Talking about Safer Sex

Safer sex – why bother?¹

Unprotected sex can be very harmful. Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) can be passed from one person to another through bacteria and viruses in body fluids. Many of these germs can cause life-threatening illness. Protect your health by avoiding direct contact with your partner’s semen, vaginal fluids, blood or breast milk during sex.

STDs may cause:

• Sterility
• Stress
• Birth defects
• Lasting health problems
• Major illnesses such as HIV, cancer or blindness
• Death

Tips for Talking about Safer Sex²

The most important first step in preventing STDs is to talk about safer sex with your partner. If you feel awkward bringing up this topic, we have some tips to help.

• **Agree to have safer sex before you have sex.**
  Be sure to keep your agreement later, no matter how caught up in the moment you may get.

• **Talk with your partner at the right time.**
  Talk about the subject when you both can focus on the topic.

• **Respect your partner.** Think of each other’s health. Talk about each other’s concerns. This shows respect all around.

• **Get tested together.** Ask your partner to get tested with you before you have sex with him or her.

• **Plan ahead.** Use birth control and have condoms on hand all the time.

• **Know the facts.** The only thing that is 100 percent effective against pregnancy or STDs is to avoid having sex.

• **It’s OK to say no.** Don’t have sex if you don’t want to, or if you don’t have protection from pregnancy or STDs.

• **Avoid drugs and alcohol.** Talk about safer sex - and make safe choices with a clear mind.

• **Ask about your partner’s sexual history.** Talk about yours as well. You both should know the risks of having sex with each other.

Tips for Having Safer Sex³

• Always use a male or female condom for oral, anal or vaginal sex.

• Never reuse a condom. Throw out used condoms.

• Check for tears or holes in condom.

• Only unroll the male condom just before using it.

Healthy Habits Count

It’s important to talk with your partner before you have sex. In fact, doing so may save your life.
• Put the condom on an erect penis before any contact with a partner’s genitals. Press the condom tip to force all the air out when putting the condom over the penis. Leave space at the tip.
• Hold the condom in place at the base of the penis as the penis is pulled out.
• Check the date the condom expires. Don’t use the condom if the date has expired.
• Keep condoms in a dry place, away from the sunlight or heat.
• Don’t use oil-based products as lubricants.
• Don’t open a condom wrapper with your fingernails or teeth. You might tear or put a hole in it.

We are here to help you.

Talk to your doctor or nurse to learn more about safer sex. You also may call our Customer Care Center or the 24/7 NurseLine. To learn more about STDs and safer sex, visit www.plannedparenthood.org.

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<th>Medi-Cal</th>
<th>L.A. Care</th>
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<tr>
<td>Customer Care Center TTY</td>
<td>1-800-407-4627</td>
<td>1-888-285-7801</td>
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Anthem Website  anthem.com/ca

The TTY lines are only for members with hearing or speech loss.

³U.S. Food and Drug Administration, Condoms and Sexually Transmitted Diseases, Brochure (Accessed August 2009): http://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/byAudience/ForPatientAdvocates/HIVandAIDSActivities/ucm126372.htm

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