The Bug Stops Here

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Thirteen percent of HIVers have done the dirty without using condoms or mentioning their serostatus to negative or untested partners, according to UCSF and RAND Health researchers. POZ asked five positively randy readers: Whose job is it to bring out the jimmy hat?

Marta Hoelscher, 41, *mom and homemaker, Zanesville, Ohio*: “Prevention education is everyone’s responsibility, positive or not. Those of us who are positive know firsthand about this disease. The fact that positive people are having unprotected sex makes me angry — it’s irresponsibility and selfishness. These people give us all a bad name.”

Kellie Casper, 34, *AIDS activist, Atlanta*: “Someone who knows they are positive has a burden to disclose and protect their partner. But this does not relieve those who are negative or do not know from the responsibility of *protecting themselves*. We live in a victim-centric society, and it’s time for people to take responsibility.”

Thomas Francis Jones, 45, *artist, San Francisco*: “I used to feel it was the responsibility of the other person to ask me if I was positive or to assume that I was. As time went on, I realized I’m responsible for myself and my actions. That means taking my time getting to know someone, not letting fear of rejection make my decisions for me, and telling my HIV status.”

David Lee, 41, *social worker, Seattle*: “I feel that positive folks should disclose, and negative folks should ask. It’s everyone’s responsiblity to protect themselves. The real question is, why are people having unprotected sex with those whose HIV status they don’t know?”

Rhiannon, 32, *writer and public speaker, Louisville, Kentucky*: “My personal motto, in which I firmly believe: ‘Safe sex is no sex. Anything else, you are most likely taking a risk.’ Both parties should be held accountable for the risk of HIV or any other STD that is out in our world.”

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