Don’t Believe the Hype

POZ busts some dangerous myths about HIV.

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Myth: Pulling out is almost as good as using a condom. Withdrawal is sometimes referred to as the contraceptive method that’s “better than nothing,” and in fact a new study claims that pulling out is only slightly less effective than a male condom when it comes to preventing pregnancy.

We say: Yes, pulling out may prevent pregnancy, but it doesn’t hinder the transmission of HIV and other STIs. Condoms are still the tried and true way to lower your risk of HIV infection during intercourse.

Myth: The high rate of HIV among black women is mostly due to black men on the down low. In 2004, data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) suggested that men who have sex with men (MSM) as well as women were a “significant bridge for HIV to women.”

But a recent study published in the April 2009 issue of the *American Journal of Public Health* found that African-American men who identify as being on the down low (DL) were no more likely to spread HIV than those who were openly bisexual.

We say: Focus on reducing high-risk behavior and other issues that drive the epidemic in communities of color, rather than labels.

Myth: Looking at the HIV prevalence rates, race determines who should worry about contracting the virus. A new study found that African Americans and Latinos are more concerned about contracting HIV than whites.

We say: While the rate of infection is disproportionately higher among African Americans and Latinos, the fact is that everyone is at risk and should take precautions.

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