

## **The Physical and Emotional Consequences of Extra-Marital Sexual Behavior** by Dr. Shirley Gonzalez

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there is an “epidemic” in the US of infections that can spread through sexual acts. These are called Sexually Transmitted Infections or STIs. Today, there are over 25 different STIs out there, which is an increase from only two known sexually transmitted infections in the 1960’s.

There are approximately 19 million new cases of sexually transmitted infections diagnosed each year in the U.S. More than 65 million Americans are currently living with one of these infections. ½ of the cases diagnosed each year occur in people under 25 years of age. This means that every day in the US 8,000 teens become infected with a new sexually transmitted infection.

At least 1 in 4 teenage girls has a sexually transmitted infection.

Chlamydia is the most common bacterial sexually transmitted infection; we have seen an increase in reported cases of Chlamydia during the past 10 years. In 2006, for the first time, reported cases exceeded one million.

Gonorrhea is the second most common bacterial sexually transmitted infection and rates increased for second consecutive year in 2006.

Bacterial STIs, like Chlamydia and Gonorrhea, can be treated with antibiotics but some of the strains of gonorrhea are becoming resistant to one or more antibiotics. Even treatable STIs cannot be treated if the person does not know if they are infected, and a study looking at Chlamydia and Gonorrhea, showed that less than 5% of infected participants reported symptoms.

In terms of syphilis, the total number of cases increased from the year 2002 to the year 2006.

Human Papilloma Virus is responsible for the majority of cervical cancer cases in the US, and 3,800 women die each year from this cancer.

While HPV is the viral STI that is transmitted the most each year, Herpes is the most prevalent viral sexually transmitted infection overall because there is no cure for herpes and once contracted it does not go away. Between 1970-1990 Herpes prevalence increased by 30%. Studies have found that 1 in 6 people over 12 years of age in the USA are infected with Herpes. We have seen 500% increase in prevalence of genital herpes in white American adolescents over the past 25 years.

In terms of HIV, according to the CDC, the estimated number of individuals who are HIV+ among the age group 13-24 years increased by 25% from 2003 to 2006.

These increases in sexually transmitted diseases are likely due to several factors: an increase in the number of tests done, an improvement in reporting mechanisms and requirements, and an actual increase in incidence of these infections.

Please keep in mind that these statistics only include KNOWN cases; the actual number of cases is probably higher since STIs may cause no symptoms and these infections are not always reported.

These infections are contagious whether the person displays symptoms or not.

These can spread through all types of sexual activity including oral sex and through any contact with infected skin.

Sexually transmitted infections may cause many complications. Some of these include: PID (Pelvic Inflammatory Disease which is when the infection spreads throughout the abdomen), infertility, and transmission of infection from infected mother to newborn.

Teenage girls are much more prone to contract an STI than an adult female because of the cell structure of their cervix.

The only way to be 100% sure you're safe is to wait until marriage to have sex. This is the **only** way to eliminate any risk of contracting any of these serious infections.

Researchers have discovered hormones called oxytocin and vasopressin that are linked to bonding and trust in humans. These hormones are released all the time, but in especially large concentrations during sex. This means that when a person has sex, they bond intensely with that person and are more likely to trust them blindly. Obviously, trust and bonding are enormous benefits within the confines of marriage; however, bonding intensely with a person you may not be with forever is dangerous. If a couple has sex and then breaks up, it is far more traumatic than if they had never had sex. Additionally, breaking these bonds multiple times can impair their ability to bond well with another partner in the future.

Researchers at The Heritage Foundation have found that sexually active girls are 3 times more likely to be depressed and 3 times as likely to attempt suicide as teenage girls who are not sexually active

Sexually active boys are twice as likely to be depressed and eight times as likely to attempt suicide as others who are not sexually active.

Teens who discuss sexuality with their parents are less likely to initiate sexual activity.

“This friendship, this knowing how to put oneself on the children’s level, makes it easier for them to talk about their small problems; it also makes it possible for parents to be the ones who teach them gradually about the origin of life, in accordance with their mentality and capacity to understand, gently anticipating their natural curiosity. I consider this very important. There is no reason why children should associate sex with something sinful or find out about something that is in itself noble and holy in a vulgar conversation with a friend. It can also be an important step in strengthening the friendship between parents and children, preventing a separation in the early moments of their early life.” ~ St. Josemaria Escriva