

Fact Sheets

Sexually Transmitted Infections

STI



National Lutheran Health & Medical Board
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Chennai—600 010



Sexually Transmitted Infections

A Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) is a general term given to any infection that can be passed from one person to another during sexual activity.

There are many STI's – there are also many possible symptoms to look for, and sometimes there are no symptoms at all.

Some common signs and symptoms are:

- **Unusual discharge of any type, from the penis or vagina.**
- **Pain or irritation when passing urine or having sexual intercourse**
- **Sores, blisters, ulcers, warts, lumps or rashes anywhere in the genital or anal area**
- **Itchiness or irritation in the genital or anal area**
- **Deep pelvic pain**

Some of these signs may be due to other causes but, if you have any of them, it is important that you see a doctor as soon as possible.

Even if the signs go away, it does not mean that the disease has gone and, you may still be able to infect people you have sex with.

Most STI's are treatable.

It is important to see a doctor if you think that you may be infected.



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Genital Herpes

Some facts...

Genital herpes is an STI transmitted through direct contact with the painful ulcers (sores) the infection causes, but herpes can also be passed to a partner even after the sores have healed or before an outbreak has occurred.

Herpes can be transmitted from the mouth to the genitals or from the genitals to the mouth during oral sex. Herpes sores heal on their own after 10 to 14 days, but the virus stays in the body after the sores are healed.

What do you look for?

Before the sores appear, there may be other symptoms, such as: Pain, tingling or itching and redness on the affected site.

In women,

sores may appear on the vulva or walls of the vagina, and occasionally on the cervix.

In men,

sores may appear around the head of shaft of the penis.

- Sores may also appear around the anus in both men and women.
- Blisters or ulcers (sores) on the mouth, lips, genitals, anus, or surrounding areas
- Burning or pain during urination
- Itching or tingling in the genital area

If left untreated...

- There is no cure for herpes, but there are ways to relieve pain caused by the sores.
- Some people experience repeated outbreaks (in other words, the sores return after they have healed). Genital herpes can be transmitted to a baby during pregnancy or delivery. If infected, the baby can become very sick and possibly die.

Genital Warts (HPV)

Some facts...

Genital warts are an STI caused by the human papilloma virus (HPV). HPV is passed between people by contact with a wart or skin in and around the genitals of the infected person.

HPV infection and genital warts are very common among sexually active people.

Many people with HPV do not have genital warts.

What do you look for?

Warts or bumps on the genitals, anus, or surrounding areas

The warts can be very small and painless.

On the penis they are usually visible, but genital warts on women, or anal warts in either sex, may be so small that some people carry them without knowing.

If left untreated...

Genital warts can reappear and undetected infection may lead to cancer.

In pregnant women, the warts to grow in size or number, bleed, or make delivery difficult. The warts will shrink on their own after delivery.

A baby can become infected during pregnancy or delivery and develop warts on the genitals or anus, or in the throat.

Gonorrhoea

Some facts...

Gonorrhoea is an STI transmitted during anal, oral, or vaginal sex.

Many men and women who have this infection have no symptoms, but they can still pass the infection to others.

What do you look for?

In men:

- Urethral discharge
- Swollen and/or painful testicles

In women:

- Unusual vaginal discharge
- Lower abdominal pain (pain below the belly button; pelvic pain)
- Abnormal and/or heavy vaginal bleeding
- Vaginal bleeding after intercourse

In men or women:

- Burning or pain during urination

If left untreated...

- In women, gonorrhoea can spread to the uterus (womb) and fallopian tubes, causing **pelvic inflammatory disease (PID)**, which can make it difficult for her to become pregnant, cause infertility
- In pregnant women, gonorrhoea can cause early labour and delivery and can be passed to the baby, causing serious infections.
- In men, gonorrhoea can cause pain and swelling in the testicles, leading to infertility.
- Gonorrhoea can get into the bloodstream, leading to an infection throughout the body, often causing pain and swelling in the joints.

Syphilis

Some facts...

Syphilis is an STI transmitted through direct contact with the sores the infection causes on the mouth, lips, vagina, penis, anus, or rectum.

- **Primary syphilis.** Initially causes sores that will heal on their own, but the infection will still be present and can progress to:
- **Secondary syphilis:** Rash, sore throat, muscle aches, tiredness, and swollen lymph nodes
- **Tertiary syphilis:** No symptoms for many years; eventually affects the whole body; at this stage, can damage the heart and nervous system and can cause death

What do you look for..?

Blisters or ulcers (sores) on the mouth, lips, genitals, anus, or surrounding areas

If left untreated...

If left untreated, the sores syphilis causes will heal on their own, but the infection will still be present and can progress and cause serious problems.

If left untreated, syphilis can damage the heart and nervous system and can cause death.

Syphilis can be transmitted to a baby during pregnancy, causing stillbirth or the death of the baby shortly after delivery.

Trichomoniasis

Some facts...

Trichomoniasis infection is an STI transmitted during anal, oral, or vaginal sex.

Many men and women who have this infection have no symptoms, but they can still pass the infection to others.

What do you look for..?

In men,

- There may be no signs at all.
- Urethral discharge

In women

- frothy yellowish green discharge with a very unpleasant smell.
- The vaginal opening may feel itchy and
- intercourse is usually painful
- Burning or pain during urination

If left untreated...

In pregnant women, trichomoniasis infection can cause early labour

Chancroid

Some facts...

Chancroid is an STI transmitted to a sexual partner through contact with the sores chancroid causes on the vagina, penis, anus, or rectum.

What do you look for..?

Blisters or ulcers (sores): lesions on the mouth, lips, genitals, anus, or surrounding areas

If left untreated...

- Treatment cures the infection, and complications are rare.
- If left untreated, chancroid can lead to swollen lymph nodes (glands) in the genital area that can rupture and drain pus.

Chlamydia

Some facts...

Chlamydia is an STI transmitted during anal, oral, or vaginal sex.

Many men and women who have this infection have no symptoms, but they can still pass the infection to others.

Often there are no signs or symptoms.

What do you look for..?

In men:

- Urethral discharge
- Swollen and/or painful testicles

In women:

- Unusual vaginal discharge.
- Lower abdominal pain (pain below the belly button; pelvic pain)
- Abnormal and/or heavy vaginal bleeding
- Vaginal bleeding after intercourse.

In men or women:

- Burning or pain during urination

If left untreated...

- In women, chlamydia can spread to the uterus (womb) and fallopian tubes, and make it difficult for her to become pregnant
- In pregnant women, chlamydia can lead to early labour and can be passed to the baby.
- In men, chlamydia can cause pain and swelling in the testicles, leading to infertility.

Fact Sheets

Reproductive Tract Infections

RTI



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Pelvic Inflammatory Disease

Some facts...

PID is a term used for infection of a women's internal reproductive organs.

The infection begins in the cervix and spreads upwards into the internal organs – the uterus, fallopian tubes and ovaries.

The most common causes of PID are chlamydia and gonorrhoea infections.

What do you look for..?

- **Lower abdominal and pelvic pain**
- **Deep pain with sexual intercourse**
- **Menstrual disturbances**
- **Fever**

If left untreated...

- **Leads to infertility**

Vaginal Yeast Infection

(Candidiasis, Moniliasis)

Some facts...

- Vaginal yeast infection is an RTI. Yeast infection is not an STI.
- Yeast infection occurs when the normal environment in the vagina changes. Sometimes the reason for this is unclear. Yeast infections can also occur with antibiotic use.
- A woman can develop a vaginal yeast infection if she has conditions that affect the immune system, such as diabetes, HIV infection, or lupus.

What do you look for..?

- Redness and burning sensation in the genital area
- Vaginal pain during sexual intercourse
- Burning sensation during urination
- Internal or external genital itching
- Clumped discharge resembling cottage cheese
- Bread-like, “yeasty” odour from the genital area
- Breaks in the skin when there is significant inflammation

Irritation of the cervix

If left untreated...

Other than extreme discomfort from skin irritation in severe infections, there are no complications from vaginal yeast infections.

Bacterial Vaginosis (BV)

Some facts...

- **BV is an RTI. BV is not an STI, although it is more common among sexually active women and women with a new sexual partner.**
- **The infection develops when the normal environment in the vagina changes. Sometimes the reason for this is unclear.**

What do you look for..?

- **Itching or tingling in the genital area**
- **Unusual vaginal discharge**

If left untreated...

- **BV can increase the risk of HIV transmission.**
- **In pregnant women, BV can cause early labour and delivery.**