

Despite all the fearful talk, the action is pretty much the same



Responsibility without paranoia: Sex ed at Dartmouth

rush night, for instance, the beer flows like water along UCLA's Fraternity Row. Promises of thoughtless sex are made and kept—just as they have been for years. Caution often takes a back seat as passion goes into overdrive. "If I get a girl in my room," says senior Vasken Guiragossian, 21, "I'm not going to worry about whether I get AIDS or VD." Guiragossian says he wouldn't think of talking to a girl about her sexual history in the heat of the moment. "When you're in the bedroom taking your clothes off and getting ready to bed down, there's no way you could ask her if she's got a disease," he says. "She would probably slap you." Still, he says, he's not concerned: "I think there's no way I'm ever going to get AIDS. I never sleep with the kind of girls who would have it."

In general, the experts say, women have always been more concerned about the consequences of casual sex than men—a situation that has not changed with the current epidemic of sexually transmitted diseases. "Women are the keepers of the gate," says Blotnick, because they have more to worry about. Most students still say that pregnancy—not disease—is the big fear. That's an acceptable reason for a woman to insist that her partner use a condom. "You just pull the old, 'Here, put this on—I don't want to get pregnant' routine," says Roseann Kitson, a 22-year-old resident assistant at New York University. "It's easier to use the word 'pregnant' than the word 'disease'."

Still, women as well as men say they avoid condoms because they think the devices inhibit sexual pleasure—even though they know they probably should be doing something to protect themselves. In the Penn State survey, 33 percent of the women polled said condoms were a turnoff even though an overwhelming majority said they understood that condom use could help prevent the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. At UCLA, freshman Beth Carr tries to take precautions but, she says, "you get carried

away with the passion of the moment." It's also difficult to keep track of what is safe and what's not. "I didn't find out you could get AIDS through oral sex until two weeks ago," she says. "I don't like the idea of oral sex with a condom. I'd rather go without protection."

Much of the new condom advertising is aimed at women, and female students are being encouraged to carry condoms. Ever alert to trends, student entrepreneurs at the University of Texas in Austin and Texas Tech, among other campuses, have started condom-delivery services, catering to those who are timid or unprepared. Still, many college women find it extremely difficult to ask a man to use a condom. Talking about the devices "may imply that the other person has some sexual health problem," says Anthony D'Augelli, a Penn State professor who has surveyed student attitudes toward sex. It may also imply that one of the partners has had a gay experience. "Those issues are somewhat uncomfortable for dating partners who are young and inexperienced in talking about these things," says D'Augelli. "It's easier to avoid an awkward situation."

New visibility: But safe sex doesn't have to be bad sex. Indeed, sex with condoms can be pleasurable. Experts advise couples to incorporate the device in their sexual interplay—so that it isn't an unwelcome interruption (story on Dr. Ruth Westheimer's views on the subject, page 19). And, say some experts, with the growing discussion of AIDS in the media and the recognition that it is not just a "gay plague," many may find it easier to talk about sex. That, in and of itself, may increase their enjoyment. Says University of Houston sociologist William Simon: "All this talk about sex may be making it more exciting than ever—taking what may have become a casual act and making it more significant. The talk has given sex a new visibility."

But increasing consciousness of AIDS could have negative effects as well. Some health officials are concerned about a possible overreaction that could later lead to serious emotional problems. "Right now, the emphasis is a fear-arous-



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Return to tradition: Pinning rite at Indiana University