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# STDs: More Than Meets the Eye

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By Penny K

## Silent creepers

Contrary to popular belief and science textbook horror stories about STDs presenting themselves in the form of ugly genital warts, doctors caution that not all STIs (sexually transmitted infections) show

obvious symptoms; not all manifest in hideous ways. It is therefore possible to contract an STI and remain unaware that you have.

"Some sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) may be symptomless," said Dr Christopher Chong, a consultant obstetrician, gynaecologist and urogynaecologist at Gleneagles Hospital.

More than 10 per cent of men and 70 per cent of women with gonorrhoea and Chlamydia – two common types of STI contracted by Singaporeans – may not experience any symptoms or discomfort. Other common STIs in Singapore include syphilis, genital herpes, genital warts and Aids.

Chlamydia Trachomatis, which affects both the mouth and genital areas, is one of the most common STI afflicting women, according to Dr Wee Horng Yen, consultant and director of the Women's Wellness Centre at KK Women's and Children's Hospital. Because the infection can be a silent one, women may contract Chlamydia from sexual partners who appear healthy, said Dr Wee.

#### Aftermath

While it is not unusual for STI victims to feel anger, anxiousness and even depression, a few may also be in a state of disbelief.

Monogamy, unfortunately, does not automatically protect one from contracting STIs.

According to Dr Wee, just one unprotected sexual encounter may have dire consequences – STIs can cause health complications such as brain and spinal-cord damage, blindness, cervical cancer and infertility.

For instance, a man with a history of genital herpes can pass the infection to his wife, despite the fact that he has been faithful since marriage, Dr Wee said. "The man may shed the virus in his semen without him experiencing any symptoms. His wife gets infected, and can get very distressing genital herpes symptoms such as severe genital pain, ulcers and difficulty passing urine," he added.

So folks, better to be safe than sorry; get yourself some condoms. No money? Get free ones from Agnes B. Too embarrassed? Don't have sex.

Source: TODAYonline

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