

Sexually Transmitted Diseases

STDs are infections passed from person to person through sexual contact. Sometimes the term Sexual Transmitted Infection (STI) may also be used. There are many types of STDs and many of them do not cause symptoms. Becoming infected with an STD is common, therefore protection and testing are very important. You can help protect yourself from many STDs by practicing safer sex, such as using a condom. If you think you may have been exposed to an STD or are experiencing symptoms of an STD it is important to get tested. Early diagnosis will allow you to begin treatment sooner. If left untreated, some STDs can increase your risk of contracting HIV or lead to infertility.

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV):

HIV can be transmitted through anal, oral or vaginal sex. It can be transmitted to a child during childbirth and through breast milk. Contact with blood infected by HIV can also transmit the disease. It cannot be transmitted through casual contact such as hugging or sharing utensils. If left untreated, HIV can lead to AIDs. It is possible to go for years without showing any symptoms of HIV.

You should get tested if: You have had unprotected sex, you have injected drugs with a needle or shared drug equipment with others, or you have a new sexual partner. A blood or urine test is used to detect HIV. If you have recently been exposed to HIV and your test result is negative, you may need to be tested again in 3 months to get a more accurate result. HIV is treated with medicine called anti-retroviral, this medicine can prevent the virus from worsening and extend the life of a person with HIV for decades. It is important to start treatment for HIV as early as possible. There is no cure for this virus.

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Pelvic Inflammatory disease (PID):

PID is a condition that only effects women. It is an infection in the womb, ovaries and fallopian tubes. STDs such as Chlamydia and Gonorrhea, if left untreated can cause PID. Symptoms of PID include: pain during intercourse, pain in the lower abdomen, fever, vaginal discharge with odor, or irregular bleeding. Some women may not experience any symptoms. PID is diagnosed with a vaginal exam, pap test, and pelvic ultrasound. The infections that cause PID are treated with antibiotics. PID is curable, however damage done by PID may not be reversible.

Human Papilloma Virus (HPV):

HPV is transmitted through anal, oral or vaginal sex with an infected person. Some types of HPV cause cancer. The vaccines Gardasil and Cervarix can protect against genital warts and from certain types of HPV. The vaccine is recommended for males and females from age 9 to 26 years. Symptoms of HPV can include genital warts which are bumps in the genital area that could be small or large, raised or flat, or they may be shaped like cauliflower. Some individuals with HPV may not show any symptoms. HPV is detected using a pap test which allows the physician to determine if you have abnormal cervical cells that might indicate HPV. HPV is not curable. The genital warts that accompany the virus can be treated or removed. Abnormal cervical cells may be treated to help prevent cancer from developing.

Gonorrhea:

Gonorrhea is transmitted through anal, oral and vaginal sex. Gonorrhea is a bacterial infection that can affect the genital tract, mouth, and anus. Symptoms include painful urination, a pus-like discharge from the vagina or penis, anal irritation or painful bowel movements. Some individual may have no symptoms. Testing for Gonorrhea is done through a urine sample or a sample from the infected body part. This condition is treated and cured with antibiotics.

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Syphilis:

Syphilis is transmitted through anal, oral, and vaginal sex with an infected person. The bacteria is passed to another person through syphilis sores. Symptoms of Syphilis are categorized into 3 stages: primary, secondary, late or latent stage. The primary stage is characterized by a single sore, the second stage involves a skin rash and lesions on the palm of the hands and both feet, the late stage begins when the other symptoms disappear but the disease is still present. Untreated Syphilis can lead to blindness and death. The test for Syphilis includes a blood test and microscopic exam of a syphilis sore. The disease is treated with a single antibiotic injection for persons infected for less than 1 year. Additional doses may be needed for those infected for more than 1 year.

Trichomoniasis:

Trichomoniasis or Trich is transmitted through vaginal sex or genital to genital contact with an infected person. This condition is caused by a tiny parasite. Trich can be dangerous in pregnant women potentially causing premature birth or low birth weight. Symptoms of Trich include unusual discharge, strong odor, and pain when urinating or having sex. Many people don't experience any symptoms. Trichomoniasis is detected by testing a sample of the discharge from the vagina or penis. It may also be tested using a urine sample. Trich can be cured with antibiotics.

Chlamydia:

Chlamydia is a bacterial infection that is transmitted through anal, oral or vaginal sex. The symptoms of Chlamydia are pain during intercourse, abdominal and lower back pain, burning during urination, and abnormal discharge. Some people infected with Chlamydia do not experience any symptoms. A urine test or specimen from the penis or cervix is used to test for Chlamydia. Antibiotics are used to treat and cure Chlamydia.

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Herpes:

Herpes is a viral infection caused by herpes simplex. The virus is transmitted through anal, oral, and vaginal sex with an infected person even if no symptoms are present. Symptoms of herpes include cold sores around the mouth; sores or blisters around genitals, buttocks, or anal area; flu-like symptoms such as fever and swollen glands. Some infected individuals have no symptoms. Herpes is detected with a blood test. There is no cure for this infection but antiviral medications are used to treat outbreaks.