Sexual transmitted infections (STI's) the basics.

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are infections that are passed from person to person through sexual contact. HIV is an STI. There are more than 25 STIs that are mainly spread by sexual contact through vaginal, anal, and oral sex.

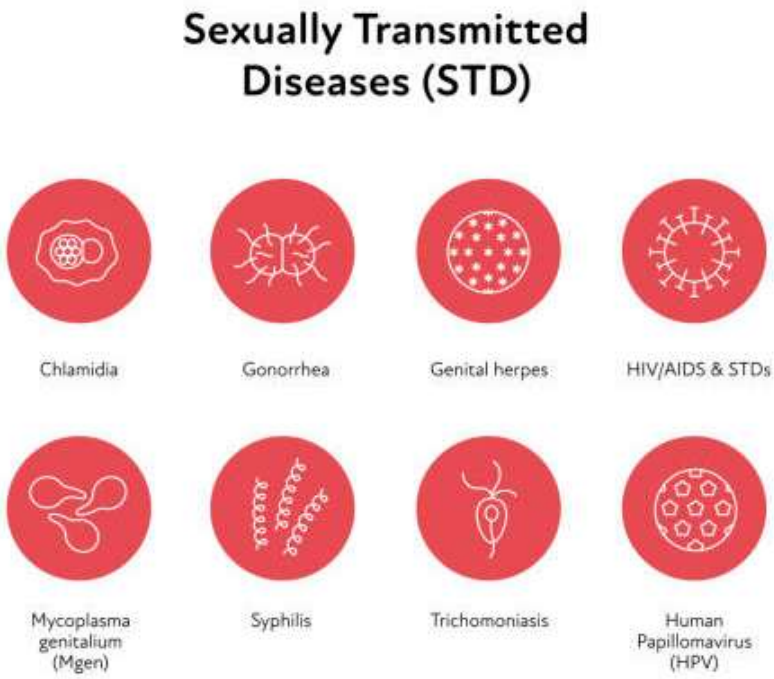
STIs are also sometimes called sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). While "STD" is often used interchangeably with "STI," they are not exactly the same. A "disease" is usually an obvious medical problem with clear signs and symptoms. "Infection" with an STI may or may not result in disease. Most people with STIs do not have any symptoms and therefore often do not know that they can pass the infection on to their sexual partner(s).

If left untreated, STIs can cause serious health problems, including cervical cancer, liver disease, pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), infertility, and pregnancy problems. Having some STIs (such as chancroid, herpes, syphilis, and trichomoniasis) can increase your risk of acquiring HIV if you are exposed. When people living with HIV get STIs, they can experience more serious problems from them or find it more difficult to get rid of these infections.



Common Types of STIs

- Chlamydia: A common bacterial infection, often asymptomatic, but can cause infertility if untreated.
- Gonorrhoea: A bacterial infection causing discharge and pain, with increasing antibiotic resistance.
- Syphilis: A bacterial infection that can cause severe, long-term health issues if not treated.
- Genital Herpes (HSV): A virus causing painful blisters; it is chronic, with no cure, but manageable with antiviral medication.
- Human Papillomavirus (HPV): Very common; certain types cause genital warts, while others can lead to cancer.
- HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus): A virus that attacks the immune system, requiring lifelong management.
- Trichomoniasis: A parasitic infection often causing discharge.
- Viral Hepatitis (B & C): Viruses affecting the liver, often transmitted through blood and semen.
- Pubic Lice & Scabies: Parasitic infestations causing intense itching.
- Mycoplasma Genitalium (Mgen): A bacteria that can cause urethritis.
- Mpox (monkeypox): A viral infection that can be transmitted through close sexual contact.



How to keep yourself safe.

The best defense against STIs is to use a condom or dental dam every time you have sex. Condoms are the only contraceptive method that protects against both STIs and pregnancy. So, even if you're using another contraceptive method to avoid getting pregnant, like the pill, you should still be using other forms of protective measures.





Communicate

Talking about sex can feel awkward, especially if it's a new conversation topic. But it's really important to have a conversation with your partners about whether or not they have had a test recently, before you have sex with them. This approach can keep yourself safe and others within your relationship.



Sexual Health Clinics

There are sexual health clinic across the UK that can offer free and confidential advice and guidance on safer sex. Some of these services can be accessed online. Here are some services

Umbrella Birmingham and Solihull

Tel 0121 237 5700

Email https://umbrellahealth.co.uk/our-services/

Coventry and Warwickshire Sexual health hubs

Tel 0300 247 0069

Email https://thesexualhealthhub.co.uk/coventry-and-warwickshire

Sexual Health Services

https://tht.org.uk/sexual-health/improving-your-sexual-health/sexual-health-services?gad_campaignid=22285846035&gad_source=1&gbraid=0AAAADqE5LR6coNwtiO7G0qjaIfti-UZ3&gclid=EAIaIQobChMIwfqS2KmpkgMVrpNQBh1DJx2rEAAYASAAEgIjT_D_BwE

Terrence Higgins Trust services

https://tht.org.uk/get-help/services?gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=365455812&gbraid=0AAAADqE5LSs80cOBHk_53l9elEuHoVjD&gclid=EAIaIQobChMI8-GmkKqpkgMVLpdQBh1GySKyEAAYASAAEgKtKPD_BwE

Other relevant information and links

Fumble

https://fumble.org.uk/sexually-transmitted-infections/?gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=22709604123&gbraid=0AAAAACTmz6w4W3Xj3BSfBg5odXGLqsGXm&gclid=EAIaIQobChMIua_Ap5upkgMVVpFQBh3ZWQeiEAAYASAAEgJ_0PD_BwE

National Health Service NHS inform.

https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/sexual-and-reproductive/sexually-transmitted-infections-stis/