



Basic facts about STIs

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are infections that pass from one person to another through sexual contact. Sexual contact includes vaginal, anal, and oral sex. STIs are also called sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).



PREVENTION

- There's only one way to guarantee you'll never get a sexually transmitted infection. Never have sex.
- Limiting sexual activity to one person your entire life is a close second, if your partner is also monogamous and neither of you have an STI.
- Avoid sexual contact with persons whose health status and practices are not known.
- 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 properly for every sex act. They do not get rid of the risk entirely.
- Once you've had an STI, you can get it again. You can't develop an immunity once you've been exposed.
- Unless they are in a monogamous relationship in which neither partner has an STI, both women and men should carry latex or polyurethane condoms and insist that they be used every time they have sex.
- Use water-based lubricants, such as K-Y Brand Jelly. Oil-based or "petroleum" ones, such as Vaseline, can damage latex condoms.
- Don't have sex while under the influence of drugs or alcohol (except in a monogamous relationship in which neither partner has an STI).
- Wash the genitals with soap and water before and after sexual intercourse.
- If you suspect you have an STI or know your partner is infected, see a doctor as soon as possible.
- Using latex condoms with spermicides, such as nonoxynol-9 (N-9) are no more effective than other lubricated condoms in protecting against the transmission of HIV and other STIs. Spermicides are a form of birth control but do not prevent STIs. Also, frequent use of spermicides with N-9 may increase the risk of spreading HIV infection.
- Follow your doctor's advice to check for STIs.

WHO GETS STIs?

Men and women of all ages who are sexually active can get an STI. Women are at greater risk for an STI from male/female intercourse than are men. More than one STI can be present and transmitted at the same time.