

HEALTH / KNOW THE FACTS

INTIMATE SKIN DISEASES ARE ON THE RISE AND DERMATOLOGISTS CAN HELP

Dermatologist Dr. Joshua Fox, Director of Advanced Dermatology PC, Shares Tips on Addressing Sexually Transmitted Skin Diseases. While love, according to the song, is the sweetest thing, the after-effects of its activity can sometimes be not-so-sweet symptoms: the bumps, sores, and rashes of sexually transmitted disease. “These infections often include skin symptoms,” observes dermatologist Dr. Joshua Fox, founder of Advanced Dermatology PC, “and dermatologists are an important resource for diagnosis and treatment.” All insurances cover treatment of STDs as it is important for health and well-being. Romantic lyrics don’t include the statistics: According to the CDC’s Sexually Transmitted Disease Surveillance Report released in September 2017, after decades on the wane, STDs are making a comeback: There are more than 100 million STD infections across the country on an annual basis with 20 million new cases, half among young people between 15 and 24 years old. Cases of chlamydia, gonorrhea and syphilis – all of which can include skin symptoms – have hit an all-time high.

“It’s important to know that STD skin symptoms go far beyond herpes and warts,” emphasizes Dr. Fox, “and may show up on areas of our body that we might not associate with sexual activity.”

In addition to herpes simplex 1 and 2 and the human papillomavirus (HPV) responsible for genital warts, STDs with skin manifestations include syphilis, gonorrhea, chlamydia, HIV – and others. “Scabies and the virus molluscum contagiosum can also be acquired through sexual contact,” notes Dr. Fox.

Beyond affecting our bodies in areas associated with sexual activity, STDs may also affect our skin in other ways: “Chlamydia and gonorrhea can cause pink eye,” explains Dr. Fox. “Gonorrhea and syphilis can cause rashes on different parts of the body, including the hands and feet. And HIV’s effect on the immune system can result in a variety of skin problems.”

Staying alert for skin symptoms and getting timely medical attention is an important means of preventing the more serious complications that STDs can cause, Dr. Fox emphasizes.

Dermatologists’ expertise includes indentifying and treating STDs that cause skin complications. With this in mind, Dr. Fox shares the following tips.

5 Recommendations Regarding Skin STDs

1. Work with a doctor you trust: “Open communication is key,” states Dr. Fox. “Many STDs are easily treatable with antibiotics. For viruses such as herpes, there are medications that can control outbreaks. Sex is a healthy part of adult life, and there shouldn’t be stigma regarding STDs.”

2. Take prompt action: “Don’t wait for skin symptoms to go away,” emphasizes Dr. Fox. “Skin outbreaks may pass, but the disease still needs treatment. Certain strains of HPV can promote cervical and other cancer. Chlamydia can cause infertility and blindness. And – at their worst – syphilis, gonorrhea, and HIV are life threatening. Untreated, STDs also pose a serious risk to pregnant women and their babies.”

3. Remember: Skin outbreaks can occur outside of ‘intimate’ areas: “Sexually transmitted diseases can cause a variety of skin problems,” states Dr. Fox, “affecting not only intimate areas, but also eyes, hands, feet, and other sections of our body. Dermatologists are experts in evaluating skin problems, including those caused by STDs.”

4. Stay aware of prevention options: “For young people, there is a vaccine for HPV,” notes Dr. Fox. “And condoms can help prevent fluid-borne infections like chlamydia, gonorrhea, and HIV. However, condoms are less effective at preventing skin-to-skin diseases, like herpes, which can spread without sexual intercourse. Getting tested for STDs and maintaining a mutually monogamous relationship should decrease your risk.”

5. Traveling? Pack STD awareness, too: “Some skin STDs are more prevalent abroad,” observes Dr. Fox. “Chancroids and donovanosis, for example, are more common outside the United States. If you do develop symptoms like a sore on your private parts, make sure that you share your travel history with your doctor.”

“The good news is that STDs are treatable,” concludes Dr. Fox. “Sexually active adults should stay aware and communicate with their doctors.”

Joshua L. Fox, M.D., F.A.A.D., Medical Director at Advanced Dermatology PC. He is board certified and specializes in skin cancer, cosmetic surgery, and laser procedures.

Advanced Dermatology P.C. and the Center for Laser and Cosmetic Surgery (New York & New Jersey) is one of the leading dermatology centers in the nation, offering highly experienced physicians in the fields of cosmetic and laser dermatology as well as plastic surgery and state-of-the-art medical technologies.
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