



Sexually transmitted infections



Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are ones that pass from one person to another through sexual contact. This can be from vaginal, anal, or oral sex, and from genital-to-genital contact. STIs are also called sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

Common STIs:

- Chlamydia
- Genital herpes
- Gonorrhea
- Hepatitis B
- HIV/AIDS.
- Human papillomavirus (HPV). This causes genital warts.
- Syphilis
- Trichomoniasis

Chlamydia		
SIGNS & SYMPTOMS		CAUSES A specific bacterial infection
Females: When present, symptoms show up 2 to 4 weeks after infection. • White, yellow, or gray vaginal discharge. Abnormal vaginal bleeding or itching. • Painful intercourse • Painful periods • Need to urinate often and pain or burning feeling when passing urine • Pain in the abdomen	Males: When present, symptoms show up 2 to 4 weeks after infection. They include: • Watery, mucous discharge from the penis • Burning or discomfort when passing urine • Pain in the scrotum	In females, chlamydia can cause pelvic inflammatory disease (PID). This can cause infertility. TREATMENT • Oral antibiotics for the infected person and their partner(s) • Avoiding sex until treatment is finished in the infected person and their partner(s)
Genital Herpes		
SIGNS & SYMPTOMS • Painful sores and/or blisters on the genital area, anus, thighs, and/or buttocks • Itching, irritation, and tingling can occur 1 to 2 days before the outbreak of the blisters. • Outbreaks may be triggered by stress, other illnesses, or vigorous sexual intercourse.		CAUSES • Herpes simplex virus (HSV-1 or HSV-2). HSV-2 is the common cause. HSV-1 most often affects the oral area as cold sores. • The virus is spread by direct skin-to-skin contact. It can be spread when no symptoms are noticed. Oral sex can spread herpes from the mouth to the genital area and from the genital area to the mouth. TREATMENT Antiviral medicines can help prevent and shorten outbreaks. During delivery, an infant may need protection from infection if the mother has active herpes.
		After a few days, the blisters break open and leave painful, shallow ulcers. These can last from 5 days to 3 weeks.
		With outbreaks, especially the first one, there may be flu-like symptoms (swollen glands, fever, body aches). Outbreaks that follow are usually milder and shorter. Once infected, the virus lives in nerve cells. New outbreaks can occur even without contact.
Gonorrhea		
SIGNS & SYMPTOMS		CAUSES A bacterial infection spread through sexual fluids. If not treated, it can spread to joints, tendons, or heart. In females, it can cause pelvic inflammatory disease (PID). This can cause infertility.
Females: If present, they appear in 2 to 10 days and include: • Mild vaginal itching and burning. White or yellow vaginal discharge. • Burning when passing urine. • Severe pain in the lower abdomen • Bleeding between periods • Pain during intercourse	Males: Males may have no symptoms, but usually have: • Pain at the tip of the penis. White, yellow, or green discharge from penis. • Swollen and painful testicles • Pain and burning when urinating • Symptoms from rectal infections for everyone may include anal itching, discharge, and bleeding.	TREATMENT • Antibiotics • Pain relievers • Follow-up test to find out if the treatment worked



Human Papillomavirus (HPV)		
SIGNS & SYMPTOMS Often, there are no visible signs or symptoms. Genital warts can appear several weeks after being infected or may not show up for months or even years. This makes it hard to know when the virus was acquired and which partner was the carrier. Genital warts: • Can be soft or hard; pink, red, or yellow-gray in color • Are inside the vagina, on the lips of the vagina, or around the anus in females • Are on the penis, inside the head of the penis, on the scrotum, or around the anus in males	CAUSES HPV is spread by direct skin-to-skin contact during vaginal, anal, or (rarely) oral sex with an infected partner. Genital warts are not caused by touching warts on the feet, hands, etc.	TREATMENT • HPV vaccine can prevent cervical cancer and genital warts due to HPV. • Genital warts can be treated with topical creams or a gel prescribed by a doctor. You apply these yourself. Medical treatments can remove genital warts. Even with treatment, all genital warts can reoccur.

Syphilis		
SIGNS & SYMPTOMS • Primary stage. A large, painless, ulcer-like sore (chancre) appears around the area of sexual contact in 2 to 6 weeks. • Secondary stage. A few months later, a widespread skin rash appears on the palms of the hands, soles of the feet, and sometimes around the mouth and nose. The rash has small, red, scaly bumps that do not itch. Other types of rashes, swollen lymph nodes, fever, and flu-like symptoms may also occur. Small patches of hair may fall out. • Latent stage. The infection may go unnoticed for years, but damages the heart, muscles, and other organs and tissues.	CAUSES A specific bacterial infection. It can lead to heart failure, blindness, dementia, or death if not treated. {Note: An elderly person with signs of dementia should be evaluated for syphilis. Men and women at an increased risk for syphilis should get screened. Talk to your doctor.}	TREATMENT • Antibiotics (usually Penicillin-G given by a shot into the muscle). All persons who have syphilis should be tested for HIV , as advised. • After treatment, follow-up blood tests are needed in 6 and 12 (and possibly 3) months. • Once treatment is complete, you're no longer contagious, but you can get infected again. • Pregnant women should be screened and treated for syphilis to avoid passing it on to their baby.

Trichomoniasis		
SIGNS & SYMPTOMS Females: Symptoms may not be present for years. If they do occur, symptoms include: • Vaginal itching and burning • A clear, white, yellow, green, or gray vaginal discharge with a bad odor • Burning or pain when passing urine • Pain during sex	Males: Symptoms are not usually present. Males can infect their sexual partners and not know it. When present, symptoms in males include: • Discomfort when passing urine • Pain during sex • Irritation and itching of the penis	CAUSES A protozoan. TREATMENT • The oral medication metronidazole (Flagyl). • Treating sexual partners to prevent spreading the infection and getting it again.



TRIAGE QUESTIONS



Do you have signs and symptoms of any of the STIs?

NO
↓

YES ➔ **SEE DOCTOR**



Do you already have a diagnosis of genital herpes and do you have severe pain and blistering and/or are you having outbreaks often?

NO
↓

YES ➔ **SEE DOCTOR**



Are you symptom-free, but worried that you got an STI from someone you think may have one?

NO
↓

YES ➔ **SEE DOCTOR**



Do you want to rule out an STI because you have had many sex partners and you are starting a new sexual relationship or are planning to get married or pregnant?

NO
↓

YES ➔ **SEE DOCTOR**



Do sores appear in the genital area only after taking a recently prescribed medicine?

NO
↓

YES ➔ **SEE DOCTOR**



USE SELF-CARE



PREVENTION

- The only sure way to avoid STIs is not having sex. This includes intercourse, oral sex, anal sex, and genital-to-genital contact. Caressing, hugging, dry kissing, and masturbation are no risk or extremely low-risk practices. So is limiting your sexual contact to one person your entire life. This is if your partner does not have an STI and has sex only with you.
- Latex and polyurethane condoms can help reduce the risk of spreading HIV and other STIs (i.e., chlamydia, gonorrhea, and trichomoniasis). To do this, they must be used the right way for every sex act. They do not get rid of the risk entirely. Barriers made of natural membranes, such as from lamb, do not give good protection against STIs.
- For oral-vaginal sex and oral-anal sex, use latex or polyurethane dams or squares ("doilies").
- Females and males should use latex or polyurethane external or internal condoms every time they have genital-to-genital contact and/or oral sex. Use polyurethane condoms if either partner is allergic to latex. You don't need condoms to prevent STIs if you have sex only with one partner and neither of you has an STI.
- Latex condoms with spermicides, such as nonoxynol-9 (N-9) are no better than other lubricated condoms for preventing HIV/STIs. Spermicides are a form of birth control but do not prevent STIs. Using spermicides with N-9 may increase your risk of getting HIV infection.
- Use water-based lubricants, such as K-Y Brand Jelly. Don't use oil-based or "petroleum" ones, such as Vaseline. They can damage latex barriers.



SELF-CARE

- Don't have sex while under the influence of drugs or alcohol. You are less likely to use safer sex measures.
- Limit sexual partners. Sexual contact with many persons increases the risk for STIs, especially if no protection is used.
- Discuss a new partner's sexual history with them before you start having sex. Know that persons are not always honest about their sexual past.
- Avoid sexual contact with persons whose health status and health practices are not known.

Medical care is needed for STIs. With medical care, do the self-care measures that follow.

HPV:

- If you don't smoke, don't start. If you do smoke, try to quit.
- A vaccine for HPV is advised for both girls and boys 11 to 12 years of age, but can be given from age 9 to age 26.

Trichomoniasis:

- Don't drink alcohol for 24 hours before, during, and 24 hours after taking metronidazole. The combination causes vomiting, dizziness, and headaches.

Genital Herpes:

- If prescribed an oral antiviral medicine, take it as advised.
- Bathe the affected area twice a day with mild soap and water. Pat dry with a towel or use a hair dryer set on warm. Using a colloidal oatmeal soap or bath may be soothing.
- Use a sitz bath to soak the affected area. You can buy a sitz bath basin from a medical supply or drug store.
- Apply ice packs on the affected genital area for 5 to 10 minutes to relieve itching and swelling.
- Wear loose-fitting pants or skirts. Don't wear pantyhose. Wear cotton (not nylon) underwear.

- If pain is made worse when you urinate, squirt tepid water near the urinary opening while you pass urine. Or, urinate while using a sitz bath.
- Take a mild pain reliever as directed.
- Ask your doctor about using a local anesthetic ointment, such as lidocaine, during the most painful part of an outbreak.
- Wash your hands if you touch the blisters or sores. Don't touch your eyes during an outbreak. Doing this could spread the virus to your eyes.
- To help avoid spreading the virus to others, use latex or polyurethane barriers during sex and skin-to-skin contact.