

# Sexually Transmitted Infections

## What are Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)?

STIs are caused by germs that live on the skin or in body fluids like semen, vaginal fluid, and blood. The germs are passed from an infected person through contact with skin, blood, or body fluids. These germs can get into the body through the vagina, mouth, anus, and open sores or cuts. STIs are not spread by casual contact, by being in swimming pools, or by sitting on toilet seats. STIs are very common. They can affect anyone.

## What are the Different Types of STIs?

There are more than 20 different kinds of STIs. They can be split into three main groups:

- **Parasites** are very small animals that feed off of the person they infect. Pubic lice or crabs are examples.
- **STIs caused by bacteria** can be cured with antibiotics. Bacterial STIs include chlamydia, gonorrhea, trichomoniasis, and syphilis.
- **STIs caused by viruses** can be controlled, but not cured. If you get a viral STI, you will always have it. These include HIV, genital herpes, genital warts, human papilloma virus (HPV), and hepatitis B virus.

## What are the Symptoms of STIs?

STIs have different symptoms. Some common ones include:

- Abnormal discharge from the penis or vagina
- Sores or warts on the genital area
- Burning while peeing
- Itching and redness in the genital area
- Anal itching, pain, or bleeding



## Common STIs:

- Chlamydia
- Gonorrhea
- Hepatitis B
- Herpes
- Human Papillomavirus (HPV)
- Syphilis
- Bacterial Vaginosis
- Crabs/Pubic Lice
- Trichomoniasis
- HIV

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## How Can STIs Be Prevented?

If you are sexually active, you can reduce your risk of getting STIs by practicing “safer sex.” This means:

- Using a condom for vaginal, oral, and anal sex – every time.
- Asking your partners direct questions about their sexual past.
- Knowing your partners and their STI status.
- Having regular health exams.

Safe sex doesn't just protect you. It also protects your partners.

## Get Tested!

You should be tested for STIs if you:

- Have had oral, anal, or vaginal sex and did not use latex condoms.
- Share needles to inject drugs or have sex with someone who shares needles.
- Feel you may have been exposed to or have signs of a STI.

Your provider can test you for STIs.

Sources:

“Sexually Transmitted Diseases”  
National Library of Medicine  
[www.nlm.nih.gov](http://www.nlm.nih.gov)

“Sexually Transmitted Diseases”  
[www.healthinfotranslations.org](http://www.healthinfotranslations.org)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

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