

HOW TO PREVENT SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED ILLNESSES (STIs)

Sexually transmitted infections (or STIs) are infections that can be caught or passed on when you have unprotected sexual activity, or close sexual contact, with another person who already has an STI. Using a condom for all types of sexual activity is the best way to avoid STIs and HIV.



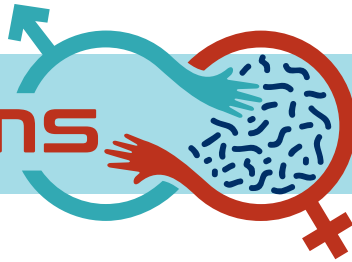
What are STI's?

Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) — or sexually transmitted infections (STIs) — are generally acquired by sexual contact. The bacteria, viruses or parasites that cause sexually transmitted diseases may pass from person to person in blood, semen, or vaginal and other bodily fluids.

Sometimes these infections can be transmitted non-sexually, such as from mothers to their infants during pregnancy or childbirth, or through blood transfusions or shared needles.

STIs don't always cause symptoms. It's possible to contract sexually transmitted infections from people who seem perfectly healthy and may not even know they have an infection.

Symptoms



STDs or STIs can have a range of signs and symptoms, including no symptoms. That's why they may go unnoticed until complications occur or a partner is diagnosed.

Signs and symptoms that might indicate an STI include:

- Sores or bumps on the genitals or in the oral or rectal area
- Painful or burning urination
- Discharge from the penis
- Unusual or odorous vaginal discharge
- Unusual vaginal bleeding
- Pain during sex
- Sore, swollen lymph nodes, particularly in the groin but sometimes more widespread
- Lower abdominal pain
- Fever
- Rash over the trunk, hands or feet

Signs and symptoms may appear a few days after exposure. However, it may take years before you have any noticeable problems, depending on the organism causing the STI.

Treatment

STDs or STIs caused by bacteria are generally easier to treat. Viral infections can be managed but not always cured.

If you are pregnant and have an STI, getting treatment right away can prevent or reduce the risk of your baby becoming infected.



Prevention

The good news is that STIs are preventable. There are steps you can take to keep yourself and your partner(s) healthy.

Here's how you can avoid giving or getting an STI:

- **Practice abstinence.** The surest way to avoid STIs is to not be involved in sexual activity.
- **Have fewer partners.** Agree to only engage in sexual activity with one partner who agrees to only engage in sexual activity with you. Make sure you both get tested to know for sure that neither of you have an STI. This is one of the most reliable ways to avoid STIs.
- **Talk with your sexual partner(s) about STIs** and staying safe before engaging into sexual activity. It might be uncomfortable to start the conversation, but protecting your health is your responsibility.
- **Using condoms correctly every time** you engage in sexual activity can help you avoid STIs. Condoms lessen the risk of infections for all STIs. You still can get certain STIs, like herpes or HPV, from contact with your partner's skin even when using a condom.
- **Get vaccinated.** The most common STI can be prevented by a vaccine. The HPV vaccine is safe, effective, and can help you avoid HPV related health problems like genital warts and some cancers.

Get tested

Many STIs don't have symptoms, but they can still cause health problems

The only way to know for sure if you have an STD is to get tested.





Wear a condom every time

- Condoms are 98% effective in preventing STIs and pregnancy when used, correctly, every time.
- Condoms have expiry dates, check the label.
- Don't use it if it's ripped or looks dry, brittle, stiff, or sticky.
- Keep condoms in a cool and dry place, away from heat and sunlight.

Free condoms are available at Platinum Health Medical Facilities.

Talk with your healthcare provider if you have any concerns, questions or want to get tested.



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Source: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/sexually-transmitted-diseases-stds/symptoms-causes/syc-20351240>