

VD? See your doctor

V.D.?

SEE YOUR DOCTOR

PRESENTED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL HEALTH AND WELFARE

This is the 20th century. Modern man moving quickly about his business, moving forward in a world of progress, a world so filled with today's transactions, man seldom finds time to look back. Until something extraordinary happens, and he has no choice.

If this prehistoric monster appeared in the mainstream of traffic in any 20th century city, modern man would forget today's progress, even if just for long enough to get out of the way. He'd be reduced to the single basic drive every man has inherited from his ancestors: the instinct of self-preservation.

The chances of meeting a dinosaur in today's world are very slim, but the possibility of contacting another kind of prehistoric monster is all too real. This monster is venereal disease.

This is an enlarged reproduction of the germ known as gonococcus, the germ of gonorrhea, a disease known 5,000 years ago to the Chinese and to the ancient Arabs, Greeks, Hindus and Romans, still known today in the modern world of the 20th century.

These are spirochete germs, shaped like corkscrews, syphilis germs, first referred to in European writings of the 15th century. Syphilis has kept pace with a changing world for 400 years.

Promiscuity and ignorance of the causes and consequences of the venereal diseases have contributed to their spread. There is evidence that many young people do not know that gonorrhea and syphilis are different diseases, that they can be caught only by sexual relations, and not just with an infected person of the opposite sex, but also by homosexual practices.

Down through the years, much has been learned about gonorrhea and syphilis. Modern medicine has developed drugs, providing our present generation with effective cures. Until today, here and now, these diseases have found a new ally: complacency. Modern society has lost its fear to the point of carelessness, and the monster venereal disease continues as a modern heritage.

This young man, for instance, is a carrier. That means he is carrying in his body the germs of gonorrhea. He knows something is wrong, but still hasn't worked up the courage to talk to anyone about it.

The previous weekend, John's family went to the cottage. On Saturday night, John and his buddy invited their girlfriends to the house for a few drinks.

John has been going steady with Linda for six months now. He thinks more of her than any girl he has gone with before, and Linda feels the same way about John.

For the last three days, John has been feeling a painful burning sensation each time he has urinated. And now, this morning, there was a new problem. John had seen a discharge down there and he knew it was pus. Now he was scared. What to do? There's only one thing to do,

and John's friend urges him to do it, and now: see his family doctor, and as soon as possible. He's the only person who can give the right kind of advice.

“Well, John, the microscopic examination confirms that the burning sensation you've been feeling when you urinate, and also the discharge of pus that you just saw this morning, are symptoms of gonorrhoea, one of the venereal diseases. Now gonorrhoea can have very serious consequences in an adult male as time goes on, if he does not receive the proper treatment. You see, the gonorrhoea germs enter a man's body at the head of the penis. They travel up and invade the lining of the urinary canal. Inflammation results, and this is what causes the burning sensation during urination. It also causes the discharge of pus from the penis. These are the symptoms of gonorrhoea in the acute stage when it is very infectious, and of course, anyone having such symptoms should abstain from all sexual relations.

- I feel alright, doctor. If I were infected, wouldn't the infection make me sick?

- Well, if you mean nauseated or headachy when you use the word “sick”, the answer is no. But gonorrhoea can cause complications that can completely disable a person, John, and these complications can arise if you neglect proper treatment. You see, the gonorrhoea germs may extend deeper to involve the posterior part of the urinary canal, the prostate gland and sperm canal. The infection may cause an abscess of the prostate gland and inflammation of the spermatic chord. Now this can result in sterility in a male. And arthritis also can result from a neglected gonorrhoea infection. So, you see, John, if proper treatment isn't given as quickly as possible, the subsequent complications can become life sentences for a man. For example, you may never be a father. Fortunately, this disease can be cured with modern drugs, but... tissues that are scarred and damaged from these complications can never be repaired.

- All the time you've been talking, in fact, ever since I first knew something was wrong, I've been trying to figure out where I might have got this infection. I used the toilet in public restaurants during the last two weeks, but they looked clean. Maybe the dishes weren't sterilized or...

- No, hold on a minute, John. You can stop all your figuring. There is only one way that you could have contacted gonorrhoea, and that is through sexual intercourse with an infected person. 'Cause there is no immunity to the disease, John. A person can contract V.D. any number of times, and furthermore, no reliance can be placed on contraceptives as a means of preventing infection. All this business about dirty dishes and unclean washrooms I'm afraid is just a lot of nonsense. Now, this is very important, John. It means that there is an infected girl who must be found and treated before her own health can be dangerously affected or before she passes the disease on to somebody else. Now, I would like you to tell me who the girl or girls are with whom you may have had relations during the past two weeks, and how they can be located. The Health Department will assist us in this. It will be done with courtesy and in the strictest confidence. The girl will not even be told who gave her name.

- Well, there was only one girl. But it couldn't have been her, doctor. We've been going steady for several months.

- Well, you must have been infected by her, if she's the only one. She should be examined and treated immediately. Look, please try to understand how very important this is for her. Now are you being truthful when you say there were no other contacts?

- Yes, she was the only one! Besides, you must be wrong. I just don't believe she would have stayed with me knowing that I would get an infection.
- Well, that's the sad part of this whole thing, John. This girl may be quite unaware yet that she is infected herself. And, naturally, she wouldn't know that she's passed along the infection to you. You see, gonorrhea is not as easily detected in women as it is in men. It may cause fewer symptoms. Well, surely you can realize that you'd be actually doing her a favor by seeing to it that she has the benefit of medical examination.
- Sure I can see your point, doctor, but... I just can't believe it.
- Well, whether you believe it or not isn't important, John. But we must know who she is.
- Let me think about it for a while, doctor. I'll... I'll come back after I've had a chance to do some thinking.
- Well, while you are taking your time, John, just keep one thing in mind, will you? Time is that girl's enemy right now, and your silence could cripple her. Now, I know that you think you're being honorable in withholding her name, but... your mistaken sense of honor could easily lead to serious illness. Look, she has passed gonorrhea on to you, John, but if she has been promiscuous with other men, she may also be carrying the germs of syphilis in her body. Now, syphilis is even more devastating than gonorrhea, if it isn't properly treated. Do you want to be an accomplice to this by keeping your secret when you're in a position to help?
- Alright, doctor. It's Linda Miller. She works as a secretary for one of the manufacturing plants in town.
- I know you don't think so now, John, but I know that you'll be glad you've told me."

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

"You asked why we've called you here. Why we think that you may have a venereal disease isn't important, Linda. The important thing is that you see your doctor without delay. He'll examine you and have some laboratory tests done. If you are infected, immediate treatment is terribly important.

- Wherever you're getting your information, Miss Johnson, all I can say to you is that you've got the wrong girl. Now if you'll excuse me, I'd like to be getting along.
- Linda. Let me explain some of the simple facts about venereal disease to you. Hear me out. Then if you still want to leave, you're quite free to go. Gonorrhea, in women or girl, may cause very few symptoms. When symptoms do occur, usually they take the form of a... a burning sensation during urination. Or, there may be a vaginal discharge. Now, even when the symptoms do occur, they're often ignored. They may even disappear in a short time. But the gonorrhea germs do not disappear. They multiply, and they travel. Now, if early treatment is not given, the infection can spread to the uterus, and from there to the Fallopian tubes. Inflammation in the Fallopian tubes can cause serious illness. The scarring which results may cause sterility. Sterility, Linda. A small word with a world of meaning. Do you know what that can mean to a girl? No babies. Instead of the joy of a family of her own, a memory of an illness which could have been completely prevented. Now, as I said before, Linda, you're perfectly free to go. But I'd like you to stay. We can discuss this problem. This *is* a problem, Linda, a very serious one. And only *you* can solve it for yourself. Won't you stay?

- Alright, Miss Johnson, I'll stay. But I don't see how this problem applies to me. I feel alright. In fact, I have trouble keeping my weight down. I've such a good appetite. If I do have this... thing, wouldn't I know it?

- Perhaps the worst aspect of the venereal diseases is that the early signs and symptoms may be overlooked, or passed off as some other illness. Now, I've already mentioned that gonorrhea may cause few or very mild symptoms in women. It can be detected, only by a medical examination and laboratory tests, and cured, only by a proper treatment from your physician. Now, the first stage of syphilis in a woman may show itself by a... chancre or sore forming on the outside genital area. But often, a chancre forms internally. Now, it's typically small and painless, but because it *is* painless and usually hidden, syphilis often goes undetected until it's reached an advanced stage. Now, even in the later stages, syphilis may show itself by symptoms that are mistaken for other temporary minor illness. Skin rash and swollen glands may appear six to eight weeks after the chancre has cleared up. A sore throat and fever may occur. Small sores may appear around the mouth, and patches of hair may fall out. Now, any one or all of these symptoms may occur, but often their true nature isn't realized because it's so common to other illness. Unfortunately, often, syphilis is not diagnosed until it's caused permanent damage to the heart or nervous system.

- But if the infection is noticed soon enough, isn't there some kind of medicine that a person could buy at a drug store to clear it up?

- Linda. There isn't any kind of medicine that can be bought over a counter which can cure a venereal disease. One must rely on proper drugs prescribed by a doctor. Now, any person who's foolish enough to believe that a bottle of pills or a tube of ointment in a plain wrapper might be effective in the treatment or cure of venereal disease is going to be very sorry later in life.

- I don't remember that chancre you described. And I'd certainly remember that burning feeling if I ever had it. In fact, I don't seem to have any of the symptoms at all, so how can you be so sure I have an infection?

- I'm not sure, Linda. In fact, I... I sincerely hope you're right. But the only way we can know, either of us, for sure, is for you to be examined by your own doctor. Look, think about it this way for a moment. In a few years time, you'll very likely be getting married. Now, if a woman with untreated syphilis becomes pregnant, she could pass this disease on to her unborn child. Now, that means that it's possible that the baby could be born dead or deformed. Now, before your wedding, your doctor will advise a... a blood test. If you are infected, wouldn't you rather find out about it now? Get the proper treatment to be cured, instead of waiting until two or three days before your wedding date? Venereal disease will not go away by ignoring it, Linda. Please, don't wait any longer. And Linda, if you are infected, the doctor will ask you for the name of the person who gave you the disease. Now, please cooperate. Now the proper steps...

- Proper steps? What does that mean? And anyway, how would I know how I got the disease, even if I was infected, or where? These germs must be everywhere. I could have picked it up from a toilet seat some place.

- Linda. It doesn't happen that way. Venereal disease is transmitted from one adult to another through intimate, sexual contact. Now, look, and I'm not stressing this because I... I want to pry into your private life, but if you are infected, I'm asking you to tell the doctor in private

the name of the person who passed venereal disease to you. He may have infected others, and they'll infect still others. It's your serious responsibility to protect the health of other people as well as your own. Why, you can do this by giving the doctor the information he asks for, so that all contacts can be located, and like you, be given the benefit of an examination and treatment if necessary.

- And what happens after I tell the doctor who it is?

- The doctor may contact him, or he may obtain the help of trained Health Department people to follow up the case. Either way, tact and discretion are used to avoid any embarrassment.

- I don't see how that could be done in my case. Last month, I had my first experience, with a man quite a lot older than I am. It only happened once. I didn't know it could lead to this. He was staying at the summer resort where I was spending my holidays. I know his name, but I don't know where he lives. I don't think he comes from this part of the country at all.

- All you can do is give his name and the name of the summer resort to the doctor, Linda. He'll take it from there. Now, let's make an appointment with your family doctor."

"Doctor Ferguson, this is Linda Miller.

- Hello, Linda. Come in. Won't you sit down?

- Hello, doctor. Miss Johnson, the Public Health nurse, told me it's possible that I might have an infection. That's what I came to see you about."

These two young people, by a chain of circumstances, contracted venereal disease. But fortunately, their infection was detected early enough and treatment begun in time to cure it before serious consequences could result. But what of the man quite a lot older than Linda? Will he be so fortunate? Linda's doctor and Public Health personnel will do everything possible to find him and treat him. But how many others will become infected before the chain of infection is broken?

"Venereal diseases are no respecters of persons. The health of thousands of our people is threatened by the increase in the incidence of venereal diseases. The medical profession and Public Health departments are concerned by the widespread occurrence of infectious syphilis and gonorrhoea. Public clinics provide free treatment in most communities, but they can't help without your cooperation. Venereal disease can affect people of any age. Not even the unborn baby is safe from the body-destroying menace of venereal disease. Ignorance, apathy, relaxation of moral standards are its allies. Linda discovered this the difficult way, by experience. Education and a constant awareness of the danger of promiscuous sexual behavior must become a part of our daily life."

This is the 20th century. But how many of us in our modern age are still in a prehistoric stage in our thinking about venereal disease? Why has venereal disease continued as a blight on society down through the ages when it should be as extinct as this dinosaur in this day of scientific marvel? How long will it take society to develop a social conscience as advanced as the material gains we now enjoy? Can syphilis and gonorrhoea be eradicated before we defeat complacency and ignorance? Can our generation govern its own behavior sufficiently to abolish the menace of venereal disease for future generations?

