What would you do if someone you love has herpes?

By Arthur Johnson
AFRO Staff Writer

What would you do if someone with whom you were in love told you that he or she had herpes? Would you end the relationship immediately and consult your doctor? Or would you listen as he or she explained that the herpes is manageable and that precautions can be taken so that you will not contract the disease?

According to Bill Palm, principal health educator of the Division of Sexually Transmitted Diseases, some herpes victims say they have never been turned down when they have told their partners that they have herpes.

"It's a matter of how you're able to present this to someone you're interested in," Palm says.

In the last several years, herpes, a sexually transmitted disease, has captured the public's attention and has caused many people to panic at the sight of rashes and skin irritations on themselves or their lovers. About 2,000 new cases of herpes are reported each year at Baltimore's public health clinics.

Despite the fact that recent media attention makes it seem as though herpes is a new phenomenon, Palm says herpes was first described by a French physician about 250 years ago.

What makes herpes so frightening to sexually active people is the fact that "No drug will absolutely get rid of it," Palm says.

Whereas victims of two other sexually transmitted diseases, gonorrhea and syphilis, can get a "quick fix" and usually avoid any complications, herpes is unpredictable.

Herpes is a virus that does not penetrate healthy intact skin, but the soft mucus membranes of the mouth or comparable areas in the genital region.

"It can be transmitted through rubbing such as the sore on one person and a susceptible area on another. It's common in children" says Palm.

The herpes virus found on the mouth is called herpes simplex type I. It tends to run its course if kept clean and dry. In some cases the sores never reoccur. Sometimes reoccurences are frequent. Genital herpes, type II, is the disease that has the sexually liberated pushing the panic button.

The first sign of herpes simplex type II is usually a sore in, on or around the sex organs. The sores may itch, burn or hurt.

"It can be very uncomfortable and may hurt like crazy. There may be a fever, like with a severe case of flu," says Palm.

Some herpes victims experience a burning sensation when urinating or a mild vaginal discharge. Sores may persist for several weeks before healing, marking the end of the active phase of herpes. The virus then enters a dormant (sleeping) phase the length of which is unpredictable.

"We have a range of signs and symptoms and a range of responses, Palm says.

Herpes type II is highly contagious just before and throughout the entire period during which any sign of an active outbreak exists.

When any sign of an occurrence is present, the affected area should not come into contact with another person.

Although a large number of new herpes patients never experience a second episode following the initial infection, some victims experience reoccurrences once or twice a year or more.

"One fellow had reoccurrences only four times over a twenty year period, but there is a possibility of having a reoccurrence at any time," Palm says.

"The more common pattern is to have reoccurrence less frequently as you get older."

Still, Palm believes there is "no need to panic if you have herpes. It is not like syphilis and it is not progressive. Aside from the discomfort, the problems are manageable."

Principal treatment of herpes type II involves relieving the aforementioned symptoms and preventing further infection. Steps are taken to prevent secondary bacterial infection and to speed the healing of the sores.

Patients are cautioned to avoid touching a sore and then touching another part of the body such as the eyes. Herpes infection of the eyes can lead to eye damage.

Female patients with genital herpes are five to eight times more likely to develop cervical cancer than women who do not have herpes.

During the last 20 years there has been an increasing concern about transmission of herpes to newborn babies. Palm says this development has contributed to the recent concern about the disease.

If a woman has active genital herpes at the time of delivery, chances are the infant will contract herpes. More than 50 percent of these children die or suffer severe damage.

Doctors recommend routine PAP tests (a method for early detection of cancer). Any pregnant woman with genital herpes should contact a physician immediately. Herpes in newborn babies can be avoided by performing a caesarian section.

Avoidance of this disease, as with syphilis and gonorrhea, involves limiting one's number of sex partners.

"The larger your number of sex partners, the more vulnerable you are. There is no way to avoid herpes by trying to be selective."

Those who subscribe to the theory of "I'll check them out before having sex" are just kidding themselves and are operating with a false sense of security. The herpes type II virus is contagious even before the tell-tale blisters or sores appear.

The reaction of many herpes victims ranges from indifference to panic, fear or a sense of contamination, and one woman even screamed when she was told of her infection, according to Palm.

"Another response for some victims is to research it like crazy. This can be very constructive response and an effective coping strategy."

Palm also works with a support group that meets the first Wednesday of each month to help herpes victims cope with their disease. People who may have social or personal problems can receive advice on comfort measures, appropriate diagnoses and help to overcome confusion.

"We can put people in contact with another victim to talk things through," Palm says.

The meetings attract from 10 to 20 people and have been held for about two and a half years. There is also a newsletter published for the victims.

"The mailing list is not available to anybody, not even me," says Palm. "Our goal is to help people come to terms with the problem they are encountering."

To avoid contracting the disease Palm recommends a rethinking of priorities.

"I think it's a matter of taking new relationships seriously. Set sexual relationships within a broader concept." says Palm.

He also recommends condoms, spermicides (gel or foams), good communication, stable relationships, and maturity.

"It's a matter of being able to talk to the person that you expect to become intimate toward. A person with recurrent one-night stands is a high risk. Feel responsible for your own health," he says.

WHERE TO GET FREE HELP AND INFORMATION ABOUT SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES

DRUID HEALTH DISTRICT
1515 W. NORTH AVE. 396-0176

EASTERN HEALTH DEPARTMENT
629 CAROLINE ST. 396-8111

DIVISION OF SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES
111 N. CALVERT ST. 396-4448

VD HOTLINE
11 A.M.-11 P.M. 800-227-8922

Left Bank on its way to new home

By R. B. Jones

The Left Bank Jazz Society is on its way to raising the funds necessary to move into its prospective new home, the former 5 West Movie House at North and Charles.

"We need about a million and a half dollars to complete the move into our own building," said John Fowler, president of the Left Bank Jazz Society. "We've found a developer to syndicate with us because we can't make a profit. He anticipates putting up about $300,000.

We submitted an Urban Development Action Grant package to the city. We should get an answer in January. Left Bank needs to raise $300-500,000 of its own," Fowler added.

One of the ways Left Bank is going to raise its share of the needed money is by having benefit concerts. "Last year we had a benefit concert for Sonny Stitt's widow. It went over so well that we decided to do one for ourselves. On Dec. 18, Arnold Sterling and a Baltimore-Washington group will play a benefit concert for us. We have a verbal committment from Houston Person and Etta Jones to do one in February for expenses. Also, Pieces of a Dream said they would come in and do a set," said Fowler excitedly.

"It's essential that we have our own place. The way things are now, every time we have a show we have to unpack and then pack up our sound system. Everytime we use the facility we have to pay the same price. It would make more sense to pay one mortgage payment," said Fowler.

The new facility is supposed to have a terraced floor plan with tables to continue the Left Bank tradition of cabaret seating. During the week, the facility will be used for seminars, kiddie concerts, and shows by local artists.

"For 20 years we operated like a fraternity. We never asked the federal or local government for anything. We acted as though we were underwritten by someone. Now we are involved with working with our city councilmen and other government officials. Now we are getting to know people we should know and learning the rules of the game. We're probably going to hire a full time manager some time early next year because that is one of the requirements in the city grant procedure. We're definitely on the move," said Left Bank president Fowler.

Community Calendar

PARK HEIGHTS COMMUNITY CORPORATION'S GIVE-AWAY

The Social Services Committee of the Park Heights Community Corp. is holding a COME AND GET IT DAY on Saturday, Dec. 17, 1983 within the Lower Park Heights Multi-Purpose Center located 3939 Reisterstown Rd., in which the corporation has its offices, between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m.

The items of clothing to be given away, free of charge, have been donated by persons cognizant of the need and all clothing is clean, serviceable and will be sorted according to type and sizes.

The only requirement for would-be recipients is proof of residency within the Park Heights area. This can be a driver's license, voter's card or two pieces of mail bearing the recipient's name which were received at a Park Heights area address. Everyone should bring bags with them since they will not be furnished.

Of course, donations are welcomed. PHCC is a tax-exempt community-based organization and all donations are tax deductible. Mrs. Earles Mitchell is chairperson and the number at the Corporation is: 578-0208.

VOICES OF PROVIDENT HOSPITAL

The Voices of Provident Hospital will be in concert, Saturday Dec. 17, at 8 p.m. at the Lyric Theater.

Proceeds will benefit the Provident Hospital. The public is invited to share the celebration of the Hospital's ninth year.

For more information call Barbara Gray, 383-9006.

FAMILIES OF PRISONERS COALITION

Concerned because someone you care about is in prison? Now's your chance to hear one of the men who makes the decisions about the future of Maryland corrections. Mr. Calvin Lightfoot, Deputy Secretary of the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services, will be the guest speaker at the next meeting of the Families of Prisoners Coalition, Monday, Dec. 12 at 7 p.m. at One E. Mount Royal Ave. For more information, call 727-8130.

UNITY IN DIVERSITY

A seasonal holiday program "Unity in Diversity " will be presented by Sigrid Dreyfuss and friends at Koinonia, 1400 Greenspring Valley Rd. on Dec. 14, at 7:30 p.m. There'll be story telling, bell ringing, music and refreshments. Open to the public. For information call: 486-6262.

MARYLAND ADVOCATES FOR THE AGING HOLIDAY PARTY

A Holiday Party will highlight the next general meeting of the Maryland Advocates for the Aging, on Thursday, Dec. 15, from 10:15 a.m., at Our Savior Lutheran Church, the Alameda and 33rd St. Two young people will talk about "Great Expectations" - what the younger generation is seeking from the older generation.

There will be a special musical presentation by Charles Meles and a sing-a-long led by Bill Thompson and accompanied by Victor Myrick. The public is invited to attend the meeting. Everyone is requested to bring a small personal gift item such as talcum powder, shaving cream or comb, which will be taken to Baltimore area nursing homes. Alfreda J. Pinkney is president of the Maryland Advocates for the Aging. For more information please call 484-0170.

Howard County Council considering jail for race hate convictions

COLUMBIA, MD (UPI) — The Howard County Council is considering legislation to impose a $1,000 fine and six months in jail for people convicted of engaging in hate violence.

Councilman Vernon Gray introduced the legislation Monday because of a spate of racial incidents in the county which forced one Savage, MD. family to relocate.

Under provisions of the bill, a person convicted of defacing property can be placed in jail up to six months and fined one-thousand dollars.

Dr. Gray said since many of the violators are juveniles, the legislation holds parents responsible for their children's deeds. The bill also calls for restitution.

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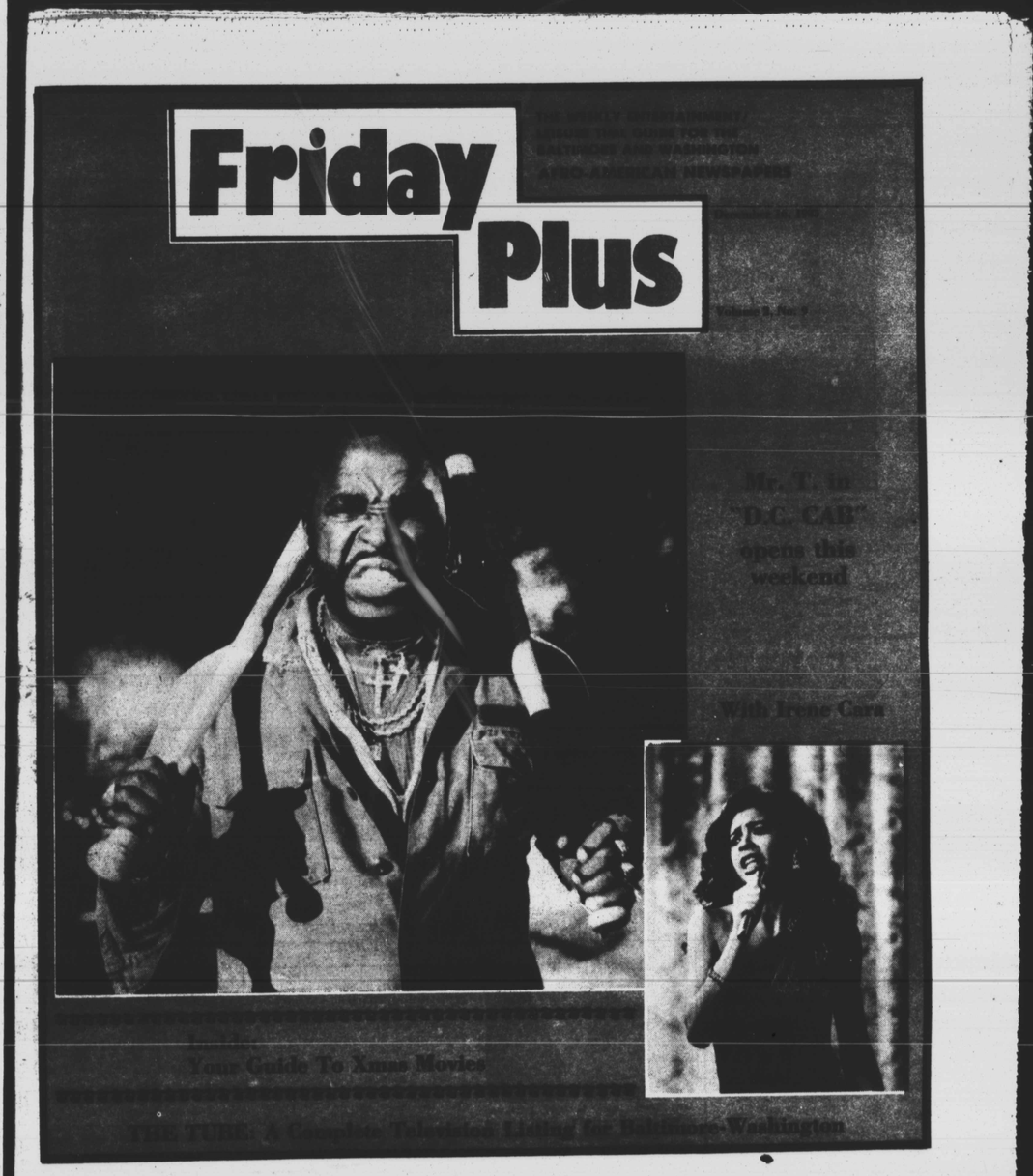
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