

The Health Risks of Gay Sex

Men who have sex with men are at considerably higher risk for a number of health problems, and the related health-care costs are substantial. According to John R, Diggs, Jr., MD, there are major distinctions between homo- and heterosexual relationships, including levels of promiscuity, physical health, mental health, and life span.

(“The Health Risks of Gay Sex” www.catholiceducation.org/articles)

Levels of Promiscuity:

- Promiscuity is the factor most responsible for the extreme rates of STDs and a shortened life span among men who have sex with men. Researchers find that promiscuity is again approaching that of the 1970s when studies found that gay men had between 100 and 1000 lifetime sexual partners.
- In one study, “[m]en who were associated with the gay community were nearly four times as likely to have had more than 50 sex partners in the six months preceding the survey as men who were not associated with the gay community.” (Van der Ven, et. al., “Facts & Figures: 2000 Male Out Survey,” p. 20 and table 20, The University of South Wales, February 2001)
- Based on statistics collected between 1986 and 1990, it was “estimated that 20-year-old gay men had a 50% chance of becoming HIV positive by age 55.” (Hoover, et. al., *American Journal of Epidemiology*, 134(10): 1190-1205, p. 1203, 1991)
- Lesbians have fewer sexual partners than gay men; however they are 4.5 times more likely than heterosexual women to have had more than 50 lifetime *male* partners. (Fethers, Marks, et al., “Sexually transmitted infections and risk behaviors in women who have sex with women,” *Sexually Transmitted Infections*, 76[5]: 345-349, p.347, October 2002)

Physical Health:

- Sexual practices among homosexual men lead to STDs and physical injuries. Anal intercourse is common, yet the rectum is not physiologically suitable for penetration. The intestine has only one cell layer separating it from highly vascular tissues making it vulnerable both to injury and to infection. This thin tissue cannot withstand friction, resulting in trauma that allows a mixing of the partners’ bodily fluids.
- Ejaculate contains immunosuppressive agents and may impair the immune responses of the recipient; this effect, along with the fragility of the anus and rectum, make anal intercourse more effective in transmitting HIV and other infections.
- Anal intercourse can result in the following health issues: anal cancers; Chlamydia; Cryptosporidium; Giardia lamblia; Herpes Simplex virus (HSV); HIV; Human Papilloma virus (HPV); Isospora belli; Microsporidia; Gonorrhea; viral Hepatitis B and C; Syphilis.
- Oral-anal contact, unprotected anal intercourse or fellatio can result in “gay bowel” syndrome, a group of parasitic and other intestinal infections.
- Homosexual men also suffer from infections that are not commonly spread by sexual contact in heterosexuals: Hepatitis A; Entamoeba histolytica; Epstein-Barr virus; Neisseria meningitides, Shigellosis, Salmonellosis, scabies, lice, and Campylobacter.

- Mild to fatal medical injuries may also occur due to the practice of various forms of sadism.

Mental Health:

- Homosexuality is associated with mental health problems during adolescence, early adulthood, and in later life. In the Netherlands, where homosexuality is largely accepted, studies showed that even when homophobia may not be a causative factor “. . . males who had any homosexual contact during that time period [the twelve months before the interview] were much more likely to experience major depression, bipolar disorder, panic disorder, agoraphobia and obsessive compulsive disorder. Females . . . were more often diagnosed with major depression, social phobia or alcohol dependence.” (Sandfort, de Graaf, et al., “Same-Sex Sexual Behavior and Psychiatric Disorders,” *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 58(1): 85-91, p. 89 and Table 2, January 2001)
- Drug abuse and depression can lead to reckless sexual behavior, even when gay men are well aware of the risks. In 2001, a study showed that 20% of homosexual men engaged in unprotected anal sex (“Officials Voice Alarm over Halt in AIDS Decline,” *New York Times*, August 14, 2001). Drug use at gay “circuit parties” is common and increases the likelihood of unprotected anal intercourse.

Shortened Life Span:

- According to data from a Canadian study, between 1987 and 1992, AIDS related deaths caused male homosexual or bisexual practitioners to lose up to 20 years of life expectancy (cigarette smokers lose about 13.5 years). (Hogg, Strathdee, et. al., “Modeling the Impact of HIV Disease on Mortality in Gay and Bisexual Men,” *International Journal of Epidemiology*, 26(3): 657-661, p. 659, 1997)
- Other causes of shortened life span may include suicide, homicide, abuse by partners, anal cancer, Hepatitis B and C, and drug abuse.