

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS (STIs)

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are infections you can get by having intimate sexual contact with someone who already has an infection. You can't tell if a person is infected because many STIs have no symptoms. But STIs can still be passed from person to person even if there are no symptoms. STIs can be very harmful to women. Screening tests can help find STIs, so they can be treated. You can take steps to lower your risk of getting an STI.

- STIs are also called sexually transmitted diseases, or STDs. STIs include chlamydia, gonorrhea, genital herpes, human papillomavirus (HPV), syphilis, HIV, and others.
- STIs are spread during vaginal, anal, or oral sex or during genital touching. Not all STIs are spread the same way.
- STIs are common. In the United States about 19 million new infections are thought to occur each year. These infections affect men and women of all ages, backgrounds, and economic levels. But almost half of new infections are among young people ages 15 to 24. African-American women have especially high rates of infection.
- STIs are dangerous to women, who often have more severe health problems from STIs than men. Untreated STIs can cause health problems such as cancer, pelvic inflammatory disease, and infertility. If a pregnant woman has an STI, it can cause health problems for the baby. Having an STI also can put you at greater risk of getting HIV.
- If you are sexually active, talk to your doctor about STI screening. Which screening tests you might need and how often depend mainly on your sexual history and your partner's. Screening tests can help find STIs early, so they can be treated. Treatment can cure some STIs. Treatment can help manage STIs that cannot be cured.
- You can take steps to protect yourself from STIs, including using condoms during sexual activity and having sex with only one partner who only has sex with you.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD and TB Prevention, CDC, HHS
Internet Address: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchhstp>

National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), NIH, HHS
Phone: (301) 496-5717, Toll-Free: (866) 284-4107
Internet Address: <http://www3.niaid.nih.gov/topics/sti>

American Social Health Association
Phone: (919) 361-8400, Toll-Free: (800) 227-8922
Internet Address: <http://www.ashastd.org>

National HIV and STD Testing Resources
Phone: (800) 458-5231
Internet Address: <http://www.hivtest.org>

For an in-depth look at sexually transmitted infections (STIs), visit [womenshealth.gov](http://www.womenshealth.gov) at <http://www.womenshealth.gov/faq/sexually-transmitted-infections.cfm>.



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1-800-994-9662 • TDD: 1-888-220-5446