

A Guide to Common STDs

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Sexually transmitted disease (STD) statistics are growing more shocking every day. By the time a person reaches the age of 25, one in two people will have had an STD.

Unfortunately, most people are not using protection, and even if they use it during sex, they're not using it during oral sex – and that's also when STDs can be transmitted.

It's not just young people, either. Senior citizens are now being diagnosed at an alarming rate, too. Nursing homes are even having to add sexual questions to their forms to ensure that residents are properly cared for in regards to STDs – otherwise known as STIs (sexually transmitted infections).

Let's go over the most common forms of STDs so that you'll know how to prevent it, how to spot the symptoms, and what to do if you get a positive diagnosis for one of them.

Chlamydia

Chlamydia is *the* most common form of STD in America. Every single year, over a million people contract Chlamydia – and that's just the reported cases. It's mostly found in females ages 15-24.

The disease itself is a bacterial infection, which means you can be treated with medicine. The infection can attack your genitals (including your anus) – but it's also able to attack your throat, and you can get it from oral sex.

Symptoms are often silent with this disease, which is why it spreads so easily. But sometimes, you will have a yellowish or green discharge from your vagina if you're a girl.

You might also have vaginal bleeding – when it's not time for your period – and if you urinate, you might feel a burning sensation. But this doesn't always happen – sometimes there are no symptoms.

If you're a guy, you also might feel a burning sensation during urination, you could have discharge, and the tip of your penis might hurt or itch from the infection.

If you're in a relationship, you both should get tested and treated simultaneously. Your doctor will prescribe some oral antibiotics – sometimes a series of pills and sometimes just one with a shot. It's important to get tested because it might make you infertile if left untreated. And if you're a guy, you might experience swollen, painful testicles.

Gonorrhea

Gonorrhea is another bacterial STD that approximately 700,000 people get diagnosed with each year. Again, women ages 15-24 are more at risk – but also young men in their early twenties.

With this infection, you also might not have any symptoms. For those who do, it's going to burn when you urinate, you'll have a discharge out of the penis or vagina, and like Chlamydia, you might have vaginal bleeding or swollen testicles.

Antibiotics can clear it up but if you're in a relationship, you both have to get tested and treated at the same time. If you don't treat this disease, you can become infertile or, if you get pregnant, have an ectopic pregnancy.

HIV

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is a more serious STD. It can't be cured, but it can be managed. This is a viral infection, so there's no antibiotic you can take to clear it right up.

This disease can morph into AIDS if you don't get tested and treated for it. It weakens your immune system dramatically and although most people are aware of the consequences, a whopping 50,000 Americans are diagnosed with it annually.

Initially, you won't have any symptoms. Once your immune system is compromised, and you're constantly getting sick, that's when doctors begin to get suspicious.

Not only is HIV an STD that you can get from unprotected vaginal, anal, and oral sex, but you can also get it from sharing dirty needles. Once you get it, you have to endure a strict regimen of medicines.

The earlier you're diagnosed, the better your chances of surviving and leading a healthy, more normal life. If you don't get tested, you could be unknowingly spreading this to other individuals.

If you don't get treated, you'll be more susceptible to infections as well as cancers. Pneumonia is a common ailment in HIV patients, too. If the disease goes into full-blown AIDS, then it becomes fatal.

HEP-B

HEP-B is also known as HBV – the Hepatitis B Virus. This is another viral infection with no known cure, but it can be treated and often just goes away over time.

This disease doesn't affect your genitals, but your liver. Some people have short-term illnesses and others suffer from it for a long time. About 38,000 individuals each year are diagnosed.

Symptoms are usually quiet, just like the other infections – but you might start to feel flu-like, suffering from vomiting, nausea, aches and pains, fatigue, and a loss of appetite.

As the disease begins to affect your liver, usually around 1-6 months after you're infected (but sometimes up to 30 years later), you might begin

looking jaundiced. This is when your skin begins turning yellow in appearance and the whites of your eyes get yellow, too.

Not only can you catch HBV through unprotected vaginal, oral and anal sex, but sharing needles – or even razors – can cause you to become infected. Even the saliva of an infected individual can cause you to get it.

If you're diagnosed, your doctor will order you to treat it just like the flu – rest, drink lots of fluids, and eat to give your body strength. He also might put you on antiretroviral medicine.

There is a vaccination against HBV, and many people have been treated as children.

HEP-C

Hepatitis C (HEP-C) also affects your liver. While it can be transmitted as an STD, people usually get it from dirty needles. Every year 17,000 more people get a positive diagnosis.

Like the other STDs, this is a silent disease – until it gets so bad for your liver that you begin looking jaundiced, feeling flu-like, and suffering from a fever and sharp abdominal pain.

If you're diagnosed, then it might be managed simply by treating it like the flu – plenty of rest and fluids with food. You will need to carefully monitor the situation over time to make sure it doesn't worsen and cause liver damage.

Herpes

Herpes is a permanent STD that you have to live with once it's contracted. It's another viral STD but this one affects your genitals as well as your mouth and lip area.

This is a very common disease – one in six Americans have it and a million people get the diagnosis each year. It's typically a-symptomatic, but you might see cold sores break out if you have Herpes 1.

Herpes 2 is the genital outbreak and this can be painful because it forms blisters and open sores in that area. Not only are there sores, but you'll feel like you have a severe cold or flu.

Outbreaks for this disease will come and go periodically. There are medicines your doctor can prescribe, but the virus will always be lurking and you'll always be able to pass it on to your sexual partners.

HPV

HPV is the Human Papillomavirus – a viral infection that causes warts and sometimes even leads to cancer. Half of all people who have sex end up with HPV and there are 6 million new cases every year.

Symptoms are quiet, as with most STDs, but you might see warts around your genital area. These usually show up a few weeks or months after you have unprotected sex or even skin to skin contact.

This is another disease that can't be cured, but you can treat it. Warts can be treated like any other wart. They can be frozen or surgically removed. There are topical ointments you can put on them, too.

This is a virus that stays in your body, so it will flare up time and time again. Some forms of HPV have cancer-causing warts, so you need to get treated for those quickly.

Women can get tested, but not men. There are vaccines you can get for both men and women, and all boys and girls should get these before they start having sex.

Syphilis

This is another bacterial infection that you can get – which means it's easily curable. Doctors diagnose 36,000 new cases annually. Like Herpes, you might see a sore, except it's painless.

Later, the sore turns into a rash and more serious symptoms start to crop up. Your doctor can prescribe an antibiotic treatment to cure this and if you don't treat it, you can cause permanent damage to your heart, brain, and more.

Trich

Trich (Trichomoniasis) is an infection where parasites infect your genital area. Almost 4 million people have this and they probably don't have any symptoms. If they do, it's usually a vaginal discharge and slight burning.

It's easily curable, but both partners have to get on antibiotics to get rid of the infection. More than 8 million people get diagnosed with this annually and symptoms start to show up within a month.

It's important to educate yourself about the various sexually transmitted diseases and know how to protect yourself (with abstinence or condoms), as well as how to look for signs and symptoms and seek treatment before things get progressively worse.



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