

### ARE STIs AND STDs DIFFERENT?

The acronym "STI" stands for sexually transmitted infection while "STD" stands for sexually transmitted disease. STIs are infections that usually start in your sexual and reproductive organs. Some infections may also infect other parts of your body. STIs are very common. Up to 75% of the sexually active population will get an STI of some kind in their lifetime. While some STIs may be painful, it is not unusual to have an STI without experiencing any symptoms for some time. Once symptoms do occur, an STI is considered an STD.

### HOW ARE STIs TRANSMITTED?

STIs are transmitted through sexual activities such as oral, vaginal or anal sex. Some STIs can also be spread through contact with infected blood. STIs are contagious which means you can contract them from your partner(s) if they are infected. STIs will stay with you if you do not receive treatment for them. STIs are most commonly found in the rectum (bum), in and around the vagina, in and around the penis and/or in the mouth.

### HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE AN STI?

Symptoms may vary from one person to another and in some cases people may have no symptoms at all which is why testing for STIs is recommended. Some common signs of infection are:

- Itching in the genital area.
- Abnormal fluid or discharge.
- Burning sensation when urinating.
- Sores or lesions around the vaginal, anal or penile area.
- Pain during or after sex.
- Pain in or around the genital area and/or pelvis.
- Sores or blisters in the genital area or in and around the mouth.
- Red or swollen throat.
- Flu or fever symptoms.

If you have signs of infection:

Discontinue sex until you have been properly diagnosed and treated.

Go to a doctor or health clinic for a check up.

You may have to specifically ask for STI tests and screenings.

Inform your sexual partner(s) so that they can access testing and treatment as well.

### HOW DO I PREVENT STIs/STDs?

Practicing safer sex can reduce your chances of STI infection. Finding creative ways to make sex play as safe and satisfying as possible is also important.

Key ways to reduce risk include:

Talking to your partner(s) about their sexual history and/or needle use.

Careful and consistent condom use when having sex.

Using new (unused/unshared) or clean (sterilized) needles at all times.

Keeping your partner(s) body fluids (blood, cum, pre-cum vaginal fluid and discharge from STIs) out of your body (vagina, anus, or mouth).

Not touching sores or growths caused by STIs.

Go for an STI check up with your doctor or health clinic.

Check yourself and your partner(s) for infection before having sex.

Get treatment if you have an STI and do not have sex until your course of treatment is complete.

Safer sex also means protecting your partner(s):

Do not allow your body fluids to get into the body of your partner(s). Use protection such as condoms, female condoms or dental dams.

Obtain treatment for STIs.

Abstain from having sex until sores and symptoms have been fully treated.

Have routine checkups for STIs and other potential infections.



## FACT SHEET 3: SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS

### WHAT ARE SOME COMMON STIs/STDs?

Bacterial vaginosis  
Chlamydia  
Cytomegalovirus (CMV)  
Epididymitis  
Gonorrhea ('the drip')  
Hepatitis B and C  
Herpes  
Human Immunodeficiency virus (HIV)  
Human papillomavirus (HPV; genital warts)  
Non-gonococcal urethritis (LGV)  
Pelvic inflammatory disease (PID)  
Phthirus pubis (crabs; pubic lice)  
Scabies  
Shigella  
Syphilis  
Urinary tract infections (UTIs)  
Vaginitis (vaginal yeast infections)

For more information or immediate questions, contact the STI information line at **604.872.6652** or [www.optionsforsexualhealth.org](http://www.optionsforsexualhealth.org)

### ONLINE RESOURCES

**Health Canada STIs:** [www.hc-sc.gc.ca/dc-ma/sti-its/index\\_e.html](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/dc-ma/sti-its/index_e.html)

**Planned Parenthood:** [www.plannedparenthood.org/sti](http://www.plannedparenthood.org/sti)

**STD Resource.:** [www.stdresource.com](http://www.stdresource.com)

### IS THERE A LINK BETWEEN STIs AND HIV?

Yes there is. An HIV positive person who gets an STI will have a higher concentration of HIV in their genital secretions and will be more infectious. An HIV negative person infected with an STI is more likely to get infected with HIV through sexual contact. Some STIs such as herpes or syphilis cause genital ulcers which create a possible point of entry for HIV. Even non-ulcerative STIs such as gonorrhea or chlamydia increase the risk for acquiring HIV.

### WHERE CAN I GO FOR HELP OR TREATMENT FOR STIs?

STIs do not go away. If you suspect or know you have an infection, make an appointment with your doctor or health clinic. Even though you may feel uncomfortable or embarrassed, it is important to get tested and get treatment. This is the only way you will get better, protect yourself and protect your partner(s). Your partner(s) should get tested and treated as well. Many STIs can be cured with antibiotics but some are more complicated and may require further treatment. Your doctor may decide to do an internal examination, run blood tests and/or do an ultrasound. The doctor will discuss all your treatment options with you.