

## Gonorrhea, Chlamydia, HPV, HIV, Hepatitis B, Syphilis, Trichomoniasis: How to Prevent Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)

### What are sexually transmitted diseases (STIs)?

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are infections that are spread by sexual contact.

- Sexually transmitted infections can cause severe damage to your body—even death.
- Except for colds and flu, STIs are the most common contagious (easily spread) infections in the United States, with millions of new cases each year.
- Although some STIs can be treated and cured, others cannot.

### How are STIs transmitted?

- A person with an STI can pass it to others by contact with skin, genitals, mouth, rectum, or body fluids.
- Anyone who has sexual contact—vaginal, anal, or oral sex—with another person may get an STI.
- STIs may not cause symptoms.
- Even if there are no symptoms, your health can be affected.

### What causes STIs?

STIs are caused by bacterial or viral infections.

- Sexually transmitted infections caused by bacteria are treated with antibiotics.
- Those caused by viruses cannot be cured, but symptoms can be treated.

### What are the risk factors for STIs?

- The following factors increase the risk of getting STIs:
- More than one sexual partner
- A partner who has or has had more than one sexual partner
- Sex with someone who has an STI
- History of STIs
- Use of intravenous drugs (injected into a vein) or partner use of intravenous drugs

**Adolescents have a higher risk of getting an STI than adults.**

### What are some of the most common STIs?

- Chlamydia

- Gonorrhea
- Testing for Human Immunodeficiency Virus
- Human papillomavirus (HPV) infection)
- Syphilis
- Trichomoniasis
- Hepatitis B

## How can I reduce the risk of getting an STI?

There are many ways you can reduce your risk of getting an STI:

- ❖ Know your sexual partners and limit their number—Your partner’s sexual history is as important as your own.
  - The more partners you or your partners have, the higher your risk of getting an STI.
- ❖ Use a latex condom—Using a latex condom every time you have vaginal, oral, or anal sex decreases the chances of infection.
  - Condoms lubricated with spermicides do not offer extra protection.
  - Frequent use of some spermicides can increase the risk of HIV.
- ❖ Avoid risky sex practices—Sexual acts that tear or break the skin carry a higher risk of STIs.
  - Even small cuts that do not bleed let germs pass back and forth.
  - Anal sex poses a high risk because tissues in the rectum tear easily.
  - Body fluids also can carry STIs.
  - Having any unprotected sexual contact with an infected person poses a high risk of getting an STI.
- ❖ Get immunized—Vaccinations are available that will help prevent *hepatitis B and some types of HPV*

## How can STIs affect pregnancy?

Having an STI during pregnancy can harm the baby.

- ❖ Gonorrhea and chlamydia both can cause health problems in the infant ranging from eye infections to pneumonia.
- ❖ Syphilis may cause miscarriage or stillbirth.
- ❖ Human immunodeficiency virus infection can occur in a baby.

If you are pregnant and you or your partner have had—or may have—an STI, inform your health care provider.

**Your baby may be at risk.**

**Tests for some STIs are offered routinely during prenatal care.**

It is best to treat the STI early to decrease the chances that your baby also will contract the infection. You and your partner both may have to be treated.

