

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI's)

Could you or your sexual partner have a sexually transmitted infection (STI)? There are many different STIs that affect more than 19 million women and men each year. You cannot always tell if your partner(s) are infected.

What is an STI?: infections that are transferred from one person to another during sexual contact, including oral, vaginal or anal intercourse; kissing or mouth to genital (penis, vulva or vagina) contact. Nearly one half of all STIs occur among adolescents and young adults (ages 15-24 years). Some STIs are bacterial and can be cured, but others are viral and cannot be cured, only treated.

Bacterial STIs

- Chlamydia
 - Infects the cervix (opening to uterus) and the urethra (tube that empties the bladder) - transmitted through contact with infected tissues.
 - Symptoms include: vaginal or penile discharge, burning with urination and bleeding between menstrual periods
 - Without treatment can cause pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), which can lead to infertility and pelvic pain in women; and in men can cause infertility, and arthritis
 - Easily treated with antibiotics - requires a urine test or cervical culture to be diagnosed
- Gonorrhea
 - Infects the cervix (opening to uterus) and the urethra (tube that empties the bladder) - transmitted through contact with infected tissues.
 - Symptoms include: burning with urination, painful intercourse, vaginal discharge and abdominal pain in women; penile discharge or burning with urination in men
 - Without treatment women may develop PID and men may develop infertility and urinary problems
 - Easily treated with antibiotics - Requires a urine test or cervical culture to be diagnosed
- Syphilis
 - Transmitted by contact with skin lesions.
 - Symptoms occur in three stages
 - Stage 1 (10-90 days after infection)- small, round, painless sores that may occur on the penis, vagina, anus or mouth, generally disappear in 3-6 weeks, but the disease remains active
 - Stage 2 - a highly contagious rash (rough brown/red) spots may appear on the palms, soles or other parts of the body. Other symptoms may include: fever, hair loss, headaches, fatigue
 - Stage 3 (often occurs years later) - can damage organs and destroy blood vessels and nerve cells in the brain and spine, causing heart problems, blindness, insanity and death.
 - Easily cured with antibiotics - Requires a blood test to be diagnosed

Viral STIs

- Herpes
 - 90% of people infected with herpes do not know they have it
 - Transmitted by contact with skin lesions
 - Symptoms include: painful blisters around the genitals (genital herpes) or the mouth (oral herpes)
 - Cannot be cured, but medications can reduce the number and severity of outbreaks - Requires a culture of a lesion or a blood test to be diagnosed
- Genital Warts (Human Papilloma Virus - HPV)
 - Symptoms include: "bumps" or warty lesions on the penis, vulva or vagina. HPV is of particular concern because certain strains can cause cervical cancer in women and has also been found in some penile cancers in men.
 - Transmitted by contact with skin lesions
 - Pap Smears are screening tests for HPV infections/cervical cancer in women
 - Methods to remove genital warts include freezing, chemical treatment and in some cases surgery.
 - Diagnosed by exam
- Hepatitis
 - Symptoms include: fever, yellow skin, extreme tiredness, upset stomach and abdominal pain.
 - Transmitted by contact with infected blood and body fluids (semen, vaginal discharge, saliva)
 - Most people have been vaccinated against Hepatitis B
 - Long-term infection can lead to liver damage.
 - Diagnosed by a blood test
- HIV/AIDS
 - Initial symptoms vary but may include: fever, sore throat, swollen lymph glands
 - Transmitted through contact with infected blood and body fluids (semen, vaginal discharge, saliva)
 - Diagnosed by a blood test

When you choose to have sex with another person, you take the risk of getting an STI, some of which have serious health consequences. Since there is no way to know for sure if you or a potential partner is infected, be realistic and protect yourself.

If you are a registered Millersville University student and you have questions or you need to make an appointment, please call Millersville University Health Services at 872-3250.



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