

A field guide to common STDs

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Start with the chorus, slowly, and then alternate brisk verses with brisk choruses

Lively (♩=180)

The musical score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of one flat (F major). It consists of ten staves of music. The lyrics are written below the notes. Chord symbols are placed above the notes. The lyrics are: Pe-ter-son shows how to tell the gan-ders from the drakes, Co-nant has the fi-eld marks of love-ly, harm-less snakes, White and Bor-ror help dis-tin-guish hor-nets, wasps, and bees, And this song is a fi-eld guide to com-mon S-T-Ds. The clas-sic S-T - D can't spread through food-stuffs or through air. It much pre-fers to tra-vel when two peo-ple form a pair, Be-cause, un-like your el-bows or the bot-toms of your feet, And quite un-like the sur-face of a pub-lic toi-let seat, Your pri-vate parts have cre-vi-ces. They're moist or flu-id-filled, And, un-der-neath your clo-thing, they are safe from get-ting chilled. So, when the pri-vate parts are joined, as ma-n-y folks en-joy, They make a co-zy cor-ri-dor for germs to re-de-ploy.

Complete lyrics begin on the next page

REFERENCES

The Boston Women's Health Book Collective. *The New Our Bodies, Ourselves*. Simon & Schuster Inc., 1992, chapters 14 (Sexually Transmitted Diseases) and 15 (AIDS, HIV Infection and Women).

A. McMillan and G. R. Scott. *Colour Aids: Sexually Transmitted Diseases*. Churchill Livingstone, 1991.

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This songsheet was prepared in August 2014

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Peterson shows how to tell the ganders from the drakes,
Conant has the field marks of lovely, harmless snakes,
White and Borror help distinguish hornets, wasps, and bees,
And this song is a field guide to common STDs.

The classic STD can't spread through foodstuffs or through air.
It much prefers to travel when two people form a pair,
Because, unlike your elbows or the bottoms of your feet,
And quite unlike the surface of a public toilet seat,
Your private parts have crevices. They're moist or fluid-filled,
And, underneath your clothing, they are safe from getting chilled.
So, when the private parts are joined, as many folks enjoy,
They make a cozy corridor for germs to redeploy.

A small sore on your penis or your labia or anus
That disappears in three to eight weeks and is rather painless
But causes lymph nodes to enlarge and leaves a tiny scar
Can lead to consequences much more serious, by far:
A rash or surface ulcers that persist about two years,
And then a latent period. No outward sign appears,
But deep inside, the germs attack your spinal cord and brain.
This is the course of syphilis; it leaves some folks insane.

A woman with some germs in early stages will not know,
So this verse is addressed to men, in whom the symptoms show.
If you are finding pain and pus each time you try to piss,
Beware! because some dreadful complications follow this,
Like epididymo-orchitis: what an awful mess!
Your scrotum and your penis both turn purple, and abscess.
So get your discharge tested, for there is no panacea:
Some drugs work in chlamydia and some in gonorrhea.

Now this one is atypical. It's more robust than most,
Less sensitive by far to where it gets into the host.
If you find that your genitals are starting to get marred
With tiny growths upon their surface that are rough and hard
But otherwise are painless, though they are an awful sight,
Don't think you've gotten callouses from playing hard at night:
Just like the bottoms of your feet, your tender private parts
Respond to certain viruses — not toads — by making warts.

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Now this one is incurable. Most days you feel fine,
But viruses have colonized the base part of your spine,
And sometimes you break out in sores that blister and then ooze,
To which you may apply some healing ointment, if you choose.
The outbreaks seem to come with stress, for instance, when you're ill,
More so if you're a speed freak or a woman on the pill.
And it can help to take a drug that's called acyclovir,
Which may reduce the herpes symptoms when they reappear.

If you've seen *Philadelphia* — the movie, not the place —
You've seen Kaposi's lesions on the body and the face.
They are not always present, for there are no certain signs
That show up on the surface as the T-cell count declines.
The red cells carry oxygen. The T-cells, being white,
Are active in infections; they're essential to the fight.
If vaginitis or pneumonia doesn't get resolved
Despite antibiotics, then there may be AIDS involved.

We're gratefully amazed at what our scientists can do.
We thought the VD problem had been solved in World War II,
When penicillin took away some fears of falling ill,
And then we took more chances in the 60s with the pill.
But, as we brought in stronger drugs to drive disease away,
Some strains became resistant as they changed their DNA.
Now even the old classics can return to haunt us yet;
There's more than one infection out there you don't want to get.

Note: in some countries, the term “STI” for “Sexually Transmitted Infection” is preferred to “STD”.
In those countries, the chorus can be modified as follows:

Peterson shows how to tell the ganders from the drakes,
Conant has the field marks of lovely, harmless snakes,
White and Borror help distinguish hornets, wasps, and flies,
And this song is a field guide to common STIs.

Of course, in those countries, the authors of the local field guides to birds, herptiles, and insects
will be different, so singers will need to find their own appropriate substitutes.