
Summer break and sex: STDs are not worth underestimating

Sex k létu a prázdninám patří. Ale podceňovat pohlavně přenosné choroby se opravdu nevyplatí!

June 13, 2011, by: P.K., Section: Students, Translation: Pavla Horáková

A May study carried out by students at Humboldt University came up with a surprising finding: one in three university students in Berlin would consider sex work to pay for their education. Four percent out of the 3,200 surveyed even admitted to having worked in the sex industry in some way or another. This sort of behaviour greatly increases the risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases. That's why I approached MUDr. Daniela Vaňousová who covered this topic at the May Medical Café Scientifique discussion evening.

Charles University provides psychological counselling to its students but how about instruction on STDs?

It is a topic very rarely spoken about and if at all, it mostly concerns HIV infection figures. But STDs also include syphilis, gonorrhoea, chlamydial infections, genital warts etc. The public know very little about STDs and I would welcome more open and frequent discussion on university premises as well.

Medical students are given a lecture on this subject later in their course but the students of other faculties have few opportunities to come across this information. Many patients believe that some venereal diseases, such as syphilis, had been eradicated a long time ago and many are surprised at their diagnosis.



MUDr. Daniela Vaňousová

Which diseases are the students most likely to contract?

For the 18–25 age bracket the most frequent infection is Chlamydia which is very tricky because 80 percent of women experience no clinical symptoms. However the consequences include infertility, ectopic pregnancy and chronic pelvic inflammatory diseases.

Fifty percent of men report discharge as a symptom of chlamydial infection. Therefore a person is often not even aware they are infected and they keep spreading it. The problem of STDs is their different incubation periods. For example the incubation period of gonorrhoea is a few days but it is up to three months in case of syphilis.

How about students and safe sex? I presume most of them do practice safe sex.

It can be assumed that in the 18–25 age bracket half of them practice safe sex but it is important to consider the type of sexual practice. Many patients aren't aware that STDs can be transmitted through oral sex as well. You can acquire gonorrhoea, Chlamydia, syphilis as well as HIV through oral sex. People protect themselves during vaginal intercourse but they have no idea they should be protecting themselves during oral intercourse as well.

Other sexually transmitted pathogens include human papillomavirus which causes condylomata, or genital warts. There is a large prevalence of this virus in the population – and unprotected oral sex raises the incidence of throat and oral tumours.

Do you have any recommendation for the students ahead of the summer break?

If we want to stay safe from STDs, the most important thing is fidelity and safe sex using a condom. It is also advisable to get tested for STDs when you have a new partner.

Promiscuous individuals should be aware of the infection risk and seek regular checkups. I definitely recommend regular tests for syphilis and HIV. It is important to know that it is possible to contract several venereal diseases during one unprotected intercourse and that we can catch those diseases repeatedly. Contraception does not protect us from infection, on the contrary, unprotected ejaculation increases the risk of infection. And a recommendation for the vacations? Be faithful to your partner.