

HIV testing like clockwork

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The CDC reported earlier this year that about 71 percent of HIV-positive women believe a "steady partner" infected them.

Huntley said that if a woman loves herself, she will get her partner to be tested for not only HIV but other sexually transmitted diseases before they begin an intimate relationship.

"It's something that's important to talk about with your partner and if your partner doesn't want to talk about it, then that's a big red flag," she said.

In August 2004, the North Carolina Department of Health invited the CDC to assist in an epidemiologic investigation of HIV transmission among black women in North Carolina.

From January 2003 to August 2004, 208 new HIV infections were reported among black women aged 18-40 in Raleigh, Durham, and Charlotte.

The most common reasons reported by black women for engaging in behaviors that place them at risk for infection were 1) financial dependence on male partners, 2) feeling invincible, 3) low self-

esteem coupled with a need to feel loved by a male figure, and 4) alcohol and drug use, according to the CDC's report.

In Charlotte, the Metrolina AIDS Project tested 107 people on Monday. The Mecklenburg County Health Department also provided free testing, but those numbers were not available by Wednesday.

Five guys in 40 minutes, and no waiting

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again. I am sitting across from Jay 717, a surfer/furniture-store owner with a long blonde ponytail. What a combo! Buzzzzz. Jean 700, balding but a very outgoing, charming personality. Buzzzzz. Bill 701, a divorced doctor who enjoys mountain climbing. "Isn't the age limit

21-35?" I thought as I glared at his graying eyebrows. Buzzzzz. Then it was over. We are told to go online later and secretly select the people who we would like to see for a "date, business, or friendship." As I drove home that night I can't say I found a good match, but I did have a good time. Ironically, what I

liked best about speed dating was the conversations I had with the women I met. We made plans to meet for dinner or shopping and laugh about our experiences being single. So, at the end of the day, I did make a connection. Maybe it wasn't the kind I expected or hoped for, but it was a good one nonetheless.

SOMMER BROKAW is looking for "that guy," but hardly desperate. Her column appears twice a month.

Summer made for activities

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shot — one by one — to try and tip the bucket with a broomstick or plastic baseball bat. Watch out for the down-pour!

• Dog chases tail requires no equipment other than a bandanna or scarf.

Line kids up, holding each other at the shoulders or waist, conga-line style. Tuck the scarf into the last child's back pocket. The first child in line tries to grab the "tail" from the last, leading the others on a zigzagging run in the process.

Let everyone have a turn as the tail or the head.

The August issue of Parenting suggests additions to your tote bag that can turn a day in the sandbox from ordinary to extraordinary.

Toss in a rubber glove and plastic spoon so children can fill the glove with sand, using the spoon. Then tie it off at the wrist and they'll have a squishy, flexible hand that's fun to play with.

Bring two dozen ice pop sticks (or regular sticks that are approximately the same length) and you can help children anchor and build their own houses in the sand.

A bag of shells, aluminum foil balls or pennies can be easily hidden—and recovered—in the sand during a treasure hunt.

In the June-July issue of Nick Jr. Family Magazine, there are recipes for "15 minutes of fun," including games called "Will it float?" and "Rainbow ice."

Who said summer fun can't

be educational, too? A collection of household items and a plastic pool or tub transforms the backyard into a science lab for "Will it float?"

Before you toss corks, balls, film canisters, wooden blocks, keys, rocks, coins and ice cubes into the filled tub, ask your youngster for a prediction whether the item will sink or swim.

"Rainbow ice" gets the creative juices flowing. Pull a bag of ice out of the freezer and place it in a pan outside on a table or the lawn. Don't worry about breaking up the ice, it actually works best as a solid chunk.

Blend several drops of food coloring and water in squeeze bottles and let kids drizzle colors onto the ice. They'll have a new palette each time the ice melts a bit.

• "Lithgow Party Paloozas: 52 Unexpected Ways to Make a Birthday, Holiday or Any Day a Celebration for Kids" (Fireside Original/Simon & Schuster) is by John Lithgow, who reminds playmates young and old that everyday is some sort of "palooza"—defined as "something outstanding of its kind."

Lithgow says he's a fan of water parks but he doesn't like the long drives and crowded parking lots that usually come with them. He suggests setting up your own in the backyard with a "slip-dee-doo-dah" slide.

You'll need 40 feet of thick plastic sheeting available at home supply stores and a garden sprinkler. Set the plastic sheeting on a grassy hill that's free of rocks and sharp bumps. Secure the slide at the four corners and at intervals along the edges with small plastic garden stakes.

Set a sprinkler on low at the top of the slide to make it slippery. Take turns sliding on your belly or back, giving yourself plenty of room between sliders.

(As much fun as a slide like this is for people, lawns don't like it much. Remove the plastic and stakes as soon as your done to keep grass green and happy.)

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