

**HEY LADIES!**

Okay ladies this is just for you. Time to focus on your special concerns.

African American women have the highest percentage - [64% - of all new AIDS cases among women!](#)

The number of HIV cases among young African American women is reported to be [7 times higher than for young White women, and 8 times higher than for young Latina women.](#)

Ladies, what's going on here? Black women are only [13%](#) of the female population, but we represent the *more than half* of the AIDS cases?

Do not ignore HIV/AIDS any longer. HIV/AIDS is a challenge, and it's time to deal with that challenge... Now.

How? Well, first you have to learn [THE BASICS](#). You can't make the right decisions unless you have the right information. Only when you are informed, are you empowered.

**THE PLAIN FACTS...**

As a women, you have to be especially concerned about HIV because of your anatomy. Because of the [larger surface area](#) of the female genital track, the risk of becoming infected with HIV during unprotected sex is two to four times greater than that of a man!

What's more, adolescent women are at an even GREATER risk than adult women because their vaginas and [cervixes](#) are less mature and less resistant to HIV and other STDs like [CHLAMYDIA AND GONORRHEA](#).

It's important to know that ***there is NO cure for AIDS***, nor is there a vaccine to prevent us from getting HIV. One of the best ways to prevent HIV infection is by not having sex at all (abstinence). The next best way is to practice safer sex. ***"But ...but he doesn't like to wear condoms."***

**WHAT DID YOU JUST SAY?!**

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***“He doesn’t like to wear condoms...he says it doesn’t feel as good.”***

How many of you have heard this before? There are a few ways to go about dealing with this:

- First, this isn’t about him. It’s about *YOU*. It’s about you protecting your body and your future. If he doesn’t get this, he won’t get *it*. You need to be strong and be willing to say “I’m not givin’ it up without a condom.” If a guy still insists on not wearing one, you need to remain strong and say “no”.
- Tell him that you want to protect him too. It’s better to be safe than sorry (as clichéd as that sounds). There’s no way that he can be sure that *you* don’t have something. After all, some STDs have no outward symptoms.
- Or use a female condom – you don’t have to wait on him to be protected; Protect your body with a condom meant just for you.

What it all boils down to is that you have to love yourself enough to protect yourself...even when he doesn’t want to.

***“We got caught up in the moment and didn’t want to ruin the mood.”***

So be prepared – plan ahead. Bring your own condoms in case he doesn’t have any. Always make sure that you have protection close at hand, for whatever you end up doing. Keep a condom on a nightstand, under a pillow, under the bed or in your purse. This way, when it gets hot and heavy, you have protection right there, ready to go. The point is: do not have unprotected sex.

***“He pulls out before he cums.”***

Now, now. Him pulling out does not protect you in any way. You can still get HIV! Before a man he often secretes “ejaculatory fluid” which can infect you. Any contact with bodily fluids of a person who is HIV positive - blood, vaginal secretions, and semen - can transmit the virus. You must remember to protect yourself from other viruses as well: HERPES, GONORRHEA, CHLAMYDIA, HPV, WARTS, AND SYPHILIS.

***“I only gave him oral sex.”***

Protection during oral sex is just as important as it is during vaginal and anal sex. This is why you should use a latex condom or dental dam *each* time you have oral sex. Also, remember that it’s not just HIV that you can get while having oral sex. HERPES is often transmitted during unprotected oral sex. This results in open sores and blisters in the area of contact- be it the

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mouth or genitals. Once you contract herpes you have it for life. Although it can be managed by drugs, it can still be spread to other sexual partners.

***“I already got tested once. I was fine.”***

And that’s great! However, a sexually active person should be TESTED every 6 months- regardless of a previous negative result.

***“He told me that he doesn’t have it.”***

And that might be true. Then again, it might not be. Are you willing to gamble your health and your life on it? You should **use protection every time you have sex**. Your future depends upon it!

## **SEXUAL PRACTICES and HIV**

### **A NOTE ON CASUAL SEX**

Casual sex is risky business; actually, any sex is risky business. But casual sex is inherently riskier. You may not know your partner well – although you’re convinced angels have sent him. Therefore, you’re risking your health and future with someone you know little about and who knows little about you. Since there’s little or no commitment between you, either or both of you could have multiple partners and thereby increasing your odds of contracting HIV and/or other STDs. And as time reveals more about him, you may wish you could send him back to the angels. Potentially, unintended consequences may always occur anytime you have sex – i.e. HIV infection, other STD infection or pregnancy.

Condoms are not 100% effective. Only abstinence is 100% effective. No doubt about it, our goals, or self-esteem, as well as our family history, play a part in determining our sexual behavior. When we feel good about ourselves we’re more likely to engage in activities that encourage our growth and honor our spirit. Further, we’re more likely to abstain from activities that could harm us. Don’t be deceived into thinking that having sex will bring you fulfillment or love. Feeling fulfilled and having love in your life has nothing to do with having sex. Having sex doesn’t mean that love follows.

### **AND A NOTE ON ANAL SEX...**

It is important to know that ‘anal’ sex is a riskier form of sex, **especially** when it is unprotected. Why? The annual cavity (rectum) is a very high absorption area for germs, and the blood vessels of the anus are very close to the service and easy to tear. Additionally, the annual cavity is not self-lubricating. As a result, during anal intercourse (sex) without protection,

penetration and friction is likely to cause the exchange of body fluids. When this happens, the risk of exposure (and possibly) contracting HIV is greater.

No one is here to pass judgment. However, if you decide to have anal sex, or any kind of sex for that matter, make sure you are protected. Use latex condoms **every time** you have sex.

### ***A WORD TO OUR LESBIAN AND BISEXUAL SISTERS...***

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) acknowledges that female-to-female transmission of HIV appears to be a rare means of contracting the virus. This explains why many of our lesbian sisters mistakenly believe that they are not at risk of contracting HIV. Well, sisters, the truth of the matter is that your unique sexuality does not exclude you from the risk of contracting the deadly disease.

Vaginal secretions and menstrual blood are potentially infectious secretions that could lead to HIV infection. Other possible means of transmitting HIV – unprotected sex (with a man or woman), donor insemination, sharing needles/syringes, sharing dildos, piercing/tattooing – mean that lesbians benefit from many of the same precautions and safe practices advised for heterosexual women.

We know there are many myths concerning lesbianism; and the stigma against lesbians can, at times, be difficult to bear. Fortunately, there are many resources available to help you. Connect with available resources and [GET SUPPORT](#). Just remember you CAN contract HIV and the other [STDS](#) out there. Practice safe sex and use protection every time you have sex.

### **SEXUAL ABUSE**

It's disturbing, but here's the reality – violence against women, contributes both directly and indirectly to women's vulnerability to HIV. [In population-based studies conducted worldwide, anywhere from 10 to over 50 percent of women report physical assault by an intimate partner. And one-third to one-half of physically abused women also report sexual coercion.](#)

Studies that look at the relationship between violence, risky behavior, and women's sexual health, also show that individuals who have been sexually abused are more likely to engage in unprotected sex, have multiple partners, and trade sex for money or drugs. This isn't a doomsday sentence for those of us who have been abused. Many of us have experienced painful histories. We are not alone. Perhaps though, for those of us who have been sexual abused, we have to be even more vigilant about observing our behaviors and doing what's best to protect our bodies.

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Self-esteem is precious and each day gives us an opportunity to strengthen it.

If you have experienced sexual abuse, reach out to the numerous resources available to you. Find out what's available at your school or community. There are people willing to help you. Seek out support and/or counseling. Sometimes, even when you don't realize it, your experiences may be affecting your self-esteem, your relationships, as well as your sexual behavior. Resources to get you started are:

[WWW.RAINN.ORG](http://WWW.RAINN.ORG) (Rape Abuse & Incest National Network);

[WWW.911RAPE.ORG](http://WWW.911RAPE.ORG) (National Domestic Violence Hotline)

### **A WOMAN'S WORTH...**

Of course, it's important to be fully informed about HIV and other STDs. However, information is only empowering when you use it. Merely knowing the facts about HIV won't protect you from HIV. Acting responsibly—protecting yourself each time you have sex—will.

Sometimes there is a disconnect between knowing the facts and acting on them. In bridging this gap, we've got to have a better appreciation for our worth and our power.

For one, you should know:

***You are not...just a body.***

In today's society, some women are often fed the belief that their value is wrapped up in their ability to attract men. Images of half-dressed, sexually-provocative women are in abundance: in magazines, in videos, in movies, on TV. Sex is used in the media to sell products and we're not products.

It is easy to internalize these images and beliefs to the point that we no longer see them as absurd. In fact, we may embrace them. Some of us do not realize that we have more to offer than just our bodies. This can lead to poor judgment and decisions that put our bodies (and souls) at risk. Do not let sex define who you are. It's a false sense of identity.

### ***THE TIME...***

It's time to make better decisions. HIV/AIDS is increasing in our community, but it's possible to reverse this trend by learning how to protect ourselves

**NOW.** Let's make a commitment to protecting our bodies and demonstrating respect for our futures through better, more informed decisions.

**"TESTING! TESTING! 1-2-3"**

There are no words to tell you how important it is that you and your partner(s) get tested - REGULARLY! And by regularly we mean that you should GET TESTED AT LEAST ONE TIME EVERY 6 MONTHS, since six months is about how long it takes HIV to show up in current testing methods.

Don't give yourself any excuses. [TALK TO THE COUNSELORS](#) that are available at the many clinics around the country and they will be able to put you in touch with the location(s) of the nearest testing facilities.

Oh, before we forget, there's one more thing we should tell you about getting tested: [KNOW YOUR TESTING RIGHTS!](#) And, yes, you DO have rights when it comes to getting tested for HIV/AIDS. Get to know them before getting tested.

- **Sources Cited**

**64% - of all new AIDS cases among women! 7 times higher than for young White women, and 8 times higher than for young Latina women**

“HIV/AIDS and the Young African America Woman.” Fact Sheet. Advocate or Youth. Accessed February 10, 2003.

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**13%**

“Resident Population Estimates of the United States by Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin.” US Census Bureau Accessed February 10, 2003..

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**In population-based studies conducted worldwide, anywhere from 10 to over 50 percent of women report physical assault by an intimate partner. And one-third to one-half of physically abused women also report sexual coercion**

“Gender, Sexuality, and HIV/AIDS: The What, the Why, and the How.” Geeta Rao Gupta. Plenary Address, XIIth International AIDS Conference, Durban, South Africa. July 12, 2000

- **Glossary Items**

**larger surface area**  
Need Definition

**cervixes / cervix**  
A neck shaped anatomical structure, as the narrow outer end of the uterus.

**ejaculatory fluid**  
Need Definition

- **STOP The Silence Website Elements**

**THE BASICS**

See STOP The Silence, “The Basics”

**CHLAMYDIA AND GONORRHEA**

See STOP The Silence, “My Friend, There’s HIV And”

**HERPES, GONORRHEA, CHLAMYDIA, HPV, WARTS, AND SYPHILIS**

See STOP The Silence, “My Friend, There’s HIV And”

**HERPES**

See STOP The Silence, “My Friend, There’s HIV And”

**TESTED**

See STOP The Silence, “The Hook UP”

**STDs**

See STOP The Silence, “My Friend, There’s HIV And”

**THE HOOK UP**

See STOP The Silence, “The Hook UP”

**KNOW YOUR TESTING RIGHTS.**

See STOP The Silence, “Know Your Testing Rights”