

AIDS is not dead

The nineties, supposedly, signify the age of enlightenment; a time when education is stressed as being the major weapon in a number of social problems. From drugs to violence, society faces numerous dilemmas.

Obviously, there is not enough space in a newspaper or a twenty minute news program to cover all aspects of America's problems. Yet, there seems to be a growing concern that safe sex needs to be addressed.

Of all the social issues that plague America, it seems as if AIDS has taken a back seat to street violence and unwanted pregnancy. Condoms appear to be used as a method of preventing children rather than protection against AIDS.

Has the thought of AIDS faded from the public minds and fallen into the category of "it can't happen to me?"

Lou Ann Walker, author of "Dangerous Liaisons" in the 1995 September issue of "New Woman" states, "Bravado makes many young people think they're immune. Older people think they are because it's a disease of the young and more sexually active. Some heterosexuals still assume it's a homosexual disease." (97)

In the 1995 October issue of "Details", author John Weir stated, "[F]ourteen years into the epidemic--at least twelve years since doctors figured out how the AIDS virus is transmitted--people are still spreading the disease."

While the number of reported cases of AIDS has fallen nationwide since 1993, HIV infection transmitted by men having sex with men is, after a period of decline, back on the rise.

Moreover such cases among men thirteen and older are increasing everywhere except in the Northeast, especially in the South and Midwest, and especially among African-Americans and Latinos.

While newly diagnosed AIDS cases have dropped among white homosexual men, they have increased in every other ethnic group. And though new infections are down for older gay men, they are rising among younger ones. (Weir, 139)

Correct use of a Condom

Based on a fact sheet from The Sex Information and Education Council of the U.S. (SIECUS) and was printed in the 1995 September of "New Woman"

1. Use a new condom each time you have oral, anal or vaginal sex. Use nonlubricated for oral sex and spermicidal for vaginal sex.
 2. Put the condom onto the penis after it is erect, but before it touches any part of a partner's mouth, anus, or vagina. Uncircumcised penises must have the foreskin pulled back before the condom is pulled on.
 3. Pinch the reservoir tip, then unroll it up the shaft of the penis, from head to base. You must have air at the tip to keep the condom from breaking.
 4. Apply a water-based lubricant, such as K-Y jelly, to keep the condom from breaking. Never use oil-based products such as baby oil or hand lotion. Also avoid yeast medications, which contain mineral oil. These substances cause a 90-percent drop in condom strength.
 5. If the condom breaks during sex, the penis must be withdrawn immediately and a new condom used.
 6. While the penis is still erect, after ejaculation and before withdrawal, the rim of the condom must be grasped around the penis, and the penis and condom should be removed slowly and carefully so that no semen is spilled.
 7. Store condoms in a cool, dry place such as a drawer or closet.
- Never use a condom that is broken, sticky, or discolored.

It is a disillusion to believe that AIDS is no longer a problem. The fact remains that AIDS is not dead. There is still not a cure. The "new AIDS drug" AZT helps to prolong life, but it is not a cure-all. Ten years after America has opened its eyes to a problem running rampant in all communities of its streets, the problem has not gone away. In many instances and circumstances, AIDS has been on the increase.

According to studies that determine an adolescent's knowledge of AIDS and modes of HIV transmission, the educational system needs much work (Hingson and Strumin, 27-28).

The use of alcohol and drugs also have a relevant impact on the decision to either abstain from intercourse or engage in intercourse with a condom.

Most do not even discuss the use of a condom before having sex.

"While most adolescents report that they would use condoms if asked, only minority reported discussing condoms

prior to intercourse," according to Hingson and Strumin.

Some say that if adolescents were made aware that others are using condoms, they may do so.

"It should be pointed out to adolescents that very few of their peers would object to using condoms [and] that [an] increasing number are using them."

The article states that some may not be using condoms because of what others may say. In fact, "Adolescents may fear that condom use will raise questions from partners about fidelity and about whether they expect and plan to have sex and do not have strict moral values; it also may raise question about whether partners will think that they are infected with HIV or other STDs already."

Some say to remedy the situation society must educate. "Education must stress that even adolescents who are monogamous now may have been exposed to the HIV virus through earlier sexual contact and that sex can be more relaxed

and result in less anxiety if condoms are used." (H & S, 30-31)

Recent studies have given the media the impression that there is a new increase in AIDS outbreaks.

According to Weir's article, there is an increasing risk group--men in their mid-twenties that has been alerting people to a "so-called second wave of HIV-infection."

Weir states, "...that people who were in grammar school and high school in the mid-80's are now testing positive for HIV in numbers not much lower than ten years ago."

"[A]ccording to recent statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention," Weir continues. "AIDS is now the leading cause of death among everyone--men and women, straight and gay--ages twenty-five to forty-four."

Although, men in their mid-twenties are in a risk group, the overall percentage of HIV infection is rising much faster in women than in men.

According to statistics from the Centers for Disease Control, 18 percent of the reported AIDS cases in the United States were women, nearly three times the proportion who had the disease ten years earlier (Svingen).

Walker states, "About 58,000 women have been reported with AIDS in this country since, 1981, and at least an additional 110,000 are thought to be infected with HIV."

Walker cites studies by an Advanced Data Report released in 1993 by the National Center for Health Statistics: Only 14 percent of all unmarried, heterosexual, sexually active women are faithful in their use of condoms. (94)

By not using a condom, women put themselves at risk for more than just pregnancy.

The number of heterosexuality acquired AIDS cases continues to grow. Women are at least two times more likely than men to contract AIDS because seminal fluid remains within a woman for a long time, exposing them to the virus - the exposed area in the vagina is larger than that of a penis. (94)

AIDS is not a discriminatory disease. It affects everyone, from the person carrying the disease to the friends and relatives who help them cope. AIDS is still prevalent, it must not be forgotten. It's a large shadow looming over everyone, not caring about preventing pregnancies, just looking to feast on its next victim.

Condoms: the good and the bad

**Most reliable:
(performance in an air-burst test)**

- Excita Extra Ultra-Ribbed, with spermicide
- Ramses, Extra Ribbed with spermicide
- Sheik Elite 1
- LifeStyles Vibra-ribbed
- Ramses Extra, with spermicide
- Ramses Sensitol
- Sheik Elite, Ribbed with spermicide

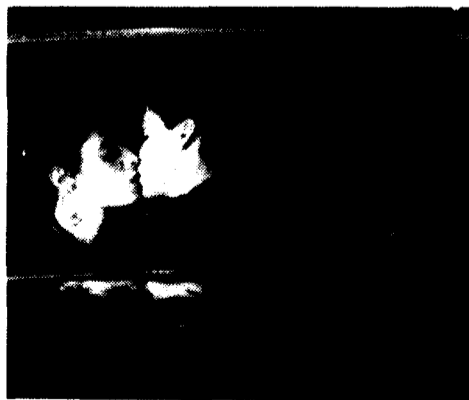
Least reliable:

- LifeStyles UltraSensitive
- Trojan Extra Strength
- Trojan Mentor
- Trojan Plus
- Trojan Very Thin
- Trojan-Enz
- Trojans Nonlubricated

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Extra special thanks (as always) to Sue Daley

VANESSA WAS IN A FATAL CAR ACCIDENT LAST NIGHT. ONLY SHE DOESN'T KNOW IT YET.



Every year, thousands of young people die in car accidents caused by drugs and alcohol. But now you can wreck your life without hitting the gas pedal. The number of reported AIDS cases among teenagers has increased by 96 percent in the last two years. If you get high and forget, even for a moment, how risky sex can be, you're putting your life on the line.

Works Cited

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