

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS (STIs)

Disease Name	What causes the disease?	How do you get it?	What are the signs and symptoms?	How do I find out if I have it?	What does it mean for my partner?	How is it treated?	How can I reduce my risk?	What happens if I don't get treated?
<b>Chlamydia</b>	Chlamydia is the most common bacterial STI.	Vaginal, oral, digital or anal sex.	Men and women may have a discharge from the penis or vagina that may burn or itch within 1 to 3 weeks, but frequently a person may be without symptoms. Women may have bleeding between periods, fever, belly pain, low back pain or pain during sex.	Urine tests or by taking a specimen from the penis, cervix, rectum or throat.	Your partner may have Chlamydia. Partners must be treated or you can be re-infected by the same partner.	You and your partner(s) can be cured with certain antibiotic medicines. Your doctor must give the correct medicine in order to cure the infection.	Limit sex partners and use condoms at all times when having sex.	Women can become sterile (unable to have children) or become pregnant outside the uterus which can be fatal. A pregnant woman can pass the infection to her baby. Chlamydia can cause premature birth, pneumonia and conjunctivitis (pink eye) in newborns.
<b>Gonorrhea (GC, "Clap" "Drip")</b>	Gonorrhea is also caused by a type of bacteria.	Infection can occur when the bacteria comes into contact with the vagina, penis, mouth, rectum or eyes during sex.	Symptoms may be absent. Men may have a discharge from the penis within 2 to 5 days that may burn or itch. Sometimes men get painful or swollen testicles. In women, symptoms are mild or absent. Women may have burning when urinating, increased vaginal discharge or bleeding between periods. Infections in the throat or rectum may cause symptoms, but usually not.	Urine tests or by taking a specimen from the penis, cervix, rectum or throat.	Your partner may have Gonorrhea. Partners must be treated or you can be re-infected by the same partner.	You and your partner(s) can be cured with certain antibiotic medicines. Your doctor must give the correct medicine in order to cure the infection. Many people who have Gonorrhea also have Chlamydia, so medicine is usually given for both infections.	Limit sex partners and use condoms at all times when having sex.	Gonorrhea may cause Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID). Men and women can become sterile if Gonorrhea is not treated. If it spreads to the blood or joints, it can be deadly. Gonorrhea can also be spread to a baby at birth and cause serious, even fatal illness.
<b>Syphilis</b>	Syphilis is caused by a type of bacteria called a spirochete.	Syphilis is passed from one person to another through direct contact with a syphilis sore. This usually happens during vaginal, oral or anal sex.	The first sign of syphilis is usually a single painless sore that appears where syphilis entered the body. The sore usually disappears within 3 weeks, but the disease is still present. The next sign is skin rashes that typically appear on the palms of the hands or bottoms of the feet (but may also appear elsewhere). Other symptoms may include: fever, swollen glands, sore throat, patchy hair loss, headaches, weight loss, muscle aches and fatigue. These symptoms too will go away without treatment, but the infection continues to advance.	A blood test and examination are done. Syphilis is so serious for babies that all pregnant women are tested.	Your partner may have Syphilis. Partners must be treated to prevent the disease from becoming serious (even life-threatening) and to stop the spread.	Syphilis is treated with certain medicines. Persons with HIV infection may need additional treatment to cure the infection, so it is very important to be tested for HIV if you have syphilis.	Limit sex partners and use condoms at all times when having sex.	If left untreated, syphilis can cause damage to the brain, nerves, eyes, heart, blood vessels, liver, bones and joints. It can result in blindness, paralysis, dementia and death. A pregnant woman can pass the infection to her baby causing serious illness or death.
<b>Human Immuno-Deficiency Virus (HIV)</b>	HIV infection is caused by the Human Immunodeficiency Virus – the virus that can cause AIDS.	HIV is passed from person to person through contact with the blood, semen or vaginal fluid of an infected person.	Within 10 days to 6 weeks after infection, most persons will have flu-like symptoms that go away without treatment. Body rashes, swollen glands, diarrhea and nausea may also be present. The illness may be mild to severe. Most persons mistake this stage for a common illness.	HIV is diagnosed by a blood or oral swab test.	Your partner may have HIV. It is very important for your partners to be tested to stop the spread of the disease and receive treatment.	HIV infection is treated with special drugs. These drugs keep the virus from damaging the body and weakening the immune system.	Limit sex partners and use condoms at all times when having sex.	If HIV infection is not treated the disease progresses, weakening the immune system until the body cannot fight common infections (AIDS) and death follows.
<b>Bacterial Vaginosis (BV)</b>	Bacterial Vaginosis (BV) is the most common vaginal infection in women.	Douching, multiple sex partners, tampons, imbalance of "good" versus "bad" bacteria in the vagina.	Fishy odor, thin milky white discharge that may cause itching and burning while urinating.	A sample of the discharge is examined under a microscope.	Males do not usually get infected. Males are treated only if sex partner has frequent episodes.	Certain antibiotic medicines are used to cure the infection.	If using tampons change frequently, avoid douching, use condoms and limit number of sexual partners.	May lead to premature labor during pregnancy, development of pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), increase risk for HIV infection.

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<b>Trichomoniasis</b>	Trichomoniasis is an STI caused by a germ called a protozoa.	It is most commonly spread by vaginal intercourse. Can also be spread by sharing of sex toys.	Frothy yellow-green discharge, strong odor, itching and irritation. Men usually do not have any symptoms.	A sample of the discharge is examined under a microscope.	Your partner may have the infection and must be treated, even if he has no symptoms.	Certain antibiotic medicines are used to cure the infection.	Limit sex partners, use condoms at all times when having sex.	Increased chance of contracting HIV. The infection in pregnant women may lead to premature labor.
<b>Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID)</b>	PID is an infection of the reproductive system in women, usually caused by untreated Gonorrhea and Chlamydia.	Usually caused by untreated Gonorrhea, Chlamydia, Bacterial Vaginosis and douching.	Fever, vaginal discharge and abdominal pain. Symptoms may be mild to severe.	Vaginal exam and lab tests.	Your partner may have an infection and must be tested and treated.	Certain antibiotic medicines are used to cure the infection.	Limit sex partners, use condoms, and see your physician regularly.	Untreated PID may lead to tubal pregnancy (which can be fatal) and inability to have children.
<b>Human Papilloma Virus (HPV)</b>	The Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) can cause genital warts in males and females and cervical cancer in women.	The infection is spread through direct contact, usually through sex.	Genital warts or an abnormal PAP smear.	Physical exam, annual PAP smears and specific testing on a specimen to identify high risk types of HPV.	Your partner may have HPV.	Warts are removed by several methods. Your doctor will choose the best one. A vaccine is available that protects against HPV strains linked to cervical cancer and genital warts.	Limit sex partners, use condoms at all times when having sex. Condoms may not protect if they do not cover the warts. Have annual PAP smears and checkups.	May cause cervical, vaginal, and rectal cancer. May cause cancer of the vulva and penis. Warts may be recurrent. The infection can also be spread to a baby during birth.
<b>Herpes (HSV)</b>	Genital herpes is caused by the Herpes Simplex virus.	Oral, anal and vaginal sex.	Initial outbreak causes small blisters at the site of infection which are painful and take about two weeks to heal. These symptoms may not be noticed, especially in women.	Blood test and examination.	Your partner may have Herpes. Herpes can be spread before, during, and between outbreaks.	Herpes can be treated with certain medications to reduce the symptoms. There may be long periods of time between outbreaks. Outbreaks often occur with stress or illness.	Limit sex partners, use condoms at all times. Condoms may not completely protect you if the condom does not cover herpes blisters.	There is no cure. The virus remains in the body and may cause outbreaks at different times.
<b>Hepatitis A (HAV)</b>	Infection of the liver with the hepatitis A virus. As an STI, HAV is most often seen among men who have sex with men.	Although Hepatitis A may be spread through sexual contact, it is most often spread by contact with contaminated food or water.	Loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, yellow skin and eyes, joint pain, clay-colored stool.	Blood tests are done to identify the infection.	Your partner may have Hepatitis A and should be tested.	Treat symptoms only.	A vaccine is available. Use condoms when having sex. Wash hands when handling food. Wash fruits and vegetables carefully.	After the disease runs its course, a person is immune.
<b>Hepatitis B (HBV)</b>	Infection of the liver with the hepatitis B virus	Through sex, sharing of needles and contact with infected blood.	Loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, yellow skin and eyes, joint pain, clay-colored stool.	Blood tests are done to identify the infection.	Your partner may have Hepatitis B and should be tested.	A vaccine is available. Treatment of the disease is to relieve symptoms only. Certain drugs may decrease the amount of virus in the body and control the disease.	Do not share needles if using IV drugs, limit sex partners and use condoms.	6%-10% will become chronic carriers. This means a person with HBV may be contagious for the rest of their life. Chronic Hepatitis B may lead to liver cancer or death.
<b>Hepatitis C (HCV)</b>	Infection of the liver with the hepatitis C virus	Through sex, sharing of needles and contact with infected blood.	Loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, yellow skin and eyes, joint pain, clay-colored stool.	Blood tests are done to identify the infection.	Your partner may have Hepatitis C and should be tested.	No vaccine is available. Treatment may stop the disease but not always. Many people who have Hepatitis C are not aware of the infection and may not know it for many years.	Do not share needles if using IV drugs, limit sex partners and use condoms.	57%-85% may become chronic carriers. This means an infected person may be contagious for the rest of their life. Chronic Hepatitis C may lead to liver cancer or death.

Source: [http://www.cdc.gov/STI/healthcomm/fact\\_sheets.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/STI/healthcomm/fact_sheets.htm) Please visit this website for more detailed information. Low cost STI testing and treatment is available at your local County Health Department. To speak with an STI professional, please call (850)595-6532.