

## Reduce your risk 100% for STDs

Written by Gallupsun Staff  
Friday, 29 May 2015 12:04

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### Dear Editor:

Thank you for running the article “A Test for Life” in your May 1, 2015 issue. Educating our community on the silent STD epidemic in our area is critical.

McKinley County had the highest rates of chlamydia and gonorrhea in New Mexico in 2013. Statewide, 63% of reported chlamydia cases were among persons aged 15-24, and 48% of reported gonorrhea cases were also from the same age range.

One of the most important sentences in your article was “According to the CDC and New Mexico Department of Health, not having sex is the only way to prevent STDs.” (That includes vaginal, anal, and oral sex.) Another way to express it is *waiting to have sex until you are in a faithful, lifelong relationship (such as marriage) with an uninfected partner is the only certain way to avoid becoming infected sexually*

Risk AVOIDANCE is a natural preference term to “risk reduction”. Your story featured a picture of a man and woman holding a condom package. However, correct and consistent use of condoms only “reduces the risk”, it doesn’t eliminate the risk of getting an STD. Your story did mention this, but I wanted your readers to have that point re-emphasized.

What is the risk when using condoms instead of just waiting to have sex until in a lifelong relationship (marriage) with an uninfected partner? If you use condoms correctly every time you have vaginal sex:

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- ...you can cut your chance of getting Chlamydia or gonorrhea by almost 60%.
- ...you can cut your chance of getting HPV (Human Papillomavirus) by up to 70%.
- ...you can cut your chance of getting genital herpes by about 30%.
- ...you can cut your chance of getting HIV by about 80%.

But do people use condoms all the time? Short answer: no. And not everyone who uses condoms uses them correctly. Plus even then they are used correctly condoms can still break or slip off. I didn't include all the possible medical consequences of getting one of the above mentioned STDs nor did I mention the emotional, social, and mental effects one can experience.

Your article notes, "false assumptions about STD's... are everywhere," and, "it can be especially hard for people to get the facts." I believe focusing your article upon condom use and frequent STD testing contributes subtly to these false assumptions and misinformation.

Let us first emphatically emphasize the foundation of sexual health promotion: abstinence. To completely reduce your risk (100%) for STD's, you must avoid sexual activity until you enter a monogamous, faithful relationship with an uninfected partner.

This has been the conventional wisdom of our ancestors, past civilizations, and spiritual advisors. It remains the strongest recommendation of the Center for Disease Control and New Mexico Department Of Health. If we truly desire health, sexual education must primarily rest upon abstinence as its foundation, not upon partner reduction, barrier methods, immunizations, and serial STD testing.

To imply that SAFER sex is SAFE is just not genuine.

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To completely reduce your risk (100%) for STDs, you should avoid all sexual activity until you are faithful to one uninfected partner. If you've already had sex, see a doctor about getting checked for STDs. You can decide to postpone any further sexual activity until that faithful, lifelong relationship happens for you.

*Sincerely,*

*Barbara Leslie*

*Director Hands of Hope Pregnancy Center, Gallup, NM*