

## STDs Can Be Treated

With treatment, most STDs improve. But when left untreated, an STD can cause health problems, including but not limited to:

- Pain in genital area
- Damage to internal organs
- Inability to have a child
- Passing an STD onto a child during pregnancy or childbirth
- Increased risk of contracting other STDs

## How Do STDs Spread?

- Sharing of body fluids (e.g., semen, pre-cum and vaginal fluids) during sex
- Skin-to-skin touching or rubbing on warm, moist areas on the body (e.g., mouth, sex organs, anus)
- Through infected blood by sharing needles for drug use

## What are the Symptoms?

Many people have no symptoms. Even when they do experience them, the symptoms are usually so mild that they can be easily mistaken for something else, like the flu.

### Symptoms of an STD include, but are not limited to:

- Burning or pain when peeing or during bowel movement
- A drip or wetness from the vagina or penis
- Pain, burning or itching near or around the vagina or penis
- Bleeding from the vagina that is not aligned with a regular period
- An unusual smell from the vagina or penis
- Pain during sex
- Sores, bumps or blisters near the vagina, penis or mouth
- Flu-like symptoms, such as fever, chills and aches

If you experience any symptoms, stop having sex and visit a doctor or STD clinic. Getting tested is the only way to know for sure if you have an STD.

Adapted from Centers for Disease Control (2024, June 1). Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs). <https://www.cdc.gov/sti/index.html>.

## 4 Ways to Protect Your Sexual Health

Many sexually active people get STDs. There are things you can do to stay healthy and minimize your risk while being sexually active.

### 1 Get Tested

STD testing is a normal part of health care. If you have sex or are experiencing any STD symptoms, talk to your doctor or health care provider about getting tested.

### 2 Get Treated

Many STDs can be cured or treated with medicine. If you test positive for an STD, it is important that you seek treatment as soon as possible.

### 3 Practice Safe Sex

Using condoms (internal and external) and dental dams when having vaginal, oral or anal sex prevents the sharing of bodily fluids to help protect against STDs.

### 4 Talk to Your Partner

Talk with your partner about STD prevention and protection, and make a plan to keep you both safe.



For further information and more resources on STDs, visit [std.endthesyndemicct.org](https://std.endthesyndemicct.org).



**Tell Everyone to Screen & Test**

# Sexual Health is Health:

## Understanding STDs

### What is an STD?

- An STD (sexually transmitted disease), also referred to as a sexually transmitted infection (STI), is a bacteria, a virus or parasite contracted during vaginal, anal or oral sex.
- Most people who have sex get an STD at some point.
- STDs can be cured or treated before they cause serious health problems.
- Treating STDs can also help lower the risk of passing it to someone else.

## Chlamydia

### SYMPTOMS

Symptoms may show up one to three weeks after unprotected sex. Many people experience mild symptoms or none at all.

#### People with a vagina:

- Discharge from vagina
- Bleeding from vagina between periods
- Pain in abdomen sometimes with fever and nausea
- Burning or pain when peeing
- Feeling the need to pee more often

#### People with a penis:

- Watery, white drip from penis
- Feeling the need to pee more often
- Swollen or tender testicles

### HOW IT IS PASSED

- Vaginal, anal or oral sex with someone who has chlamydia

### LONG-TERM RISKS

- Can pass to sex partner(s)
- Can lead to more serious infections
- Can damage reproductive organs
- May give birth too early or pass to baby during childbirth
- May no longer be able to have children
- Can lead to arthritis or more serious infections

## Hepatitis B

### SYMPTOMS

Symptoms may show up between 6 weeks and 6 months after contact with virus. Many people experience mild symptoms or none at all.

- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Tiredness
- Abdominal pain
- Jaundice (yellow skin)
- Dark urine or light-colored bowel movements
- Flu-like symptoms

### HOW IT IS PASSED

- Vaginal, anal or oral sex with someone who has hepatitis B
- Sharing needles with someone who has the hepatitis virus
- Contact with infected blood

### LONG-TERM RISKS

- Can pass to sex partner(s) or through needle sharing
- Permanent liver damage or liver cancer
- May pass to baby during childbirth

\*There is no known cure for hepatitis B, but most people with it recover completely. However, people with chronic cases must seek treatment.

## HIV/AIDS

### SYMPTOMS

Symptoms may show up weeks, months or years after contact with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.

- Unexplained weight loss or tiredness
- Diarrhea
- White spots in mouth
- Vaginal yeast infections that don't go away
- Flu-like symptoms that don't go away

### HOW IT IS PASSED

- Vaginal, anal or oral sex with someone who has HIV
- Sharing needles with someone who has HIV
- Contact with infected blood

### LONG-TERM RISKS

- Can pass to your sex partner(s) or someone you share a needle with
- Can pass to baby in the womb, during birth or while breastfeeding
- Serious illness and even death

\*There is no known cure for HIV, but medicine can help control it.

## Syphilis

### SYMPTOMS

#### 1ST STAGE:

- Symptoms show up 1-12 weeks after having sex
- Painless sore(s) on the mouth, penis or vagina lasting 2-6 weeks

#### 2ND STAGE:

- Symptoms show up as the sores heal or after
- Rash anywhere on the body
- Flu-like symptoms

\*Without treatment, you likely still have syphilis even when symptoms go away.

### HOW IT IS PASSED

- Vaginal, anal or oral sex
- Genital touching with someone who has syphilis

### LONG-TERM RISKS

- Heart disease
- Brain damage
- Blindness
- Can pass to sex partner(s)
- Can pass to baby during pregnancy (aka congenital syphilis)
- Increased risk of miscarriage
- Death

## Gonorrhea

### SYMPTOMS

Symptoms may show up 1-14 days after sex, though many people experience no symptoms

#### People with a vagina:

- Thick yellow or gray discharge from vagina
- Cramps/pain in stomach or lower abdomen
- Abnormal periods or bleeding
- Burning or pain when peeing or during a bowel movement

#### People with a penis:

- Thick yellow or greenish drip from penis
- Feel the need to pee more often
- Swollen or tender testicles
- Burning or pain when peeing or during a bowel movement

### HOW IT IS PASSED

- Vaginal, anal or oral sex with someone who has gonorrhea

### LONG-TERM RISKS

- Heart trouble
- Skin disease
- Arthritis
- Blindness
- Can lead to more serious infections
- Damage to reproductive organs
- Can pass to baby before or during childbirth
- May no longer be able to have children

## Herpes

### SYMPTOMS

Symptoms may show up 2-12 days after sex, though most people experience no symptoms.

- Flu-like symptoms
- Small, painful blisters on penis, vagina or mouth
- Blisters lasting 1-4 weeks
- Itching or burning before blisters appear

### HOW IT IS PASSED

- Vaginal, anal or oral sex
- Genital touching with someone who has herpes

### LONG-TERM RISKS

- Can pass to sex partner(s)
- Increased risk of contracting HIV
- Can pass to baby during childbirth

## Genital Warts

### SYMPTOMS

Symptoms may show up weeks, months or years after contact with HPV, though many people experience no symptoms.

- Small, bumpy warts on penis, vagina and anus
- Itching or burning around penis or vagina
- After warts go away, the virus sometimes stays in the body and warts can return

### HOW IT IS PASSED

- Vaginal, anal or oral sex with someone who has HPV
- Genital touching with someone who has HPV

### LONG-TERM RISKS

- Can pass to your sex partner(s)
- Warts may go away on their own, remain unchanged, or grow and spread
- A person with warts can pass them to baby during childbirth
- Some types can cause cervical cancer, as well as cancer of the vulva, vagina, throat, anus or penis

\*There is no known cure for HPV, but in most cases it goes away on its own in about 2 years.

## Trichomoniasis ("Trich")

### SYMPTOMS

Symptoms may show up 5-28 days after sex, though many people have no symptoms.

#### People with a vagina:

- Itching, burning or irritation in vagina
- Yellow, greenish or gray discharge from vagina

#### People with a penis:

- Burning or pain when peeing
- Watery, white drip from penis
- Feel the need to pee more often

### HOW IT IS PASSED

- Vaginal sex

### LONG-TERM RISKS

- Can pass to your sex partner(s)
- Uncomfortable symptoms will continue
- Infections in prostate gland
- Increased risk of getting other STDs