



LEARN • ACT • ALLIES • RESOURCES

Hurricane Warning: Sexually Transmitted Diseases in America

With Katrina billowing off the Gulf Coast of the United States, forecasters began to send out the warnings: this one was not only *huge* and *powerful*, it was *gaining momentum*, *headed directly* at some of the *most vulnerable* people in America and would *kill*. Looking back, we wish we had done more. We wish we had done everything in our power decades ago to strengthen the levees. We wish someone had sounded the alarm louder. We wish more residents had gotten out before it was too late.

We know this: given the legacy of Katrina, it is unlikely that warnings will go ignored again.

The comparison of the sexually transmitted disease (STD) epidemic in America to Hurricane Katrina is not as far out as it sounds. In fact, the STD epidemic is worse. It is worse because not only is it murderous, powerful, gaining strength, and headed directly at the vulnerable, *it isn't going away*. Imagine living through a hurricane that lasts not several hours, but for *years* and even *decades*.

That is the situation with STDs in America.

Consider this brochure your Hurricane Warning...and Survival Guide.

Hurricane Conditions

One of the conditions of the STD hurricane is Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). HIV infection usually results in AIDS. South Carolina ranks 8th in the nation in men and 9th in women of the number of new AIDS cases per capita.

[solutions for survival]

The solution to our national STD epidemic and a shift toward healthy lifestyles is a strategy in our culture to change behavior. Whether we welcome the responsibility or not, the primary responsibility for changing behavior is on the shoulders of parents. Simply put, **it all starts at home.**

Parents must embrace that responsibility by *learning and acting.*

But parents are not, and should not be alone. The **faith community, public officials, physicians and schools** can be solid partners in helping kids successfully navigate adolescence. Even television and movie stars and sports figures should get on board with parental authority.

LEARN

Parents should learn about the epidemic of sexually transmitted diseases. This brochure and the websites and other resources listed on the back of this pamphlet provide the shocking statistics and the gravity of the situation with South Carolina youth and STDs. An understanding of the imminent danger of fatal diseases will allow parents to approach the subject eyes wide open.

Parents should understand the South Carolina Comprehensive Health Education Act. This South Carolina law says "abstinence and the risks of sexual activity outside marriage must be strongly emphasized." South Carolina parents have a right to expect state law to be fol-

lowed. Public officials should provide oversight to agencies to see that our law is followed to the letter. President Bush had it right when he said: "When our children face a choice between self-restraint and self-destruction, government should not be neutral. Government should not sell children short by assuming they are incapable of acting responsibly. We must promote good choices."

Parents should know the difference between competing sexual health models. Because it is a risk *elimination* solution, abstinence is the most effective means of preventing pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. In addition to abstinence education, what is known as comprehensive sexuality education is commonly taught in South Carolina schools. These programs emphasize risk *reduction* through the use of condoms and other contraceptives as well as abstinence, though some studies report that abstinence receives as little as .9% of the teaching manual.

Parents should know that abstinence works and is realistic. The successful ABC model used in Uganda emphasized abstinence, being faithful and using a condom in that order. The result was a dramatic decline in casual sex. The A-B-C order is important because condoms do not provide 100% protection from any STDs, particularly the painful herpes virus, and the occasionally deadly Human Papilloma Virus (HPV).

Choosing the Best abstinence education curriculum reports a 47% decrease in the initiation of teen sex. Participants in the *Best Friends* abstinence education program were 6 times less likely than their peers to engage in premarital sex.

Parents should learn about the sex education curriculum taught in their son or daughter's school. Parents should take the initiative to find out what their teenagers are being taught.

Parents should learn about the teen brain and other issues of adolescent development. The research of Jay Giedd, a neuroscientist at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in Bethesda, Maryland, indicates that a teenager's brain is a work in progress. Teens are not capable of making rational decisions until they reach their early twenties. Parents should refresh their memories of their own adolescence without letting their own possible non-abstinent past hold them back.

Parents should understand their ability to influence their son or daughter. According to the Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, parents opinions about their influence with their kids vs. their kids peers is exactly opposite of reality. Kids listen to their parents more (45%-31%).



ACT

Parents should be the primary sex educators and that role should be embraced early. Make sure your teenager learns from you and soon. About 8% of seventh graders say they would be willing to have sex.

Parents should teach their teenagers their values system. Abstinence is a responsible lifestyle that springs from values. Clear messages about the role of their beliefs in why they should delay sex (and stay in school and keep away from alcohol or drugs) are key. Even a commitment to financial security or a good education as a value may resonate: female virgins were more likely than non-virgins to have a positive financial net worth and less likely to use welfare benefits or to experience health problems. Virgins of both genders attained more education and were half as likely to experience divorce.

Parents should be literally “hands on.” With their teenagers, parents should show physical affection, make time, listen as well as talk, check in with them often, set dating boundaries, learn to say “no,” know their friends and encourage relationships with peers who are solid in their character.

- 88% of teens say it would be easier to postpone sexual activity if they were able to have conversations about these topics with their parents.

Parents should tell their teenagers the real-life stories of sex, oral sex and cyber sex that often lead to Sexually Transmitted Disease, Teenage Pregnancy, Children Born Out-of-Wedlock, Depression and Suicide. We provide some of these stories and corresponding statistics in this brochure. The names have been changed to insure confidentiality.

The media can be good conversation starters. Ads for beer parties or sitcoms or dramas showing “hooking up” are opportunities for parents to compare their values to those depicted on screen. A key point to the conversation could be a focus on the future. Premature sexual activity threatens the exciting promises of the future.

Parents should affirmatively work on their own key relationship . . . their marriage. Huh? Yes, it is a proven fact that growing up in the context of a healthy marriage decreases risks that children will have emotional or behavioral problems or become sexually active early. 59% of teens say that their parents are their role models of healthy, responsible relationships.

Parents should seek out other parents who share their values, encourage them and compare notes with them. Don’t go it alone.

Parents may wish, on an age appropriate basis, to restrict access to media that do not reinforce or undermine their values, particularly in the area of sex.

[Allies for Parents in the Quest for Purity]



[THE FAITH COMMUNITY]

The Faith Community should help parents teach their values.

The Faith Community should help parents build strong relationships with their teenagers.

The Faith Community should teach parents the religious underpinnings of the parental role as primary educators.

The Faith Community should sponsor and support marriage enrichment initiatives and marriage movements like the Palmetto Marriage Project (www.marriage.sc).

The Faith Community should help parents of teenagers network with each other.

The Faith Community should consider hosting abstinence programs like Silver Ring (www.silverring.sc) at their churches.

[PUBLIC OFFICIALS]

Public Officials, especially **School Board Members** should work to make sure the South Carolina Comprehensive Health Education Law is followed. According to a recent national survey, abstinence is not being taught in a meaningful way as part of sexual

education classes. In most curriculums it accounts for less than 5%, while promotion of contraception accounts for over 28%. South Carolina law mandates that abstinence be “strongly emphasized” and that the materials should “not include instruction concerning sexual practices outside of marriage.” (SC Code of Laws – Section 59-21-10)

Public officials should consider enacting laws and advancing administrative policies & procedures that ensure that government is not hostile to parental values.

Public officials should consider laws that strengthen marriages, like waiving marriage license fees for those who complete pre-marital counseling or reversing the trend toward “no fault” divorce.

[SCHOOLS]

Schools should recognize education as a partnership and respect parental roles as educators.

Schools should welcome parental and physician involvement and be prepared to discuss curricula and options (particularly sex education curricula and options) for parents.

Schools should integrate proven abstinence programs like *Worth the Wait* into their curriculum and teacher training models like those offered through SC Parents Involved in Education (www.scpie.org).

[PHYSICIANS]

Physicians should take the time to read SC DHEC and CDC materials so that they will know that the gravity of the situation with STDs and that they do indeed represent an epidemic.

Physicians should concern themselves not only with *disease*, but *behavior*. Doctors shouldn’t simply look to science or reach for the prescription pad, but affirmatively back parents with their authority as doctors in addressing *behavior*.

Physicians should participate in training opportunities by STD experts like the Medical Institute for Sexual Health (www.medinstitute.org).

[Real Life Stories of Victims from the files of SC OBGYN doctor, Jimmy Stands]

HIV/AIDS

Shawna came in excited about her first pregnancy. During the workup she has a prenatal blood profile that shows she has screened positive for HIV. The most common way females acquire HIV in the United States is through heterosexual activity. The baby's father gave the disease to her.

Susan had been dating a seminary student for two years. A year after they broke up she screened positive for HIV. Her viral load for the virus had gone down, but during her last visit, the virus had become more active and she had to restart her anti-AIDS medicines. When you get HIV, it stays until your death.

Six months after **Rosalyn** was married, her husband died of AIDS. Every 6 months she goes through extreme anguish while waiting to see if she had converted "this time" and is now HIV positive.

Other Sexually Transmitted Diseases

April became sexually active at age 13. She was just looking for someone to love her. She delivered her only child when she was 16. For 6 years she went from one sexual relationship to another continuing to look for that person that would love her and now, love her son as well. After a 6-year wait, a physical and pap smear showed invasive cervical cancer from Human Papilloma Virus. Her child bearing was abruptly ended by a radical hysterectomy. Routine cancer follow-up has recently shown metastatic cancer in her lungs. She is probably going to die. Her son is now 8.

Grace was born to **Anna**, a mother with known but inactive genital herpes. There was not any sign of a lesion during her vaginal delivery. Grace subsequently got herpetic meningitis. This leaves a high percentage of babies mentally retarded if they live. How sad it is to think that this mother has to look at her baby every day, knowing she gave her own child a sexually transmitted disease.

Bonita, a pregnant Mexican patient, screened positive for Chlamydia and Syphilis. The mother was treated and through a translator the father of the baby was instructed on how to get treated. A year later the health department called and said the one-year-old child had a spinal tap and was positive for syphilis. Life is tough enough for the poor without starting your first year of life with syphilis of your brain.

Oral Sex in the 'tween Years

A patient told me her son was at a party with a group of 12-13 year old kids. **Annie** had oral sex with seven different boys in the same night. The girl had a fever blister on her lip and all seven of the boys got herpes of the penis.

Mr. Jones, an assistant principal, said **Jessica**, one of her eighth graders came to the first day of school having to continue her penicillin. She had a Gonorrhea infection in her throat.

Stacy, a 16-year-old came in with the worst case of genital herpes I have ever seen. She and her mom could not figure out how she

had acquired this since she was a "virgin" and "saving herself for marriage." Her boyfriend had a herpes fever blister on his lip. Her nickname at school became "Ms. Herpes." Six months later she was in the hospital for two weeks after trying to kill herself because of depression.

While giving a presentation to a mixed group of teens, the topic of oral sex came up. When the question came up about what the teens thought about the activity, **John** told me it was like "holding hands." It did not mean a thing.

Cancer

Debbie was 35 with one child when she was diagnosed with cervical cancer from HPV, which causes 99.7% of Squamous Cell cancer of the cervix. She died two years later. As many women die from HPV induced cervical cancer each year in the US as from AIDS.

Tammy, a 15-year-old, was sexually active with 21-year-old **Jason** when in a medical exam, she asked her physician what was on her lip. A biopsy showed it was a venereal wart. She was having oral sex. She was also being treated for pre-cancer changes on her cervix from another strain of Human Papilloma Virus (HPV).

Depression and Suicide

Jane, a 14-year-old got pregnant and her father made her have an abortion. She became so depressed that after her second suicide attempt she was committed to Charter Rivers Psychiatric Hospital for severe depression.

Connie was 15 when her father brought her into my office to see if she was pregnant. She was late for her period and had always used condoms. She was not pregnant but in the process of the exam, I found a message written in magic marker on her inner thigh: "I want a life with no pain, I want a life with no worries, why can't I have a life with no death." After the exam and after I told her she was not pregnant, I asked her if she had considered killing herself. She looked at me with tears in her eyes and said "If my pregnancy test had been positive..." and she put her head down and cried. All I could do was hug her as tears also came to my eyes.

Julie, a college senior, was a virgin when she met the boy she felt would be her life long mate. He convinced her that she should sleep with him. The boy she gave her virginity to gave her Chlamydia in return. He left her and she has been on antidepressants ever since.

Cigarettes, Alcohol, Sex

Ann and **Linda** went to school and church together. They succumbed to the pressure to try cigarettes, then alcohol, and finally sex. They were so tired of feeling that they were the "only ones" who had never had intercourse, so they gave in. Together with two guys they planned and had sex the same night so they would be like their friends. They gave up thinking they were the odd ones. She told me she hated it and wished she had never done it. 72% of all sexually-active girls wished that they had waited to have sex.

[statistics]

Are sexually transmitted diseases really all that dangerous?

Yes! All of the five primary diseases that make up the majority of the epidemic of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) that are endangering South Carolina's kids are serious. Some can be treated. Some can only be contained. Some are fatal. While there are a growing number of health concerns that are related to premarital sexual activity, here are the five that every South Carolinian needs to know about:

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)

- HIV infection usually results in AIDS.
- **Once infected, most individuals will be contagious for life.**
- AIDS is often **fatal**.
- One South Carolina city, Columbia, is #9 in the nation in the rate of HIV cases.
- Three South Carolina metropolitan areas exceed the national average of 15.2 in the rate of AIDS cases: Charleston (16.1), Rock Hill-Charlotte (16.2), and Columbia (33.5).
- Almost 1,000,000 Americans have HIV and **20% do not know they have the disease.**

SOUTH CAROLINA FACT: South Carolina ranks 8th in the per capita number of new AIDS cases.

Human Papilloma Virus (HPV)

- While most people are unaware of this virus, it is the **most common viral STD** with more than 5 million new infections each year.
- **Condoms have not proven to prevent this virus** that spreads through skin-to-skin contact. Some say they are totally ineffective.
- Effects of the virus range from genital warts to causing certain types of cancer.
- A British study found that 46% of teenage girls contracted this disease after the **first time they had sexual intercourse.**
- The virus is the proven cause of **99.7%** of cervical cancer cases in women and causing over 4,400 deaths, making it almost equal to women dying from AIDS.

Chlamydia

- **#1 cause of blindness in kids.**
- Most common nonviral STD in the US with an estimated 3 million new infections annually.

- **Very hard to detect.** 85% of women and 40% of men have no symptoms.
- It is also a major cause of a number of illnesses including pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), pelvic pain, ectopic pregnancy and infertility among women.

SOUTH CAROLINA FACT: South Carolina ranks #7 in the United States for Chlamydia in women.

Herpes

- 21.7% of Americans age 12 or over test positive for Herpes Simplex Virus Type II
- **Outbreaks usually continue over a person's lifetime.**
- Some individuals are not aware that they carry this disease, yet this does not prevent them from passing it on.
- It is possible for **women to pass this on to their babies during delivery.** If a newborn becomes infected at birth, there is a 50% chance of death or brain damage if the baby survives.

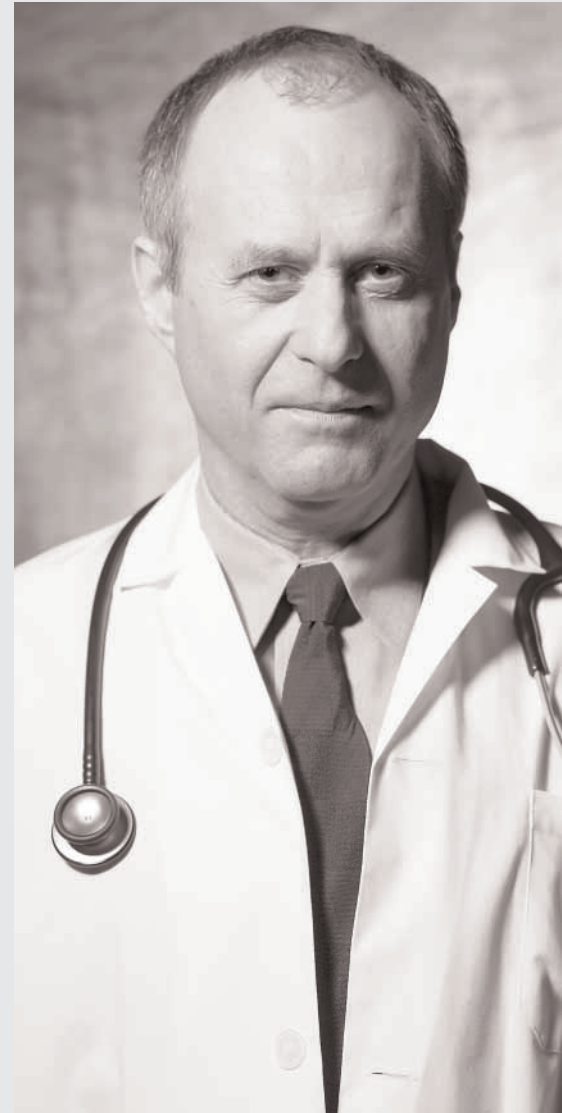
Gonorrhea

- A disease that is contracted by a disproportionately high number of 15-19 year olds.
- The disease has a variety of symptoms, which can include urethritis (discharge and burning while urinating) in men and pelvic inflammatory diseases (PID), arthritis and infertility in women.

SOUTH CAROLINA FACT: South Carolina ranks #3 in the per capita number of new cases of Gonorrhea.

Key Points to Remember

- While condoms can reduce the risk for some STDs, in **no cases is it 100% effective in preventing any diseases** and for some illnesses such as HPV there is no conclusive evidence that condoms are effective at reducing transmission of the virus at all.



- **65 million Americans have an incurable sexually transmitted disease.**
- Even excluding AIDS, over **10 Billion dollars** is spent in America each year on major STDs and their complications.
- 9.6% of 9th graders have had at least 4 partners.
- Besides STDs, teen births cost SC over \$1 billion dollars in 2000.
- In a Kaiser Foundation study, over **41% of those asked did not know they could get STDs from oral sex.**
- Both the National Institute of Health and the Center for Disease Control have labeled the STD problem in America as an **epidemic.**
- Some of the worst side effects to STDs are not physical. Teenage boys who are sexually active are 5 times more likely to attempt suicide than boys who are abstinent. Teenage girls are almost 3 times as likely to try to kill themselves as their abstinent counterparts.

SOUTH CAROLINA FACT: South Carolina ranks #12 in the nation for infectious syphilis.

resources on abstinence and teen sexuality

NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

The Medical Institute for Sexual Health
(800) 892-9484
www.medinstitute.org

Premier medically based resource for information about and solutions to problems associated with sexually transmitted disease and non-material pregnancy.

Abstinence Clearinghouse
(888) 577-2966
www.abstinence.net

Non-profit educational organization with an online resource library, news updates and an online abstinence resource store.

Silver Ring Thing
(888) 741-5673
www.silverringthing.com

Faith-based organization that produces high-tech events using sketch comedy and music videos to educate teens about abstinence. Teens attending the event receive a ring to wear as a constant reminder of their abstinence pledge.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Office of Population Affairs
(866) 640-PUBS (7827)
<http://opa.osophs.dhhs.gov/pubs/publications.html>

Brochures published by the federal government on adolescent sexuality. Can be viewed online or ordered free of charge. See especially:

- *If You Think Saying "No" Is Tough, Just Wait 'Til You Say "Yes"*
- *You Didn't Get Pregnant. You Didn't Get AIDS. Why Do You Feel Bad?*
- *How to Be a Better Lover*

Focus on the Family
(800) A-FAMILY (232-6459)
www.family.org

Faith-based organization dedicated to preserving traditional values and the institution of the family. Search resource section for the following relevant publications:

- *Let's Talk About Sex*
- *Five Reasons You Need "The Piece of Paper"*

SOUTH CAROLINA ORGANIZATIONS

Palmetto Family Council
1207 Lincoln Street,
Suite 201
Columbia, South
Carolina 29211
(866) 733-5605
www.palmettofamily.org



Palmetto Family Council is a non-profit research and education organization dedicated to strengthening the family. The **Palmetto Marriage Project** marriage clearinghouse page can be found at www.marriage.sc.

SC Parents Involved in Education (SCPIE)
PO Box 819
Lugoff, SC 29078
(803) 438-5144
www.scpie.org



SC PIE is a grassroots organization committed to excellence in the public schools of South Carolina through the meaningful involvement of parents in children's education. In addition to its policy work, SC PIE is an innovator in public school abstinence program design, instruction and training.

COOL INTERNET RESOURCES

Here are some websites for teens and their parents on making healthy sexual choices. Many also contain sections for parents, teachers and healthcare professionals.

Students for Abstinence
www.usa100.net

A.C. Green Site
www.ClubAC.com

Healthy Futures
www.doinitright.org

Choose Abstinence
www.choosetoday.org

Great to Wait
www.greattowait.com

Worth the Wait
www.worththewait.org

Teen Leadership
www.freeteens.org

Abstinence Education
www.abstinencedu.com

A Place for Parents
www.4parents.gov

Healthy Image of Sex
www.healthyimageofsex.com

BOOKS

Questions Kids Ask About Sex: Honest Answers for Every Age
www.medinstitute.org

Parents, Teens and Sex: The Big Talk Book
By Bruce Cook
Choosing the Best Publishing, 2003.
(800) 774-2378
www.choosingrthebest.org

Epidemic: How Teen Sex is Killing our Kids
By Meg Meeker, M.D.
National Book Network, 2002.
(800) 462-6420
www.nbnbooks.com

PROGRAMS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

The Princess & The Kiss
www.familylife.com

Passport2Purity
www.familylife.com

South Carolina Medical Institute
Dr. Jimmy Stands
www.scmeginstitute.org

Full citation of references in this document may be found at www.scmeginstitute.org.