

女性 Phu nữ
women

महिलाए 여성

Protecting Our Selves,

Our Families,

Our Communities

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women's power

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Sức mạnh của Người phụ nữ,

Asian & Pacific Islander Women in NY:

Protecting Ourselves, Our Families, and Our Communities

Are you an Asian & Pacific Islander (API) woman in NY?

(this includes but is not limited to Afghani, Bengali, Chinese, Filipina, Hawaiian, Indian, Japanese, Korean, Pakistani, Vietnamese, etc.)

- Have you been raped, sexually abused or molested?
- Is your husband, partner or family member hurting you?
- Do you have sex without a condom with your husband or partner?
- Do you go to a woman's doctor (gynecologist) regularly?
- Have you come into contact with blood through needles, tattoos, operations or blood transfusions (outside of the US)?

If you are a woman who has concerns about any of the above, then your health and your family's health may be at risk.

A&PI Women and Violence:

Sexual abuse and incest is a silent crisis happening to A&PI women both in Asia and NY. Every day, thousands of A&PI girls and women suffer from this abuse at the hands of their cousins, uncles, or family friends.

In many of our Asian cultures, a girl or woman is most often blamed if she has been raped or sexually abused. She is seen as the person at fault, instead of the man who hurt her. It is very common for the girl or woman's family and community to believe that she did something to provoke the attack. A&PI women who have been abused are forced to keep silent about the trauma rather than risk blame and family shame. Because of this, many A&PI girls and women experience serious depression, and sometimes suicide.

Violence by a woman's husband, partner, parents-in-law, extended family members or employer is also a significant problem both in Asia and here in

NY. Many A&PI women do not have green cards, have limited English language skills and are in low wage jobs - this forces women to depend on the person who is hurting them for food and shelter. Getting help from the police or other community members is not possible for many women because talking about her abuse to people outside the family is not culturally acceptable. If a woman makes the abuse known to others or if she attempts to leave the house, she may face greater abuse and isolation from her extended family. She and her children risk being shunned from the community, and therefore this forces women to keep silent.

But there are places run by other A&PI women who understand our language, culture and religion that can help you. A&PI women who are being abused by their husbands or others must get help because abused women and their children are at greater risk for other serious diseases like sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV/AIDS.

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)

Women who are victims of violence at the hands of their husband or others are at risk for serious reproductive diseases. Why?

Sometimes, our husbands or partners have had sexual relations before marriage; sometimes they continue to have sexual relations with others even after marriage. This may be happening even if you are not being abused. When a man catches a sexually transmitted infection (STI) from another person, no matter if it was recent or ten years ago, and then has sex with you without using a condom, you are at risk for getting that infection.

Most STIs are curable, if a doctor detects the infections in time. That is why it is so important for us A&PI women to go to a gynecologist at least once a year, even if you do not feel sick. Going to

a gynecologist will help you protect your health and your family's health.

Most women who have STIs do not show any symptoms – because having no symptoms, many women do not even know they are sick. And because many A&PI women do not go to a gynecologist regularly, the infection goes untreated and can cause permanent damage to a woman's reproductive organs. If an STI is not detected and treated, a woman can get very sick and develop cancers and other diseases. Her reproductive organs may become damaged for life, and any infection that she has can be passed along to her children during birth.

While STIs can damage a woman's reproductive system and cause infertility and certain cancers, STIs can also increase a man and woman's chances of catching other illnesses like HIV/AIDS.

A&PI Women and HIV/AIDS:

What is HIV/AIDS? HIV/AIDS is one type of sexually transmitted infection that is spreading to A&PI women in Asia and in NY. Many of us think that HIV is not happening in our communities, but it is. More and more A&PI women and their children are catching HIV/AIDS, mainly through their husbands or partners.

HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus. This virus destroys our body's immune system, that when undamaged, helps us fight infections and other diseases. Once infected with HIV, it may take up to 10 years or more to get AIDS, which means Acquired Immunodeficiency Sndrome. HIV is the virus that causes AIDS; AIDS is a group of diseases that attack the body. HIV is preventable, but once you get HIV, there is no cure, only treatment.

How can you get HIV? You can get HIV/AIDS if you come into contact with an infected person's blood, semen, vaginal fluid, or breast milk. We don't always know who our partners have had sexual relations with, before or after marriage. If your partner gets infected with HIV no matter if it was now or 10-20 years ago, he can pass it on to you through his semen at any time, when having sex without a condom. Once you are infected, you can pass HIV to your baby through birth and breast-feeding. You can also get HIV if you do drugs, or if you have sex without a condom with your partner who does drugs. Even drinking alcohol can put you at risk for HIV/AIDS – alcohol affects your decision making, especially about safer sex. If you have had a blood transfusion or an operation outside of North America, you may also be at risk for having HIV/AIDS.

HIV/AIDS is NOT spread by sneezing or coughing, or using public toilets, sharing cups, forks or

spoons. You cannot get HIV/AIDS by swimming in public pools, shaking hands, getting bitten by insects, or kissing.

Early signs of HIV infection can be chronic vaginal infections, painful menstrual periods, irregular pap smear test results, extreme weight loss, white sores/spots in the mouth, and tuberculosis. These can also be symptoms of other diseases. Please see a doctor if you have any of these symptoms, or contact us for more information or to get free and confidential HIV testing, at 1-866-274-2429, or 1-866-APICHA-9.

**Protect Your Self,
Your Family,
and Your Community**

HIV/AIDS can be prevented. As a woman you have the right to protect yourself and your loved ones. As an Asian woman taught to be silent about sex, talking with your partner about safer sex is the first thing you can do. Take action by using a condom to protect yourself against HIV infection, unwanted pregnancy, and other sexually transmitted infections.

We can help you. Call our toll free number: 1-866-274-2429, or 1-866-APICHA-9.

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APICHA

ASIAN & PACIFIC ISLANDER COALITION on HIV/AIDS