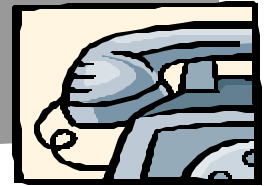


**IT'S YOUR CHOICE!!**



# SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS (STIs)

For more information about Sexually Transmitted Infections call the **CHOICE Hotline**  
**215-985-3300 or 800-848-3367**

## What are Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)?

STIs are infections that are usually spread through sexual contact with an infected partner. Some of the most common STIs are:

- *Chlamydia*
- *Gonorrhea* ("Clap")
- *Trichomonas* ("Trich")
- *HPV* (genital warts)
- *Pubic Lice*
- *Herpes*
- *Syphilis*
- *Hepatitis B*
- *HIV/AIDS*

## What happens to you when you have an STI?

When you have an STI, you may or may not have symptoms like:

- *Burning or pain when you pee.*
- *Sores, bumps or blisters in your genital area (penis or vagina) or anus.*
- *Unusual discharge from your genitals or anus.*
- *Pain in your lower stomach.*

Many STIs can be cured easily. Others cannot be cured but treatment can control the symptoms. If not found and treated early, many STIs can cause serious problems like infertility (never being able to have a baby), cancer, severe pain and even death.

## Who is at risk for STIs?

At least one in four sexually active Americans has an STI. Anyone who has ever had sex is at risk for STIs. STIs do not affect all people the same way. Women suffer more serious problems from most STIs than men because of the way the diseases act in their bodies. Some STIs, like Chlamydia, are more common among young people. They are also likely to cause more harm to teen girls than to older women because of the ways that teens' bodies develop.

## How do you know if you have an STI?

If you are having any of the symptoms listed above, you should go to a doctor and get checked right away. However, many STIs have no symptoms or the symptoms do not appear for a long time. This is why it is very important to get checked for STIs once a year if you are sexually active.

You can ask your doctor to test you for STIs. Most tests for STIs are either blood tests or tests of fluids taken from your vagina or penis. If you don't know where to go for an STI exam call the **CHOICE Hotline** at **215-985-3300** or

## How can I prevent STIs?

STIs *can* be prevented. The best ways to prevent STIs are:

- *Not having sex at all (abstinence).*
- *Only having sex with an uninfected partner, who is having sex only with you.*
- *Using a male or female condom made of polyurethane or latex every time you have oral, vaginal or anal sex.*
- *Only engaging in sexual activities where you do not exchange semen, vaginal fluids or blood with your partner. These include kissing, touching, massaging, rubbing and mutual masturbation.*

- *For women, not douching and not using vaginal deodorant sprays or scented tampons; these can break down the body's natural resistance to STIs.*

A few infections (like Trich and pubic lice) are very contagious. They can be passed through skin-to-skin contact without exchange of fluids. To prevent these diseases, condom use is still important, but it is not always effective. Not sharing bathing suits, underwear, wet wash cloths or towels can also help.

## How are STIs cured?

Many STIs can be cured easily by taking antibiotics to kill the bacteria causing the infection. If you are being treated for an STI, it is very important to:

- *Take all the medicine you are given.*
- *Never take someone else's medicine or give someone yours.*
- *Go back to the clinic or doctor's office to be re-tested if you are asked to do so.*
- *Tell everyone you have had sex with so they can be treated too. It is very important that sexual partners be tested and treated even if they have no symptoms. Remember, you or your sexual partners can feel perfectly healthy and still have an STI. If your sexual partners are not treated, they can keep infecting you over and over again.*

Some STIs cannot be cured (like HIV/AIDS, Herpes and HPV). However, treatment can make you feel better if you have these infections so it is still very important to be under a doctor's care.

**CHOICE**  
Educating the Community to Make Informed Decisions

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