consequences and make a plan for a healthy future family.

Sources

Medical Institute for Sexual Health, http://www.medinstitute.org
