Black girls who use marijuana engage in riskier sex, have higher STD rate

August 5 2008

Black girls who use marijuana are more likely to engage in risky sexual acts and contract a sexually transmitted disease, a new study finds.

The study, by Emory University public health researchers, is being presented at the International AIDS Conference in Mexico City. It analyzed the marijuana use and self-reported sexual behavior of 439 sexually active black females between the ages of 15 and 21.

Researchers found that black girls who used marijuana had significantly higher rates of incident STDs than non-marijuana users (32 percent compared to 23 percent). Marijuana users also had more sex partners, riskier sex partners, including a partner just released from jail, and more recent episodes of engaging in vaginal sex while their partner was under the influence.

"While adolescent African-American females remain a high-risk group for STDs, little research has examined their marijuana use, sexual behaviors and incidence of STD infection," says study co-author Ralph DiClemente, PhD, Candler professor of public health at Emory's Rollins School of Public Health.

"Although no differences in condom use were identified between marijuana users and non-users, results suggest that marijuana users are engaging in sexual acts with riskier partners and under riskier circumstances, and had higher rates of STDs," DiClemente says.

DiClemente and team recommend STD and HIV intervention programs designed for adolescent black females that promote condom use as well as emphasize the risks of drug use and STD and HIV infection.

Source: Emory University