

## Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) can be spread when a person is exposed to blood, skin, semen, vaginal fluids, or other bodily fluids that have a virus, bacteria, or parasite during sexual contact. Sexual contact includes vaginal, oral, or anal sex, or contact with the genitals. They can also be spread from an infected mother to her baby during a vaginal delivery. STIs are very common. It is thought that 20 million new cases of STIs happen in the United States every year. Half of these cases are teenagers and young adults.

### Types of STIs

STIs are caused by bacteria, viruses, or parasites.

- Bacterial and parasitic STIs can usually be treated with antibiotics.
- Viral STIs can stay in the body, sometimes for life. They cannot be cured, but symptoms can be managed with medicines.

<u>Bacteria/Parasite STIs</u>	<u>Virus STIs</u>
Chlamydia	Herpes
Gonorrhea	Human papilloma virus (HPV)
Syphilis	HIV/AIDS
Trichomoniasis	Hepatitis

### Risks factors for STIs

All sexually active teenagers and young adults should be tested for STIs at least once a year. Certain behaviors put males and females at a bigger risk for getting a STI. **If you do any of these behaviors, you should consider getting tested more than once a year.**

- Males having sex with other males
- Having a new sex partner or many sex partners
- Having sex with someone who has an STI
- Pregnancy

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## Risks factors for STIs, continued

- Having unprotected oral, vaginal, or anal sex. This means sex without a condom.
- Getting a new STI. This puts you at greater risk of having another STI at the same time.
- Had an STI in the past.
- Trading sex for money, drugs, or anything else.

## Signs and symptoms of STIs

Most infections have no signs or symptoms. Most signs and symptoms will depend on which STI you have. You are able to spread STIs to partners even when you do not have symptoms of the STI.

<p>Some of the <b>most common EARLY signs and symptoms</b> are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sores on the mouth, genitals, or rectal areas</li> <li>▪ Burning or pain during urination</li> <li>▪ Discharge from the penis or vagina</li> <li>▪ Vaginal smell (odor)</li> </ul>	<p>Some of the <b>most common LATE signs and symptoms</b> are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Belly (abdominal) pain</li> <li>▪ Fever</li> <li>▪ Rash on the hands, feet, or abdomen (chest)</li> <li>▪ Sore and swollen lymph nodes, mostly in the groin</li> <li>▪ Cancer</li> </ul>
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## Diagnosing STIs

- There is not one test that looks for all STIs, so you may need 2 or more different tests.
- STIs can be tested through urine (Picture 1), blood, or genital discharge and open sores. Usually you can collect the specimen yourself, in private.
- Test results usually come back within 2 to 3 days or sooner.



**Picture 1** A specimen cup used to test urine

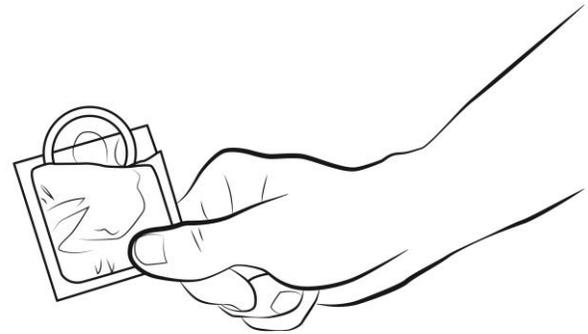
## Treating STIs

Most STIs can be treated. Many STIs can be cured, but some do not have a known cure. These may still be managed with medicines.

- Antibiotics – only for STIs caused by bacteria or parasites. It is important that you take all of your medicine until it is gone, even if you feel better.
- Medicines – for STIs caused by viruses, like HPV, herpes, and HIV/AIDS. These can treat your symptoms and may lower the risk of giving the STI to a sex partner.
- If you have an STI, it is important to tell any partners you've had in the past 3 months. They will need to be tested and treated, as well.
- If your partner(s) does not have a regular doctor, he or she can be treated at the Columbus Public Health Sexual Health Clinic, 240 Parsons Avenue, Columbus, Ohio 43215. The phone number is (614) 645-7772. If you live outside the Columbus area, call your local health department.
- After being treated for an STI, do not have sex at all for the next week.

## Preventing STIs

- NOT HAVING SEX (abstinence) is the only 100% way to make sure you do not get an STI.
- Limit the number of sexual partners. Know your partner and his or her sexual history.
- ALWAYS USE A LATEX CONDOM (Picture 2). Use it correctly. Use a condom every time you have sex, the whole time you have sex.
- Having only one, long-term partner that has tested negative for all STIs and using a condom, the right way, every time you have sex.
- Vaccines are available for two STIs (Hepatitis B and HPV). This can greatly lower your risk of getting either of these STIs.
- Avoid mind-altering substances such as alcohol and other drugs. You cannot make good decisions if you are drunk or high.



**Picture 2** A condom in the wrapper.

## When to call the doctor

Call your doctor if your symptoms get worse or you get new symptoms, like pain in the lower belly (pelvis) or pain in the testicles.

## Follow-ups and appointments

You may need close follow-up and education after being diagnosed with some STIs. It is important to follow the doctor's or healthcare provider's orders.

- After treatment for chlamydia, gonorrhea, or trichomonas, you should be retested in three months to be sure you did not get that STI again, or any other STI.
- Some STIs make it easier for HIV to enter the skin and mucous membranes. If you have an STI, you should get tested for HIV.
- Write down all of your questions as you think of them. Bring the list with you when you see the doctor or healthcare provider.
- Call the clinic or doctor's office if you cannot make your appointment.
- Be sure to tell your health care provider if there is any chance you may be pregnant.
- AVOID SEXUAL CONTACT until one week after you and your partner are both finished with the antibiotic treatments.

## For more information

- If you have any questions, call the Adolescent Medicine Clinic at (614) 722-2450.
- For more information, you may also call the National STD Hotline at 1-800-227-8922, Monday through Friday, 8:00 am to 11:00 pm.
- You can also get information at <http://www.ashastd.org/sitemap.cfm>.
- Refer to these other Helping Hands:
  - HH-I-38, Chlamydia
  - HH-I-67, Gonorrhea
  - HH-I-174, Herpes Simplex Virus
  - HH-I-116, HIV Infection/AIDS
  - HH-I-108, Trichomoniasis
  - HH-I-102, Genital Warts
  - HH-I-43, Hepatitis B
  - HH-IV-46, Condoms
  - HH-I-119, Vaginal Discharge