



Ministry of Education

Approved
By
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SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Government of
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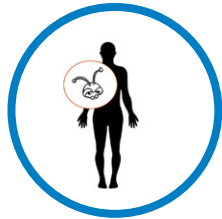
SEXUALLY
TRANSMITTED
INFECTIONS

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)

What are Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)?

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) are diseases that are passed on from one person to another through sexual contact. There are many different STIs. They include: chlamydia, gonorrhoea, syphilis, genital herpes, hepatitis B, human papilloma virus (HPV) and HIV.

How can you get a STI?



A person can get a STI from having sex with a person who has a STI through:

- Vaginal or anal intercourse
- Genital to genital contact (no intercourse)
- Contact with blisters (herpes), sores (syphilis), or genital warts on someone else's skin
- Oral sex (mouth to genital contact).

Some STIs like hepatitis and HIV are also spread through sharing equipment such as needles for drug use, tattooing or body piercing.

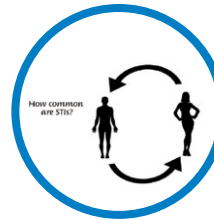
A mother with a STI can pass the infection to the unborn baby during pregnancy, during delivery, or when breast-feeding.

Many people who have a STI have no signs or symptoms. They may look and feel healthy, but they can still pass on the STI during sexual contact. The only way to know if a person has a STI is to visit a clinic to be tested. A person who gets treated for a STI can get infected again if they have sex with someone who is infected.

If you think you may have a STI, get yourself checked.

You cannot get a STI from sitting on a toilet seat, shaking hands, or hugging someone.

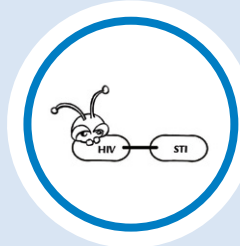
How common are STIs?



STIs are common, especially among young people. Young people are at greater risk of getting a STI for several reasons:

- Young women's bodies are biologically different in ways that allows STIs to attack and be more harmful to them than other people.
- Some young people do not realise they need to get the necessary tests before they engage in sexual activity. If they have a STI and do not know, or if the other person has a STI, they will pass it on to each other.
- Many young people feel uncomfortable talking to a health worker about their sexual habits and getting advice about preventing STIs.
- Some young people have more than one sex partner and are less careful about protecting themselves.
- Some young people do not have transport to go to a clinic to learn about prevention of STIs.
- Sometimes young people are worried that other people will find out why they are at the clinic, and so they do not want to get tested or get advice about preventing STIs.

The link between HIV and other STIs



Having a STI is one of the most important factors in how HIV is passed on from one person to another person. This is because the sores or discharge from a STI in a HIV negative person can make it easier for the HIV virus to enter their body. In addition, a person who is infected with both HIV and a STI will pass on the HIV more easily. Having a STI increases the risk of getting HIV by 350 percent.

What can I do to protect myself?



Abstinence: The surest way to protect yourself against a STI is to not have sex. This means not having any sex. There are many things to consider before having sex, and it is okay to say “no” if you don’t want to have sex. If you have a girlfriend or boyfriend, you should be able to talk about how to prevent STIs and early pregnancy. They should always respect your right to say “no” to anything that does not feel right to you.

Be faithful to your traditions when you are younger and practise abstinence. When you are older and ready to have a relationship, be faithful to your partner. At all times stick to one partner. Be faithful. Remember the numbers game! The more sexual partners one has, the higher the chance of getting infected.

Get tested: Ask a doctor or health care worker about STI testing. If you think you may have a STI, it is better to get tested so you can get early treatment. The earlier you get tested, the easier it is to treat a STI if you test positive. For young women and men who do not get treatment for STIs, it may mean that they will not be able to have children in the future, or that they may get anal or cervical cancer in the future. Remember to get tested regularly, because you can get a STI after you have been treated if you engage in sexual activity with a person who has a STI.

Get vaccinated: Ask a doctor or health care worker about vaccination against HPV and Hepatitis B. Do not share your toothbrush with anyone (it is a risk factor for Hepatitis B).

Reduce risky behaviours: Don’t take drugs, alcohol or sniff glue. If you use alcohol and drugs or sniff glue, you are likely to take risks, like having sex with someone you normally wouldn’t have sex with. Sharing injection needles and using drugs is a dangerous practice. It can also lead to STIs, including HIV. If you have a STI, you can infect someone else. Talk to a health worker or doctor for advice.

If I get an STI, how will I know?



Many STIs do not cause symptoms that you would notice, so the only way to know for sure if you have a STI or not, is to get tested. You can get a STI from having sex with someone who has no symptoms. Just like you, that person might not even know he or she has a STI.

Where can I get tested?



You can go to a youth-friendly health clinic in your area, or to a doctor.

Can STIs be treated?



You can get medicine to cure some STIs, like chlamydia and gonorrhoea. Other STIs, like herpes, cannot be cured, but you can take medicine to help with the symptoms. If you are ever treated for a STI, be sure to finish all your medicine, even if you feel better before you finish it all. The medicine is making sure there is no more infection left in your

body, even though you feel better. It is possible to get a STI again after you have been treated, if you have sex with someone who has a STI.

What happens if I don't treat a STI?



Some STIs are curable but can be dangerous if they are not treated. For example, if chlamydia and gonorrhoea are not treated, it is difficult – or even impossible – for a woman to get pregnant. You also increase your chance of getting HIV if you have a STI that has not been treated. Some STIs, such as HIV, can be fatal if they are not treated.

What happens if I have an incurable STI?

Some STIs, like herpes and HIV, are not curable, but a doctor can give you medicine to treat the symptoms. If you are living with a STI, it is important to talk to someone you trust, to get help and to protect yourself and your future partner's health.

If I have questions, who can answer them?

If you have questions, talk to a parent, aunt, uncle, teacher, school counsellor, health worker, or a trusted adult. Don't be afraid to be open and honest with them about your worries about STIs. If you are confused or need advice, they are the first people to talk to.

You should go to see your doctor or health care worker if you notice any symptoms such as an unusual sore, a smelly discharge, burning when urinating, or, for women and girls, if there is bleeding between periods.

Chlamydia

What is it?

Chlamydia is caused by bacteria. Because there often are not any symptoms, lots of people can have chlamydia and not know it.

The chlamydia bacteria can pass from one person to another through sexual intercourse. If someone touches bodily fluids that contain the bacteria and then touches his or her eye, a chlamydial eye infection is possible. Chlamydia also can be passed from a mother to her baby during birth. This can cause pneumonia and eye infection in the baby, which can become very serious.

What are the symptoms?

Most people do not have symptoms.

Sometimes girls get pain in the lower abdomen and feel burning when urinating, or have an abnormal discharge from the vagina.

Men sometimes have a discharge from the penis, or itching or burning around the penis when urinating. Warts (small, raised, hard bulges on the skin) can also appear on the genital area.

How long does it take symptoms appear?

Symptoms may appear after 1-3 weeks, but many people do not have any symptoms at all and do not know they have it.

What can happen?

If it is not treated, in women it can lead to infection in the reproductive system

(in the uterus and the tubes carrying the egg from the ovaries to the uterus) and can cause permanent damage leading to pain in the lower abdomen and not being able to get pregnant. In men it can cause problems in the tube carrying sperm from the testicles, causing pain and fever.

Babies born to infected mothers can have eye infections or get pneumonia.

If not treated, chlamydia increases the chances of getting or passing on HIV.

How is it treated?

It is treated with medicine called antibiotics. Both partners should be treated at the same time.

How is chlamydia prevented?

The best prevention is abstinence. Using protection is another way.

It is better to prevent the infection than to treat it.

Gonorrhoea

What is it?

It is an infection caused by bacteria and passed from one person to another through having sex (including oral sex), even when the person who is infected has no symptoms. It can also be passed from a mother to her baby during birth.

What are the symptoms?

Men: Yellow-green or white discharge and burning when urinating. There can be possible swelling in the area of the testicles.

Women: Yellow-green discharge. Burning sensation when urinating or bleeding in the time between menstrual periods.

How long does it take symptoms appear?

Symptoms appear 2-14 days after being exposed.

What can happen?

It is possible that men may be unable to father children. If untreated women will possibly be unable to have children.

In both men and women, if untreated, it can affect throat, eyes, heart, brain, skin and joints.

Babies born to mothers with the infection should be treated with drops in the eyes, otherwise they can become blind,

How is it treated?

Gonorrhoea is treated with medicines called antibiotics. You can get infected again after being treated if you have sex with an infected person.

How is gonorrhoea prevented?

The best prevention is abstinence. Using protection during sexual activity is another way. It is better to prevent the infection than to treat it.

Syphilis

What is it?

Syphilis is caused by bacteria, through direct contact with a syphilis sore on an infected person during sexual intercourse (vaginal, anal, or oral sex). The infection can also be passed from a mother to her baby during pregnancy.

What are the symptoms?

There are many stages:

First stage: A red and painless sore called a chancre appears in the mouth, lips, throat, vagina, under the foreskin, on the cervix, on the anus or between the buttocks. It looks like a harmless bump.

Second stage: There is a rash on the inside of the hands, soles of the feet and back, or all over the body. Also you can feel like you have flu, with symptoms such as fever and feeling cold. Sometimes there are no symptoms.

Third stage: The infection spreads to the brain, eyes, heart, spinal cord, and bones. The person has difficulty walking, experiences numbness, gradual blindness, and possibly even death.

How long does it take symptoms appear?

First stage: Chancre appears about 3 weeks after the person is infected.

Secondary: Rash appears 2-10 weeks after the chancre appears. It is important to remember; many people never notice any symptoms of syphilis and even sores disappear, but the infection is still hiding in the body if it is not treated.

What can happen?

The infection can spread throughout the body if it is not treated. It affects the heart, brain and nerves. If the infection is not treated, it can cause death.

In babies born to mothers who are infected, the infection can cause possible death or bone deformation, if the infected mother is not treated early in pregnancy.

Syphilis also increases the risk of HIV infection, because HIV can enter the body more easily when there is a sore present.

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)

How is it treated?

It is treated with medicine called antibiotics in the early stages. Later stage damage cannot be reversed, but treatment is still important. It is important for both partners to get treatment, otherwise the person who has not been treated will infect the treated person again.

How is syphilis prevented?

The best prevention is abstinence. Using protection during sexual activity is another way. It is better to prevent the infection than to treat it.

Genital herpes

What is it?

Genital herpes is caused by a virus called herpes virus. There are two types of herpes virus, HSV 1 and HSV 2. They cause sores around the sexual organs or the anus. This type of infection is called genital herpes. HSV 1 also causes another type of infection called oral herpes, that causes sores around the mouth. If a person with oral herpes touches the sores on the mouth and then touches the genital area, they can pass on the infection and cause genital herpes. Genital herpes can be passed on from an infected person to another person even when no signs are present, and also from the mouth of one person to the genital area of the other person.

What are the symptoms?

Sores usually appear as one or more blisters on or around the genital area, anal area or the mouth. The blisters break and leave painful sores that may take many weeks to heal and make it painful to urinate. Sores may bleed. The first time a person gets the symptoms they can also get fever, body ache or swollen glands.

How long does it take symptoms appear?

Genital herpes starts with itching and pain 2-20 days after being infected.

Soon after this time, small painful blisters appear on the genital area. Then the blisters break and leave painful sores.

What can happen?

Without treatment, sores make it painful to urinate. Sores may bleed. Sores take a week or several weeks to heal and the genital area can be very painful. If you touch your sores or the fluids from the sores, you may transfer herpes to another part of your body, such as your eyes. To avoid spreading herpes to another part of your body, do not touch the sores or fluids. If you touch the sores or fluids, immediately wash your hands thoroughly to help avoid spreading your infection.

Having genital herpes can increase the chance of the person getting HIV, because herpes sores make it easier for HIV to enter the body. Genital herpes can cause sores or breaks in the skin or lining of the mouth, vagina, and rectum. The genital sores caused by herpes can bleed easily. If you are pregnant and have genital herpes there is a chance that you will have your baby too early, or you can pass the infection to your unborn child and cause a deadly infection (neonatal herpes). It is important to avoid getting herpes during pregnancy, or if you get herpes, that you get treatment before delivery.

Pregnant women who have herpes should get treatment, otherwise severe damage to the brain of the newborn baby can occur.

The link between genital herpes and HIV

When the sores from genital herpes come into contact with the mouth, vagina, or rectum during sexual activity, they increase the risk of getting HIV by allowing the virus to enter the body more easily. Sores from genital herpes in an HIV positive person also make it easier to pass the HIV on.

The link between genital herpes and oral herpes

Oral herpes results in sores or blisters on or around the mouth and is usually caused by HSV 1. Many people may have been infected with HSV 1 during childhood, from contact that is not sexual. For example, people can get

infected from a kiss from a relative or friend with oral herpes. HSV 1 can also be spread from the mouth to the genitals through oral sex. This is why some cases of genital herpes are caused by HSV 1.

How is it treated?

There is no cure for genital herpes. There is medicine that can reduce the symptoms and reduce the chance of spreading it to another person. The virus remains in the body and can resurface.

How is herpes prevented?

The best prevention is abstinence. Using protection is another way. It is better to prevent the infection than to treat it.

Hepatitis B

What is it?

Hepatitis B is an infection of the liver caused by a virus. It can move from one person to another through blood and other body fluids. People can also get it through having sex, or from injecting drugs using needles that have been used by people who have the virus, or from tattoo needles that have not been properly cleaned. A pregnant woman can pass Hepatitis B to her unborn baby.

What are the symptoms?

The infected person has the symptoms of flu, extreme tiredness and mild fever, and they feel like vomiting and do not feel like eating. Sometimes they have abdominal pain. The skin and eyes look yellow and their urine is brown in colour.

How long does it take symptoms appear?

The symptoms appear after 6 weeks to 6 months. Someone with no symptoms can still pass the virus to someone else. Some people carry the virus for the rest of their lives.

What can happen?

Hepatitis B can lead to liver damage and the chance of liver cancer, leading to death. If a pregnant woman has the hepatitis B virus, her baby has a very high chance of having the virus.

How is it treated?

It is important to get plenty of rest or drink fluids. Sometimes, people need to be hospitalised for a little while, if they are too sick to eat or drink.

How is hepatitis B prevented?

The best way is abstinence from all kinds of sex (i.e., don't have oral, vaginal, or anal sex). Protection is another way. Avoid contact with an infected person's blood. Do not use intravenous drugs or share needles or other drug tools. Do not share things like toothbrushes or razors. Do not have tattoos and piercing done, unless the needles are sterilised. It is better to prevent than to treat.

Genital warts (HPV)

What is it?

Genital warts are caused by the human papilloma virus (HPV). Some people carry the virus but do not have any signs. The virus is commonly carried in teenagers and young people who engage in sex. Genital warts can be passed from person to person through intimate sexual contact (touching someone's genitals or having vaginal, oral, or anal sex).

What are the symptoms?

The symptoms are wart-like growths, that look like small bumps or can be flat shaped, in the genital or anal region in men and women. Sometimes they are hard to see, so people who have them do not know they have the infection.

How long does it take symptoms appear?

It can take several weeks to several months for warts to appear. Most HPV infections have no signs or symptoms, but the virus is there hiding in the body. During this time the infected person can pass it on to another person without knowing.

What can happen?

Genital warts can go away, remain unchanged, or grow bigger and multiply. They can also spread to other people. There are many other types of HPV. Some other types of HPV virus can lead to cancer of the cervix in girls, or genital cancer in boys as well as girls. The types of HPV that cause genital warts are different from the types that can cause cancer.

How is it treated?

There is no cure that gets rid of the human papilloma virus completely. Medication or 'freezing' can reduce the number of genital warts. When the warts go away, the virus is still there and the infection could still spread to someone else. It is common for the warts to come back after treatment, especially in the first 3 months after treatment.

How are genital warts prevented?

The best prevention is abstinence. Using protection is another way. It is better to prevent the infection than to treat it. Prevention also means not touching the genitals of someone who is infected with HPV.

The more dangerous types of HPV lead to cancer and can be prevented by getting vaccinated. Ask a health care worker about the HPV vaccination. Girls can be vaccinated between the ages of 11 and 26 years, and boys between the ages of 11 and 21 years.

Review and activities for teachers to do with pupils/students

Here are some discussion points for you to think and talk about with the group. Remember to lead them to two main messages:

1. If they think they have a STI, or even if they are not sure but are in circumstances that could cause STIs, they should get themselves and their sexual partners tested.
2. STIs are dangerous, hidden and can spread very easily. It is better, therefore, to abstain from activity that may lead to STIs. You have a responsibility to protect yourself.

Who can you go to for help?

Parents, teachers, counsellors, health clinic, aunts, uncles, older sisters or brothers.

Questions to ask the pupils/students

- Is going to the doctor difficult? Why?
- Why do women/girls have problems taking STI treatment?
- Do you know any friends who have had STIs? What problems do they have in getting treatment or advice about prevention? Any other problems?

Activities

The following activities can be done after the pupils/students have read the booklet. Activity 1 is for Level 3 students. Activity 2 is for younger pupils after they have read the first part of the booklet.

Activity 1 – Older students (Level 3)

Explain the major STIs and their symptoms to the group. Since there is a lot of information and all of it is important to remember, do a memory test with the group through the following activity.

Use cards to play a game of 'match-the-symptom-with-the-STI'. Put the name of each STI on separate poster on the wall in the classroom. Write each symptom on a separate piece of card/paper and mix up all the cards. Ask the students to stick each symptom card under the appropriate STI heading.

Activity 2

On a flip chart write two headings: True and False. Write each of the following statements on a separate card. Split the pupils into small groups of 3-4 pupils. Give each group a card. Each group reads the card, discusses the statement and then sticks it under True or False, depending on their understanding.

Here are some examples of statements you could use. You can add others:

People do not always realise they have an STI.

[Answer: True. Some STIs are difficult to see or feel, especially in women. Sores may come and go. Because you do not see them does not mean they are not there.]

If the symptoms of STI go away, the STI has also gone away.

[Answer: False. Some STIs are difficult to see or feel, especially in women. Sores may come and go. Because you do not see them or feel them does not mean they are not there.]

Once you get an STI, you do not get it again.

[Answer: False. STIs are treated with medicine. After treatment, you can still get infected with STIs if you have sex with a person who has a STI. You do not develop immunity against STIs.]

You can tell if someone has a STI by looking at the vagina or penis.

[Answer: False. More than 50% of STIs do not have symptoms.]

Most STIs are curable.

[Answer: True. Most STIs (except HIV, herpes and genital warts) are curable if treatment is started early and if the medicine is taken until it is all finished even if the person feels better.]

If you do not treat STIs, men and women may have problems being able to produce a baby.

[Answer: True. STIs can cause infertility.]

Having a STI makes it easier to become infected with HIV.

[Answer: True. STIs create sores or small breaks in the skin of the penis or in the wall of the vagina that allows HIV to enter. Thus, HIV can easily pass to a sexual partner.]

If I use birth control pills, I am protected from STIs (use this question for children above 14 years old).

[Answer: False. Only abstinence from sex, using protection, or being faithful to one sexual partner who has been tested and does not have an STI, can protect you from STIs.]

If a doctor has treated me for a STI, the person that I had sex with must also be treated.

[Answer: True. Both partners must be treated at the same time to stop the infection spreading to other people or to stop the untreated person infecting the treated person again.]

Men who have an STI are cured if they have sex with a virgin.

[Answer: False. This is a myth. Only medicines can cure STIs. Some STIs cannot be cured but there is medicine to reduce the effects of the infection.]

My friend had the same problem as me, so I will use the same medicine s/he took. There is no need to go to a doctor.

[Answer: False. Self-medication or advice from a friend can result in the wrong medicine or not enough medicine being taken for treatment. A visit to a qualified doctor is essential.]

If I wash with antiseptics frequently, the infection will go away.

[Answer: False. It is good to have good hygiene, but medicine is necessary for treating or curing the infection.]

If I get a STI, I only put myself in danger.

[Answer: False. You can infect other people if you have sex with them, and if you are pregnant you can infect your baby as well. You can even lose the baby or cause severe harm to the baby, depending which STI you have and whether it has been treated or not.]

If I do not have sexual intercourse, but only touch the genitals of a person, I cannot get a STI.

[Answer: False. You can get a STI even if you do not have sexual intercourse. You can get some STIs by touching the genitals of the infected person, because some STIs are passed on through genital contact or your hands can carry the infection to your mouth.]

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS

This booklet is designed for use in schools and in the community. It provides information on different STIs chlamydia, gonorrhoea, syphilis, genital herpes, hepatitis B, human papilloma virus (HPV) and HIV. The booklet is straightforward and uses forthright language, dispels the myths and misconceptions about STIs and helps pupils/students to learn about safe sex practices, such as delaying sexual activity.