

STD'S ARE SPREAD THROUGH SEXUAL CONTACT

Std's are spread through sexual contact between two people, this may be vaginal, oral or anal. The disease can be spread from male to female, female to female, female to male, male to male.

Some Std's can be spread through any contact between the genitals or mouth, even if there is no actual sexual intercourse. For example genital Herpes can be spread just by skin to skin contact.

A few Std's can be spread other ways also, such as HIV and Hepatitis B which are spread through blood to blood contact, so sharing needles for drugs or medications and blood transfusions can also spread the disease.



SYMPTOMS OF STD'S

The symptoms of Std's vary depending on the disease and on the person, but most std's present with at least some of these following symptoms:

- Discharge from penis or vagina
- Bad odour from the vagina
- Pain when passing urine
- Pelvic or genital pain
- Swelling or redness near the penis or vagina
- Skin rashes on hands or feet
- Weight loss, loose stools, night sweats
- Aches, pains, fever or chills

- Lumps or swelling in the genital area
- Genital ulcers
- Painful sex
- Genital rash
- Yellowing of the skin (jaundice)
- Anal symptoms relating to sexual intercourse

Because many of these symptoms are similar for many different stds, but some stds are more serious than others, it is VERY IMPORTANT to get all of the symptoms investigated by your doctor or through laboratory testing.

HOW ARE STD'S DIAGNOSED?

Most std's can be diagnosed with a simple blood test or urine test. On some occasions if you have symptoms such as a rash or genital ulcers, your doctor may need to do an examination. A smear can be done from ulcers or blisters to provide a definitive diagnosis to allow more precise treatment and faster recovery.



TREATMENT OF STD'S

It is IMPORTANT to get treatment. Whilst you may not have severe symptoms or even feel them at all, but if you have the disease you can spread it to others. By screening regularly, catching any infections early and

getting them treated and cured, you reduce your own risk or complications developing and you eliminate the risk to others getting the disease from you.

Many Std's are treated with antibiotics, and some with anti-retrovirals. Sometimes you may need to repeat treatment after a period of time, sometimes you may have to take medication going forward. But getting diagnosis and treatment is most important.

REDUCE YOUR RISK OF SPREADING & CATCHING STD'S

You can reduce your risk of getting or spreading sexually transmitted disease by:

- Consider that not having sex or sexual relations, the only sure way to prevent STDs.
- Use a latex condom every time you have sex. (If you use a lubricant, make sure it is water-based, other lubricants can damage the latex of the condom)
- Limit your number of sexual partners. The more partners you have, the more likely you are to catch an STD.
- Practice monogamy. This means having sex with only one person. That person must also have sex with only you to reduce your risk.
- Choose your sex partners with care. Don't have sex with someone whom you suspect may have an STD. And keep in mind that you can't always tell by looking if your partner has an STD.
- Get checked for STDs regularly. Don't risk giving the infection to someone else.
- Don't use alcohol or drugs before you have sex. You may be less likely to use a condom if you are drunk or high.
- Know the signs and symptoms of STDs. Look for them in yourself and your sex partners.
- Learn about STDs. The more you know, the better you can protect yourself.
- Kissing exposes you and your partner to a few STIs such as herpes and hepatitis. Avoid kissing when sores or cuts are present in and around your mouth.
- Skin-to-skin touching exposes you and your partner to several STIs such as syphilis, genital herpes, HPV, pubic lice and scabies.
- Oral sex exposes you and your partner to many STIs. Giving and getting oral sex puts you at risk of getting chlamydia, gonorrhoea, syphilis, genital herpes, hepatitis B and HIV.
- Vaginal sex exposes you and your partner to all the STIs.
- Anal sex exposes you and your partner to most of the STIs, such as chlamydia, gonorrhoea, syphilis, genital herpes, HPV, hepatitis B, HIV, pubic lice and scabies.
- Sex toys – any object used in sex can be called a sex toy, whether it's designed for this use or not. It's important to keep sex toys clean. If you're sharing sex toys, make sure you wash them between each use and always use a new condom each time. Sharing sex toys has risks, including getting and passing on infections such as chlamydia, syphilis and herpes. If there are any cuts or sores around your vagina, anus or penis and there's blood, there's an increased risk of passing on hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV
- If you choose to have vaginal, oral or anal sex, always use condoms. They reduce the risk of spreading STIs
- If you have an STD, stop having sex until you see a doctor and are treated

- Follow your doctor's instructions for treatment. Don't resume having sex unless your doctor says it is okay.
- Return to your doctor to get rechecked.
- Be sure your sex partner or partners also are treated.
- Hepatitis B and Human Papillomavirus (HPV) can also be prevented through vaccination, so get vaccinated!

COMPLICATIONS

Many Std's are extremely common and have just a mild set of symptoms and are fully treatable. But if they are left untreated, some can lead to very serious complications.

- Sterility in men and in women (infertility)
- Pelvic inflammatory disease (PID)
- Ectopic pregnancy
- Cervical Cancer
- Kidney failure
- Organ failure, death
- Permanent eye damage from conjunctiva
- Infection and permanent damage to babies during pregnancy and birth
- Still birth



TELLING YOUR PARTNER

It is important, when you have found that you have an Std that you share this information with your partner, and any other sexual partners you may have or had in the

last 2-3 months, depending on the time you suspect you may have contracted this disease.

Your doctor will help you determine how long you may have had an infection, and if you discuss with your doctor they will help you talk to your partner/s about the infection and explain to them the treatment and requirement for testing.

Sometimes when you get an Std your partner can be judgemental, or you can suspect your partner of infidelity. It is important that you both understand the disease, how it came about, what the treatment is and how you can continue your daily lives and routine whilst treatment is completed.

SUMMARY OF COMMON STD'S

CHLAMYDIA

Chlamydia is a common STD that can infect both men and women. It can cause serious damage to a woman's reproductive system. This can make it difficult or impossible for her to get pregnant later on. Chlamydia can also cause a potentially fatal ectopic pregnancy (pregnancy that occurs outside the womb).

You can get chlamydia through unprotected (no condom) sexual contact including vaginal, oral and anal sex. Pregnant women can spread the bacteria to a baby during birth.

GONORRHOEA

Gonorrhoea is a bacterial infection caused by Neisseria gonorrhoeae. It is a common sexually transmitted disease that is primarily passed from person to person during sexual contact.

As well as genital gonorrhoea you can also get gonorrhoea of the throat and anus by having anal and oral sex with someone who has the infection.

SYPHILIS

*Syphilis is a sexually transmitted disease (STD) caused by a bacterium called *Treponema pallidum*. It enters the body through tiny breaks in the skin, mainly in the genital area or the mouth. Syphilis is a serious condition, it develops slowly in stages, if left untreated it can cause organ failure and even death.*

TRICHOMONAS

Trichomonas vaginalis is a microscopic parasite that causes trichomoniasis, a common STD, especially among sexually active young women. It can be treated with a single dose of antibiotic medication.

HUMAN PAPILLOMA VIRUS (HPV)

One of the most common STDs globally, most of us will have some kind of HPV infection at some time in our lives, although we may not be aware of it. There are over 100 types of HPV. Low-risk types can cause genital warts (condyloma) while high-risk types can lead to cervical cancer and other genital cancers. Early detection can reduce the risk of cancer. Vaccines are available that protect against certain types of HPV.

HERPES SIMPLEX VIRUS (HSV)

Genital Herpes is a common viral infection caused by the Herpes Simplex virus (HSV). There are two types of the disease, HSV-1 and HSV-2. As well as genital herpes HSV-1 can infect the mouth and cause cold sores

HEPATITIS

Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C. These are viral infections that can cause liver inflammation. They can be transmitted through sexual

contact although hepatitis C is spread more often through sharing of contaminated needles or other equipment used to inject drugs. Both viruses can cause acute forms of the disease that usually result in a few mild symptoms or no symptoms, but they can also progress to a chronic form that causes severe and/or lasting liver damage. Treatment of chronic hepatitis with antiviral medications is available. There is a vaccine to prevent hepatitis B.

HIV

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). HIV is the virus that causes AIDS. It attacks and destroys certain white blood cells (T-helper lymphocytes) that are an important part of the immune system. As the number of these cells is reduced, the ability of the body to fight off infections also decreases. Although there is no cure, early detection allows for treatment with anti-retroviral therapies (ART) that can help to prolong life. .



Pamphlet Information Series