

## **Sawbones 187: The Clap**

Published on May 25th, 2017

[Listen here at TheMcElroy.family](#)

**Clint:** *Sawbones* is a show about medical history, and nothing the hosts say should be taken as medical advice or opinion. It's for fun. Can't you just have fun for an hour, and not try to diagnose your mystery boil? We think you've earned it. Just sit back, relax, and enjoy a moment of distraction from... that weird growth. You're worth it.

[theme music, "Medicines" by The Taxpayers, plays]

**Justin:** Welcome!

[audience cheers]

**Justin:** To *Sawbones*, a marital tour of misguided medicine. I'm your cohost, Justin Tyler McElroy.

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

[audience cheers]

**Sydnee:** And I'm Sydnee Smirl-McElroy.

[audience cheers louder]

**Justin:** Y'all...

[audience continues cheering, dies out]

**Justin:** The first 10 times...

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Justin:** Cute, I'll grant you. Um, so we already have— we have a topic picked out, uh, for this episode...

**Sydnee:** I mean, I hope we do. [laughs]

**Justin:** ...and uh, I have this— this is so good. [laughs] It's really funny. Hold on.

[audience laughs]

**Justin:** Just let me get— just let me get through it. Uh, and uh, we thought that uh, rather than us tell you—

**Sydnee:** No, what “we thought,” or “you thought”?

**Justin:** What I thought...

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Justin:** ...is that rather than us tell you what the subject of the episode is, that you would tell us. Are you ready?

**Audience Member 1:** [unintelligible suggestion]

**Audience Member 2:** Gonorrhea!

**Justin:** No, I—

**Sydnee:** [bursts out laughing]

[audience laughs, cheers]

**Justin:** Okay. Here we go, are you ready? Okay.

**Sydnee:** It's a bit, guys.

**Justin:** It's a bit. Just work with me, okay? [singing] The stars at night are big and bright...

[audience claps]

**Audience and Justin:** [singing] Deep in the heart of Texas.

**Justin:** That's right, we're doing The Clap!

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

[audience laughs, cheers]

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Justin:** Your— your doubts have been rendered moot. Thank you for indulging me.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. And somebody was right! Somebody said gonorrhea!

[audience laughs]

**Justin:** Oh, dunk, I did think it was chlamydia. I'm so very sorry.

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** And for the occasion, 'cause I didn't know about this really clever thing Justin was gonna come up with at the last minute, I brought gonorrhea with me to...

**Audience:** Aww...

**Sydnee:** ...Austin. To share with all of you. [laughs]

**Justin:** We picked that up at your Terra Toys.

[audience cheers]

**Sydnee:** The only time it's nice to share gonorrhea with your friends. Here it is.

**Justin:** What's gonorrhea?

**Sydnee:** Well, I'm gonna tell ya. First of all, thank you uh, John and Diane. Not Jack and Diane, John and Diane, for recommending this topic. Um, gonorrhea comes— first of all, the word, "gonorrhea," where does that come from? So from the ancient Greek for "flow of seed..."

[audience groans]

**Sydnee:** Yeah, okay. Everybody—

**Justin:** Uh, one, no likey.

**Sydnee:** First of all, [laughs] just buckle in, 'cause...

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** That's the kind of episode this is.

**Justin:** Do you think— do you think -rrhea is the "flow" part? Because "diarrhea," I would think, would be of the same—

[audience groans]

**Justin:** Hey, it's linguistics, alright? It's not all jokes, okay? This is a linguist— explanation of linguistics.

**Sydnee:** There were— for a long time, it was thought that gonorrhea was just some sort of irregular flow of semen. That that was all that was happening, was like, "I don't know what's going on. I don't feel— I don't feel like I'm into it right now, and I didn't see this coming, but now... now this is happening."

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** And so people thought it was just semen.

**Justin:** Okay.

**Sydnee:** And a lot of the symptoms early on, their descriptions were mainly associated with the symptoms that come with a penis, because men were more likely to have symptoms than women, and so you see a lot of this association with just what happens to the penis, as opposed to... everything else.

**Justin:** Okay.

**Sydnee:** Why is it called “the clap”?

**Justin:** Uh, I have... Ugh.

[audience laughs]

**Justin:** I have heard that the reason it’s called “the clap...”

**Sydnee:** Uh-huh.

**Justin:** ...is because the... [pauses]

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Justin:** When you came in, and your... [clears throat] wiener...

[audience laughs]

**Justin:** ...was having the cla— the gonorrhea. Was—

**Sydnee:** [through laughter] Was having the gonorrhea.

**Justin:** Which I still don’t know what it is, to be clear.

**Sydnee:** Right.

**Justin:** That when they would have it, the doctor would go, [makes slapping noise] like that...

[audience groans]

**Audience member:** Jesus!

**Justin:** ...and slap it... and s— thank you.

[audience laughs]

**Justin:** I'm assuming Jesus wasn't present, but thank you.

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** That is one theory as to why it was called— why it is called still the clap, it— not so much doctors. It was not, like, a medical procedure, like, "Here, I got this."

**Justin:** Hey, if that's—

**Sydnee:** "Strap on my gloves."

**Justin:** If that's not real, and you spend an afternoon coming up with that, get a life, okay?

[audience laughs]

**Justin:** Get a hobby.

**Sydnee:** No, it was more like a recommendation for like, a do-it-yourself-er, like... if you can't pee because there's so much discharge there, you could either... clap it... [laughs] or take something really heavy, and just kind of...

[shocked audience noises]

**Sydnee:** ...smack it! [laughs]

[audience laughs]

**Justin:** You just gotta keep pushing through, Sydster.

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** The— the other— the other theory is actually – and this is probably more likely – is that it comes from the word, the French word for brothels. Back in the day, a brothel would be called a “clapier,” which was the same word at the time that was used for, like, a rabbit hutch as well.

**Justin:** Some— some— some odd evenings that led to, I’m sure.

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** So that’s probably— that’s probably actually where “the clap” came from, although it is associated with that. And there was also an old English word that meant “to throb,” that was called clapham. So somewhere in there. Probably the brothels, though.

**Justin:** Okay. That’s go with that. ‘Cause I don’t ever want to think about my thing again.

**Sydnee:** You—[laughs] Or you could just call it “the drip,” ‘cause that’s the other... that’s the other name for it.

It is, as most of you, it seems, know, a sexually transmitted infection. And it’s caused by a bacteria, Neisseria gonorrhea, that looks like this little guy. And it can cause symptoms like burning when you pee. That’s like, the classic thing, right? Does it burn when you pee. Obviously, there’s discharge, ‘cause we’ve talked a lot about discharge, so... what we call purulent or, I mean, pus. It’s pus. Um... [laughs]

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** You can have pain in things like your testicles or in the pelvic region, and then it can cause some, like, rare things where it spreads to joints and causes infections there, or meningitis. These are much more rare. Um, and it can affect things like the uterus and the fallopian tubes,

and cause a lot more problems than just discharge. Uh, and you can also get it in your throat. Which I learned from *Degrassi*.

[audience cheers]

**Sydnee:** Because it goes there, [laughs] *Degrassi*.

**Justin:** It does go there. [through laughter] And apparently, so does gonorrhea.

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** The—[laughs] the symptoms start about four to six days after you've been infected, and a lot of people are never gonna get 'em, so you may be infected with gonorrhea and never know, which you're still— you can still transmit it, even if you don't have symptoms. But...

**Justin:** Sleep tight!

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** And you can get it again. So, you can get it, be treated, and then get it again. You're not immune forever.

It was so common throughout history in men that for a long time, it was assumed that all women just had it. Like, from birth, they've just got it, and any time you had sex with one, you're rolling the dice. You might get it too.

**Justin:** And that... was...

**Sydnee:** It's not true. [laughs]

**Justin:** ...not true, okay.

**Sydnee:** That is—



[audience laughs]

**Justin:** I suspected, but...

**Sydnee:** [laughs] It's been talked about— and now, when I say "gonorrhea" specifically, symptoms that are consistent with what we now know to be gonorrhea have been talked about since ancient times. There's probably a lot of overlap with individual cases between, you know, gonorrhea and chlamydia and then sometimes syphilis gets thrown in there with other symptoms, so— but generally speaking, we think that we've known about gonorrhea since Hippocrates.

He wrote about something that was probably called— that was probably gonorrhea, but he called it "strangury," and it was because of the slow, painful urination that comes with it. It was like, strangling your urine flow... so, it was named that. [laughs]

Uh, both Galen and one of our— one of our favorite features on *Sawbones*, Pliny the Elder...

[audience cheers]

**Sydnee:** They both had the same theory that it was— it had to do with— basically, your semen has become poison.

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** And so now it hurts! Uh... Pliny didn't have a lot— usually, he has like 30 treatments for anything. For this, he was like, "Eh, the only thing that I know will help, definitely, are onions and leeks."

**Justin:** Sure.

**Sydnee:** Uh, you could definitely just eat a lot of those and it will go away, but he says, "But you might not want to, 'cause they are gonna give you farts. So..."

**Justin:** [snorts]

[audience laughs]

**Justin:** That's a man who knew his priorities.

**Sydnee:** And the treatments that they recommended back then were things like massage or cooling foods. When we talk about, like, the time where we believed in the four humors, this was thought to be, like, a hot disease, and so you needed cool things to try to balance it out. So like, eat some cooling foods, or take a cold bath. And drink some vinegar. And don't have sex! They did say that, don't have sex. 'Cause that ma— they just thought it made it worse. They didn't know about spreading it.

They thought the cold stuff would drive away all the warm humors, and you would get better. They had more elaborate treatments that actually don't sound too bad, where you like, wrap the affected... organ in wool and rose oil and... dump some white wine on there, and some... olive oil.

**Justin:** Now, Sydnee, as you well know, that is my nightly ritual.

[audience laughs]

**Justin:** I'm so happy to hear that it's also been preventative.

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** They also had— you could throw on a poultice, of something that like, smells nice. Like, marjoram and rosemary, maybe a little bit of dill, maybe some honey. Lots of herbs and spices...

[growing audience laughter]

**Sydnee:** ...and at the end, throw in some friction for good measure.

[audience laughs, scattered cheers]

**Sydnee:** And I r— I was reading this, and thinking, "Hold on a second..."  
[laughs]

[audience laughs]

**Justin:** Do you wanna eat penises? 'Cause I think that that's what y'all are angling for.

**Sydnee:** [laughs] No!

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** That wasn't where I was going!

**Justin:** Whatever, you just sounded like the first 30 seconds of an episode of *Hannibal*, okay? Don't look at me with that judgment!

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Justin:** They're your weird old people!

**Sydnee:** Um, other— other not quite as pleasurable ancient treatments included things like, of course, bloodletting, 'cause why not?

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** We do it for everything. Do it for this too. Um, anything that would make you puke was thought to be a good treatment, so just something that'll make you throw up. And then in addition, you know, harmless things like hemlock.

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** Um, or some poppies, 'cause you'll feel better.

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** Or maybe just some lettuce, or some... coriander, or some lentils. 'Cause we don't know. [laughs]

**Justin:** We're just guessing. We just got protein, that's good!

**Sydnee:** We just got this stuff.

Um, there are mentions of it probably in the Bible. There are a couple of mentions of something called zav or zavah, and that's probably a reference to gonorrhea or something like it.

They talked about it in ancient Persian culture. You would place a metal plate over your groin, if you had it. And then sleep in a cold bed. There you go.

**Justin:** I...

[pause]

[audience laughs]

**Justin:** Probably not too much of a problem to find a cold bed if you're struck with gonorrhea. That's probably— you're probably accustomed to that.

**Sydnee:** In the middle ages— vinegar, we've talked about before. Vinegar has been a very popular treatment for everything for a long time. Specifically for this, in the middle ages, you'd want to actually inject vinegar... into your penis.

[audience groans]

**Sydnee:** If you wanted to...

**Justin:** Meh...

**Sydnee:** ...you know.

**Justin:** No, I don't think so.

**Sydnee:** Get right to the source. [laughs]

[audience laughs]

**Justin:** Eh. What else you got?

**Sydnee:** Uh, in England, [laughs] it was a little better. If you were royalty in England, they had a better concoction for you. It's still an injection, but instead, it's made of breast milk, almond milk, sugar, and violet oil.

[scattered audience groans]

**Sydnee:** [hesitantly] Better than vinegar?

**Justin:** Yeah, better.

**Sydnee:** I don't know.

**Justin:** Sure.

**Sydnee:** [laughs] Gonorrhea got to be such a problem that there were actually laws passed to try to stop people from getting it. They knew that it was associated somehow with sex. They obviously didn't know the particulars. But in 1161, English parliament passed laws to try and stop the spread of what they called "the perilous infirmity of burning". [laughs]

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** Although nobody really knew the cause! So, it was really hard to, like, regulate the spread of it, 'cause nobody was quite sure what was happening.

Louis IX in 1256, he went a step further, and said, "You know what, we're not gonna regulate this. We're gonna banish anybody who has it."

**Justin:** Nice.

**Sydnee:** “Just throw them out.” And everybody was kind of freaking out, and nobody knew how to stop it, so everybody took to kind of washing their bits in vinegar.

**Justin:** Mm-hm.

**Sydnee:** Because that seemed to... I don’t know, something.

**Justin:** Be gross?

**Sydnee:** Smell different? Um, the epidemics of gonorrhea, though, did, on the flipside, lead to an interest in the concept of public health, and the idea of public health officials that would work for the government, and try to force people to get treated, which is— would be particularly bad, because their treatments were terrible and didn’t work.

But I mean, even without your ability to refuse, that’s the first idea of like, “We’re gonna force you to come in and try to get treated for this, ‘cause we are spreading it to people, and we don’t know how.”

It also helped lead to the secularizing of medicine, because at the time, there were a lot of physicians who had to take orders of the priesthood as part of their position training. And Pope Boniface said, like, “If this is what we’re gonna be doing... maybe we can let doctors do their own thing, and we can do something else.”

And that was actually the beginning of the secularizing of medicine, where they said, “Let’s just separate that out, and maybe you can just go to...” not med school. You know, you can pretend to be a doctor [laughs] and you don’t have to be a priest too.

**Justin:** So, as I find myself saying almost every week, thank you, gonorrhea.

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

[audience laughs]

[ad break]

**Sydnee:** Now, I've mentioned this guy in a different, in another episode, but I have to bring him up again, in case you haven't heard it. We thought for a long time that maybe gonorrhea and syphilis were part of the same disease, that it was just different phases of the same, you know, disease spectrum.

And there was a guy who was so convinced that he thought, "I'm gonna do—I'm gonna do whatever it takes to figure it out." His name was John Hunter. He was a doctor in London, and he was treating a *ton* of sexually transmitted infections. At this point in history, London was booming – this was in, like, the mid to late 1700s – London was booming, and there was a lot of prostitution, and a lot of people had both gonorrhea and syphilis.

And a lot of people were arguing, like, doctors, is it the same thing? Are they different things? There's the clap and the pox. Is it the same, or different?

Hunter thought they were the same disease, and the only way we're ever gonna prove it is if we get some gonorrhea and we give it to somebody who's never had either, and then we see what happens. The problem was, he had to find somebody that he knew for sure... [laughs] never had either. And who better than himself?

**Justin:** Nice!

[mixed audience reactions]

**Sydnee:** So the way he—the way he went about this is he got some... pus from...

[audience groans]

**Sydnee:** ...the penis of a patient [laughs] who had— who he had diagnosed with gonorrhea. And he... made some cuts...

[audience groans]

**Sydnee:** ...sorry... in his own... penis. And then he just kinda rubbed it in there. And—

[audience groans, laughs]

**Sydnee:** Some doctors will just do anything for medicine. For their— for their art!

**Justin:** I bet afterwards, he was like— he's like, "Um, guys, do you wanna rename it Hunter's Disease or something?"

[audience laughs]

**Justin:** "Can I get something out of this, please?"

**Sydnee:** He actually— actually, you're not far off. So he ended up uh, he got the chancre that we associate with syphilis. And he also got symptoms of gonorrhea. And he thought, "I did it! I proved it! This was all just gonorrhea to begin with! It's all the same thing, they're the same disease! I win, I'm right!" And it became known briefly as the hunterian chancre, 'cause it was Hunter's chancre.

**Justin:** Oh!

**Sydnee:** Except he was wrong. It took 'em a long time to undo the damage he did, and finally just broke the news to him, "John, you just gave yourself both gonorrhea and syphilis."

**Justin:** [laughs]

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** "That dude had both, and now you got both. Sorry, man."

**Justin:** "Sorry. Uh, but hey, in a few years, they're talk about you on a medical history podcast, so... got that going for you." Twice! As it turns out.



**Sydnee:** Twice, yeah.

**Justin:** You're the only person that they'll drag you out again [laughs] to—  
[holding back laughter] for public harassment.

**Sydnee:** [laughs] Other than Pliny the Elder.

**Justin:** Yeah, Pliny, yeah.

**Sydnee:** We'll just drag you out again and again.

Um, in the 17- and 1800s, the treatments largely consisted of... mercury. That was the biggest thing you would do. Um, a lot of injections, again, directly into the penis. And a lot of these treatments, again, focus mainly on people with penises, but that's because at the time, they really thought, because it presented more in people with penises, that they were the only ones who got it, even though we knew that that wasn't true.

Now, the reason they figured out this is they've actually uncovered a lot of the implements that would be used to inject the mercury, like syringes, from like, old ships, where like, people would be trapped for long periods of time, and I guess...

**Justin:** Bored.

**Sydnee:** Bored, and thinking, like, "Man, it hurts when I pee. I gotta do something! What do we have? I'm gonna whittle a syringe."

[audience groans, laughs]

**Sydnee:** "You got some mercury?" If you didn't like that, you could try—you could try a cinnabar fumigation.

**Justin:** Cinnabon?

**Sydnee:** [laughs] No. I don't think they had that then.

**Justin:** No? Okay.

**Sydnee:** No, this was before the invention of Cinnabon. They—

**Justin:** 'Cause I was about to be like, I've found my treatment. That's what I'm—

[audience laughs]

**Justin:** I'm going with that one.

**Sydnee:** [laughs] So you'd take a hot iron, and you would put some— no, don't worry. This isn't too bad. You would take a hot iron, and you would put some mercury and some sulfur on it, and then you would, like, put it underneath— sit on a seat with a hole, like basically a toilet, and put this underneath it. And then, like, make yourself a little tent. Like, some blankets— like a blanket fort. Some tents...

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** And then, just like, sit in there and like, inhale.

**Justin:** Go on a vision quest. [laughs]

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** And just fumigate your nethers with, you know, mercury.  
[pauses] It's better than the injection.

**Justin:** Yeah. For sure, for sure, for sure. Low bar, but definitely, it clears it.

**Sydnee:** There were a couple herbal remedies that got really popular in the 1800s. One was this, like, pepper-like spice from Sumatra, called cubebs. And then there was something else, uh, called balsam of copaiba, and both of these were very popular, and thought that they helped to reduce, like, the

inflammation from the disease. So much so, in fact, that in the year 1859, Great Britain imported 151,000 pounds of this stuff.

That's a big gonorrhea problem. That's a lot.

Um, in the 1870s, we finally started to figure out that gonorrhea could cause problems for people with vaginas and uteruses and cervixes and fallopian tubes, and all the other things that gonorrhea can spread to and cause other problems. We discovered... pelvic inflammatory disease is a condition that can result from untreated not just gonorrhea, but gonorrhea in this case. And also the fact that it could affect your fertility long-term.

So we finally figured those things out, as well as the fact that if someone gave birth to an infant while they were infected with gonorrhea, that babies could get a condition in their eyes called ophthalmia neonatorum, and that—it can actually—it was actually one of the leading causes of blindness, for a long time.

They figured out how to treat this – and this worked – was silver nitrate.

**Justin:** Really?

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Justin:** Well, good.

**Sydnee:** So we were starting—

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** Yeah, we were starting to learn...

**Justin:** Imagine my relief.

**Sydnee:** ...some things, we're starting to figure things out by the late 1800s, and this is when Dr. Albert Neisser – Neisseria – finally isolated the bacteria.

**Justin:** Wait, hold on. You just said Neisseria, like, "As we all know..."

[audience laughs]

**Justin:** And you— and everyone in the audience is like, "Uh-hum."

[audience laughs]

**Justin:** "Go— go on. I'm... with you."

**Sydnee:** It's the Neisseria gonorrhe— Neisseria gonorrhea. Like Neisseria, Neisseria. It's the...

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** I said that at the beginning of the show!

**Justin:** That was a lot of penis slapping ago.

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** The name of the bacteria...

**Justin:** Got it.

**Sydnee:** There's a guy that... anyway. So. Al figured it out.

**Justin:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** And—[laughs] and uh, he tried to make a vaccine, and it was a very— like, I was rea— I was starting to read about this, it was 1910, and there was a vaccine for gonorrhea, and I'm thinking, "I've never heard of this. Why is there— why don't we use it?"

And it, first of all, wasn't very effective. And secondly, it was like, you had to take injections every third day for months...

**Justin:** [snorts]

**Sydnee:** [holding back laughter] ...and then it still didn't work very well. And like, well, okay.

**Justin:** I wanna meet— I wanna meet this cat who's like, "Listen..."

[audience laughs]

**Justin:** "I know me, okay? I know my lifestyle. I'm *definitely* gonna get gonorrhea. [laughs] I will— I will do it repeatedly. I will do literally anything [through laughter] for a slim chance to lessen the occasions of me getting gonorrhea."

[audience laughs]

**Justin:** "Well, listen, Paul, couldn't you just try—" "No!"

[audience laughs]

**Justin:** "No. I will not alter my lifestyle for you. Give me the shot again. I will see you on Wednesday."

**Sydnee:** [laughs] Because— because we had figured out the connection with the infection in newborns' eyes and gonorrhea, in the early 1900s, you see some crazy ideas of what to do during the birthing process. Where they're like, all you gotta do is clean the vaginal canal by painting everything with iodine, just everything. Just the vagina, and...

And make sure that you're also going to, like, spray— they created this, like, this special spray douche that, like, had nozzles on the side, so you could insert it into the vagina and spray the walls of the vagina.

[audience groans]

**Sydnee:** But not the cervix. They didn't wanna do *that*. So you, like, stuff cotton in there first, and then just spray everything down...

[audience groans]

**Sydnee:** Yeah. And then they encouraged douching! Which, we know you shouldn't douche, but they thought, "Well, the alternative would be telling everybody to wear condoms, and that seems cumbersome, so..."

[audience laughs]

**Justin:** Yeah, sorry.

**Sydnee:** "And also, that would be effective. Let's go with douching."  
[laughs]

**Justin:** Sorry again, everybody. Sorry.

**Sydnee:** [laughs] Um, like I said, silver nitrate was— was used for eyes, and so they thought, well, maybe that's good for other symptoms too. So applying silver nitrate directly inside the urethra was tried for a while. Um, other forms of silver, like Bayer marketed their own colloidal silver, specifically for... your penis. Um, [laughs] and the—

**Justin:** It said that right on the bottle. [laughs]

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** And then things— this is the time when things like arsenic and bismuth and mercury were just like, "Yeah, just use 'em for anything." So until the 1930s, like, a lot of, like, you know, poisons and heavy metals and things like that.

And then fever cabinets came along. Now, fever cabinets were not just used for gonorrhea, but they were definitely used for gonorrhea – and syphilis as well, actually – but you would— basically, it was like a big... coffin that you laid in, except not your head. You left your head out. And it— they would heat it to 110 degrees Fahrenheit, so really hot. And the thought was like, "We're just gonna kill all the bacteria, with this [laughs] really hot thing we're gonna have you lay in."

And you would leave— you would lay there for, like, 10 hours.

**Justin:** Eugh!

**Sydnee:** They went a step further for gonorrhea by heating instruments to, like, 120 degrees that you could actually place internally.

[loud audience groans]

**Justin:** Nope!

**Sydnee:** So either the vagina or the rectum, with these...

[audience groans]

**Sydnee:** Yeah! This was not... good. This was bad on many levels.  
[laughs] And then thinking [of sort of the] 1940s, and there are antibiotics.  
Phew! Thank you.

**Justin:** Thank you, antibiotics.

**Sydnee:** Thank you, antibiotics. Uh, they started by using, um, penicillin. 'Cause we had it and sulfa drugs, those were the earliest antibiotics. And it worked for a while! So long, the late 1940s, when we started seeing resistance. [laughs] So not too long. But don't worry, like, we have other antibiotics now. Like, this ends happy. You're fine.

Um, [laughs] this was especially good because there was a lot of concern for this during both World War I and World War II, so World War II, we finally had antibiotics, which was great. And I only mention this because in both, you see this— this horrible, like, victimization of women as being these secret vectors for disease that they're not gonna tell you about.

And you can see these posters from, especially World War II, where it has posters of these, like, lovely-looking ladies smiling at you, and it's like, "She may look clean..."

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** “Good time girls, pickups, mm, prostitutes.” And, you know, you can’t defeat the Axis if you have VD, so...

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Justin:** Sorry. I mean, I’m sorry from guys. I’m sorry.

[audience laughs]

**Justin:** Again, I’m very sorry.

**Sydnee:** So, condoms, guys. Come on, condoms.

In general, antibiotics helped, and awareness helped, and education of how it was transmitted and that you could use a condom, and that this was helpful, this all helped, and we started to see, like, cases of gonorrhea decline, and this— it was really good.

And it actually— it’s crazy, you see that until, like, the ‘60s and ‘70s, when everything kinda, like, spikes back up real high again. [laughs] Which was a lot of things. I mean, obviously sexual liberation, and more people having— having sex with multiple partners. But there was also birth control, which was great, but it led to a decrease in the use of condoms.

**Justin:** Mm.

**Sydnee:** Which was not great for things like gonorrhea.

**Justin:** Sorry, again.

**Sydnee:** Don’t worry, we see things have died back down again. We figured it out again. So what do we do now?

**Justin:** I don’t know.



**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Justin:** I thought it was called chlamydia, so...

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** It's— I will say this. You've mentioned chlamydia a couple times, and it's not a crazy thing to bring up, because gonorrhea and chlamydia are buddies, and they... [laughs] they run together often. So, if you've been diagnosed with one, it's good to get tested for the other.

**Justin:** Mm.

**Sydnee:** Just to make sure. And they're both easily treated. And generally, if we suspect that, we treat you for both.

**Justin:** Ah!

**Sydnee:** At the same time, so...

Um, like I've already mentioned, we have antibiotics that work, although just in the last few years, there were stories that you may have read that kind of hit the media where we had new resistant strains of gonorrhea. So we had to, like, change our dosing, and pick certain antibiotics that we always use, and we couldn't— you couldn't mess around with it. Not like— not like— I hope we weren't messing around with it before. [laughs]

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** D— you couldn't give— you couldn't give people, like, the fake antibiotics anymore.

**Justin:** You know how sometimes you think your doctor's giving you fake antibiotics?

[audience laughs]

**Sydnee:** But obviously, the biggest thing is, you know, use a condom, get tested, get treated. Um, and treat everybody's partners, and there you go. And now we have antibiotics, so it's good.

**Justin:** Hooray, science!

**Sydnee:** Yay!

[audience cheers]

**Justin:** Uh... I wanna say thank you so much to— first off, to Austin. Hello, thank you.

[audience cheers]

**Justin:** Thank you to The Taxpayers for letting us use their song, "Medicines," as the intro and outro of our program.

[audience cheers]

**Justin:** Uh, thank you to the Maximum Fun family of podcasts. Uh, they have a lot of great programs. You can find them all at [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org).

Thank you to the Paramount for having us here. It's a beautiful venue.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hm.

**Justin:** Everybody's been real nice.

[audience cheers]

**Justin:** And of course—

**Sydnee:** Yeah, thank you.

**Justin:** Thank you to you, both listening here at the beautiful theater and at home. But that's gonna do it for us, so until next week, my name is Justin McElroy.

**Sydnee:** I'm Sydnee McElroy.

**Justin:** And as always, don't drill a hole in your head.

[theme music plays]

MaximumFun.org