

## **A humanist discussion of... sexually transmitted infections**

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Humanists seek to live good lives without religious or superstitious beliefs. They use reason, experience and respect for others when thinking about moral issues, not obedience to dogmatic rules. They promote happiness and fulfilment in this life because they believe it is the only one we have. Humanists value personal freedom and choice because they contribute to personal happiness, but only as long as they do not interfere with anyone else's freedom, happiness, or security. The "golden rule" observed by many humanists, "Treat others as you would like to be treated yourself", means taking the wishes and needs of others into account, and this is an important element in sexual relationships.

### **Morality and sexually transmitted diseases**

Carelessness about other people's physical health is wrong, and people who know they have infectious illnesses, including sexually transmitted ones like gonorrhoea or HIV, have a duty to tell sexual partners and to minimise the risk of passing them on.

A rational and humane approach to STDs would include: world-wide promotion of safer sex, including how to say no to unsafe sex; full and frank sex education; access to condoms; proper funding for research and treatment, including help for poorer countries; and respect for the human rights of those with HIV or AIDS.

### **Questions to think about**

- Can any activity which does not harm anyone else be morally wrong?
  - Can an activity which harms others be morally right?
  - Is your health your private business and no one else's?
  - How are you deciding your answers to these questions? What principles and arguments influence your answers?
  - How is the humanist view on this issue similar to that of other worldviews you have come across? How is it different?
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