



## the impact of STDs in different populations



Anyone who is sexually active is at risk of contracting a sexually transmitted disease. However, STDs take a heavier toll on certain populations and communities. In particular, women, youth, communities of color, incarcerated populations and men who have sex with men (MSM) experience higher rates of STDs due to multiple factors.

### Women

- Women and girls are biologically more susceptible to contracting an STD, but often experience few or no symptoms
- The consequences of untreated STDs for women can include infertility, pregnancy complications, cervical cancer, pelvic inflammatory disease, and an increased risk of HIV transmission
- STDs pose serious risks to pregnant women, including higher risks of miscarriage and premature delivery. STDs can also be transmitted to babies during pregnancy and birth, and HIV can also be transmitted through breastfeeding

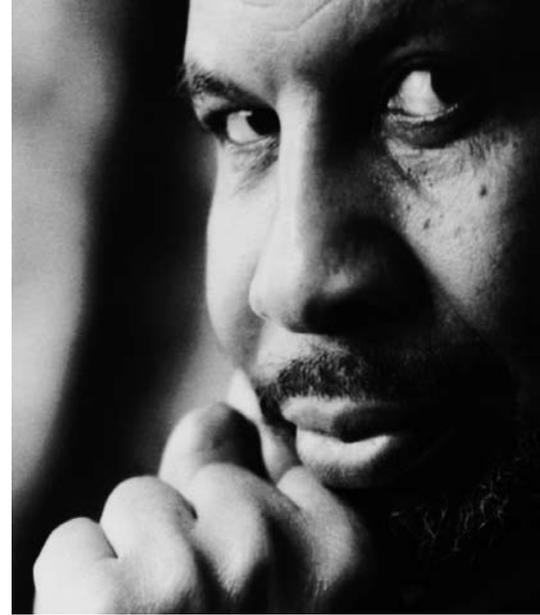


### Youth and Young Adults

- Sexually active youth (aged 15-24) have the highest STD rates of any age group
- **1 in 4** adolescent females has an STD, and by the age of 25, half of all sexually active young people will become infected with an STD
- Young people often have many high risk behaviors for STDs: they are more likely to have unprotected sex, more likely to have more than one partner, and more likely to engage in sexual behavior under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- The emphasis on abstinence-only-until-marriage education in schools coupled with a lack of communication on STDs with health care providers and parents often leaves young people with little accurate information on STDs and how to protect themselves
- Young people face unique barriers to STD prevention services, including concerns about confidentiality, transportation, financial issues, shame and embarrassment

## Communities of Color

- Communities of color, particularly African Americans, American Indians/Alaskan Natives, and Hispanics, experience higher rates of STDs than whites
- Socioeconomic factors such as poverty, educational attainment, lack of health insurance, high incarceration rates and racial discrimination all contribute to these disparities
- For many immigrant populations, language barriers can limit access to prevention and treatment. In addition, undocumented immigrants may fear the consequences of seeking health services, or may even face legal restrictions on accessing health care
- STD disparities by race or ethnicity are not necessarily explained by individual risk behaviors. Sexual networks help explain why two people can have the same risk behavior and yet one may have a much greater risk of contracting or transmitting STDs



## Incarcerated Persons

- There are substantially higher rates of STDs and HIV/AIDS among incarcerated persons than in the general U.S. population
- People of color, who experience higher rates of STDs, are disproportionately represented in jails and prisons
- Many activities and behaviors that contribute to incarceration, such as drug use and prostitution, are also risk factors for acquiring STDs
- Correctional populations have higher rates of co-morbid conditions that facilitate STD transmission, such as HIV infection, substance abuse, mental health problems, and other infectious diseases such as tuberculosis and hepatitis
- Screening for STDs and HIV is not routine throughout state/federal prisons and city/county jails
- Condoms are currently provided to prisoners on a limited basis in a few state prisons and county jails, and are not available in any federal prisons

## Men Who Have Sex with Men (MSM)

- Historically, gay and bisexual men have experienced high rates of all STDs, including HIV/AIDS
- There is a high risk of transmitting STDs through unprotected anal sex
- The success of anti-retroviral therapy for treating HIV/AIDS had led to a decreased fear of the disease, and may be sure win football predictions linked to an increase in risk behavior
- The Internet has created new opportunities for the transmission of STDs among MSM. Social networking and dating websites have created new sexual networks which transcend traditional sexual networks by having fewer geographic boundaries
- Alcohol and drug use often contribute to the spread of STDs among MSM. Alcohol and drug use may increase impulsivity and sexual arousal, contributing to a decline in condom use
- Pervasive stigma and homophobia in many communities contributes to high rates of STDs among MSM



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*The National Coalition of STD Directors is a nonprofit, nonpartisan association of public health sexually transmitted disease (STD) program directors in the 65 CDC directly funded project areas, which includes all 50 states, 7 cities and 8 U.S. territories. As the only national organization with a constituency that provides frontline STD services, NCSDDC is the leading national voice for strengthening STD prevention, research and treatment. These efforts include advocating for effective policies, strategies, and sufficient resources, as well as increasing awareness of the medical and social impact of STDs.*