



# Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)

## What are Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)?

Sexually transmitted infections are infections commonly transmitted during anal, oral, or vaginal sex.

There are many types of STIs, but the most common ones are: chlamydia, gonorrhea, herpes, genital warts, human papillomavirus (HPV), syphilis, hepatitis B and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

## How do you get STIs?

Sexually transmitted infections are spread by having vaginal, oral, or anal sex with an infected male or female. Anyone who has any kind of unprotected sex is at risk. If a mother is infected, she can also pass STIs to her unborn child while she is pregnant or during birth. Some STIs can also be spread by sharing needles (HIV, hepatitis B, hepatitis C and syphilis).

## Are STIs preventable?

Yes. The best ways to avoid getting STIs are:

- No sex (abstinence).
- No drugs (including alcohol), which can impair your judgment prior to sex.

If you are having sex:

- Talk to your partner about getting tested and using condoms.
- Limit your number of sex partners.
- Use a latex condom correctly each time you have sex.
- Use dental dams, flavored condoms, or non-lubricated condom for oral sex.

## What are the signs and symptoms of STIs?

STIs often have no signs or symptoms. You can have an STI, not show signs and still spread it to someone else. You could get an STI from someone who doesn't show any signs. General signs and symptoms include:

- Itching and/or burning pain in the genital area when you urinate (pee).
- Sores, rashes, or blisters that appear in the genital area.
- A discharge or drip from the genitals (may have an unusual odor or color).



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## What do you do if you think you may have an STI?

Contact the local health department or your primary health care provider. Don't just hope it will go away because it won't. Some STIs can be treated with antibiotics. Without treatment, STIs can cause serious health problems including sterility, cancer and even death. You should also inform your sexual partners; there is help available for telling them. You do not have to do this alone.

## Who can I call for more information?

- American Sexual Health Association Hotline:  
1-800-227-8922  
Spanish-Speaking: 1-800-344-7432  
Hearing-impaired: 1-800-243-7889  
[www.ashastd.org](http://www.ashastd.org)
- Guilford County Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health  
Greensboro or High Point: 336-641-7777  
[www.guilfordcountync.gov/health-department](http://www.guilfordcountync.gov/health-department)

Free language assistance available upon request.