

University Health Center Health Education Program



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Let's Talk About Sex...

By Sariantra Kali

Baby. Let's talk about you and me. Let's talk about all the good things and the bad things that may be. Let's talk about sex. Ahhhh, and so the song goes. It's in the ads, it's in the movies, it's talked about all the time but what exactly is good sex?

Communication is definitely a key to unlocking the hot 'n heavy. Sure we all see those gorgeous hard bodies fall into bed night after night from the power of one sexy stare. What TV doesn't often show us, however, is realistic communication or the consequences of these behaviors. There are currently non-profit research groups working with daytime and primetime television executives to create stories that are a little more reality based. But until then you'll be wise to do your fact finding elsewhere.

The American Social Health Association reports 2/3 of all Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) occur in people under 25 years of age (www.ashstd.org) so it is important to learn actions you can take right now to keep you and your partner healthy. Let's take a look at some common sexual health misconceptions. After that...well, your fantasy life is up to you!

To obtain some accurate information I went to a veteran in the field. The UO Health Center's own Jolene Siemsen has been in nursing for 23 years and a Nurse Practitioner for 10. She has counseled patients about contraception, STIs, and has conducted presentations on lesbian health. Here she answers some of the most common question about sexual health.

Q: A friend told me to double up on condoms for extra protection. Is that the best way to increase safety?

Jolene: No, they are not meant to be used on top of one another. This increases the likelihood of breakage. It is better to limit your sexual partners and know your partner's history. The two most important things are to use condoms all the time and have those discussions of sexual history. Of course, it is easier to say and much harder to do.

Q: What is the most common STI among college students?

Jolene: Herpes and HPV (Human Papilloma Virus - genital warts) are the most commonly diagnosed (by exam and culture). There are occasional Chlamydia cases. Rarely do we see Gonorrhea or HIV here although recent Lance County Public Health information indicates increasing gonorrhea and syphilis among men who have sex with men.

Q: My doctor gave me a clean bill of health but my partner contracted an STI. How is that possible?

Jolene: A lot of people have this misconception. It is difficult to tell if someone has an STI because of asymptomatic infection and transmission. Specifically, Herpes (HSV) and warts do not have good screening tests. Approximately 20-30% of genital HSV are HSV 1 and are often caused by oral genital contact.

Q: My partner has cold sores from time to time, do I have to be concerned?

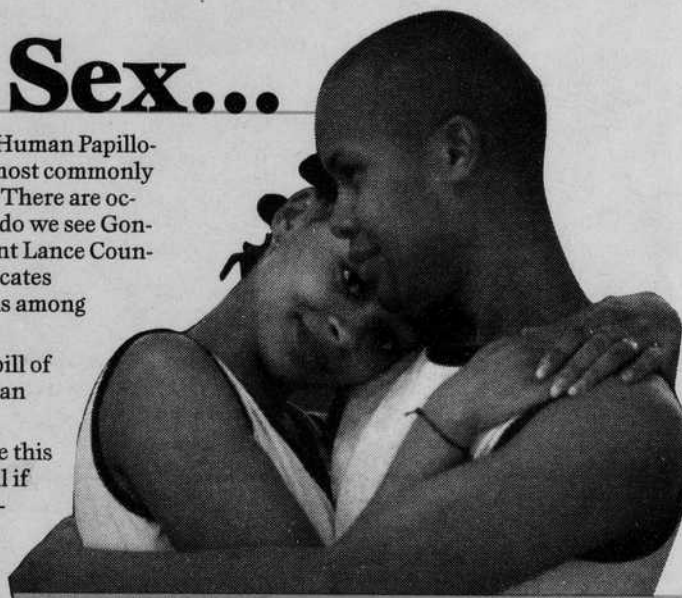
Jolene: Yes, unfortunately. More people are aware of the risk these days but some people still do not realize Herpes can be passed by oral to genital contact. It is important to avoid oral sex and kissing during a cold sore outbreak. Also, taking an antiviral medication like acyclovir and using barrier protection (i.e. condoms and dental dams), reduces the risk of viral shedding.

Q: Any last words of wisdom?

Jolene: It is important for people to come in with their partner and talk about these things with a health care provider. Everybody has a life story that affects his or her situation. You just can't generalize. Another important thing to keep in mind is that alcohol and other drug use has a negative relationship in terms of risky sexual behavior.

Other Resources

The University of Oregon Health Center is an excellent resource. As a student, you can receive services for \$6 per visit. Currently a federal grant program, FPEP, allows you to receive free contra-



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ceptive counseling and supplies as well as STI testing. This is a great deal! Many Health Center staff focus on sexual and reproductive health and several have worked on gay and lesbian issues. Jolene Semsen, Colleen Jones, and Benjamin Douglas are available for general and sexual health appointments.

There are also a number of websites, which offer clear and current information on these topics. While you are surfing the net check out the Centers for Disease Control (www.cdc.gov) and The National Herpes Association (www.herpes.org)

If you favor old fashioned book learning check out the Physician's Reference Book at the Health Education Office along with other books sporting inspiring titles such as: "How to get your Partner to Wear a Condom", "Heterosexuality", "Lesbian Passion", "An Intimate Geography" and "And the Band Played On". Come stop by for free dental dams, condoms, and check out all we have to offer. The office is located by Area B on the first floor of the Health Center.

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The Health Center offers a variety of services to aid students with their reproductive health.

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a Book Review

Woman: An Intimate Geography

by Jessica Hougen

Natalie Angier's book *Woman: An Intimate Geography* is a beautifully written biology lesson. The subject of this lesson is the female body. A wonderfully challenging book, Angier discusses topics ranging from breast milk to hormone replacement therapy, anatomy to anthropology. If you, like me, are not so experienced with science, this proclamation might make you run screaming from this book. However, Angier is a Pulitzer Prize winning science author, yet she writes with such poetic flair that you hardly notice that you are reading about chromosomes, hormones, and synapses. Angier uses this book as a basis to speculate on a number of subjects, all having to do with the female body. Through this speculation, she tears down ideas from old stereotypes and myths of women, and simply bowls over a lot of questionable science.

The range of topics in this book is astounding. Some of her chapter headings include Unscrambling the Egg: It Begins With One Perfect Solar Cell, The Well-Tempered Clavier: On the Evolution of the Clitoris, Holy Water: Breast Milk, and Wolf Whistles & Hyena Smiles: Testosterone and Women. As you can imagine, this barrage of information can be a little overwhelming, but the book is organized so that one could read a chapter, then not pick it up for months, then read another chapter.

Angier's style also makes this book so accessible. She writes as if conversing with the reader, and throws in a lot of humor. She writes from a thoroughly feminist point of view, without crossing the line into complaining or male-bashing. As you read this book, you can all but hear her discussing these topics

with friends, laughing over their opinions, and the opinions of so-called "experts."

The book describes female biology almost independent of male biology. As opposed to the standard texts that up-hold the male biology as the norm, or the example to which female biology should be measured, she treats female as a separate entity from that of males.

In short, Natalie Angier has written a fabulous book on the hows and whys of the female body. In a time when our society seems to worship girls with eating disorders, it is refreshing to finally read a book that explains why women get fat deposits how we do, what it means to have large breasts, and includes the reasons why these things are good. She is calling for an all-out celebration and acceptance of the female form in all of its shapes and sizes,

and I say she has arrived just in the nick of time. Angier herself calls her book "...a celebration of the female body-it's anatomy, it's chemistry, it's evolution, and it's laughter...it is a book about rapture, a rapture firmly grounded in the flesh, the beauties of the body." This is a great description of what will be a staple on my bookshelf from now on. This is the sort of book that, once read, should be shared with friends and relatives with abandon. This would be the perfect gift for any girl or woman, from pre-pubertal to post-menopausal. For everyone wanting to learn more about the female body, I highly recommend this book. It is available to check out in the resource room at the Health Center, along with many other great books.

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