

Women's Health

Knowledge Is Power When It Comes To Women's Health

(NAPSA)—Being informed about their own bodies could help women stay healthy. However, a new survey shows that when it comes to feminine health, many women seem to be misinformed—particularly about vulvovaginal health.

This misinformation could be the source of potentially dangerous feminine health problems, according to Elizabeth Gunther Stewart, M.D., director of the Stewart-Forbes Vulvovaginal Specialty Service, author of “The V Book: A Doctor’s Guide to Complete Vulvovaginal Health” and Advisor to the Vagisil Women’s Health Center (sponsors of the survey).

“There is still a surprisingly high level of embarrassment among women when it comes to discussing feminine health, and in particular sexual health issues—even with their doctors,” said Dr. Stewart. “The first steps to maintaining good health are regular exams, and fostering an honest, open dialog with their physicians to ensure that both patient and doctor are asking the right questions.”

Here are a few key findings from the survey:

- Nearly one out of five falsely believes that Pap smears test for most sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Pap smears screen for abnormal cervical cells, not STDs.

- Only 27 percent of women who experience feminine itching seek medical attention.

- A majority of women (82 percent) do not know that bacterial vaginosis (BV) is the most common vaginal infection in the U.S. Though most women are familiar with yeast infections, BV is the



A survey revealed a number of misconceptions about women's health.

most common vaginal infection and can lead to serious problems if left untreated.

- Thirty-six percent of women falsely believe that intrauterine devices (IUDs) have many safety concerns associated with them. This misconception is thought to stem from the concerns of the late 1970s, when the FDA did not monitor IUDs, and an untested IUD entered the market. Doctors say today’s IUDs offer virtually maintenance-free birth control that is 95 percent effective, doesn’t interfere with daily activities or intercourse and has minimal hormonal side effects.

- Twelve percent of women falsely believe that tampons are the only cause of toxic shock syndrome (TSS). New cases of TSS have emerged among women with genital piercings and streptococcal infections.

- Sixteen percent of women falsely believe that pain during intercourse is normal for some women. Younger women, 18-34, are most likely to believe this.

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