

# STI Awareness

April 2024

## Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs):

Most STIs are caused by viruses or bacteria. They can be spread through vaginal, oral, and anal sex and through other types of sex play.

The most common STIs:

- **Bacterial:** Chlamydia, Mycoplasma Genitalium, and Syphilis
- **Viral:** Genital Herpes/Herpes Simplex Virus (HSV), Human Papillomavirus (HPV), Hepatitis B, Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)
- **Parasitic:** Trichomoniasis

## STI Statistics:

- 1 in 5 people in the US have an STI.
- There were 68 million sexually transmitted infections in the US in 2018.
- Nearly one-half of new STIs in the US in 2018 were seen in adolescents and young adults aged 15-24 years.
- New STIs cost the US healthcare system billions of dollars each year.

## Impact of STIs:

If left untreated, chlamydia or gonorrhea can cause pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) in females, which can lead to future difficulties with becoming pregnant.

Untreated gonorrhea can lead to arthritis and joint infections and can increase the risk of HIV infection.

HPV can cause genital warts and, in some cases, cervical cancer, which can be deadly.

HIV affects your body's ability to fight off infections. HIV can progress to AIDS, which can cause serious illness and death.

Pregnant patients with an STI can pass the infection to their unborn child. This can cause serious health complications for both mother and baby.

## Signs and symptoms:

Common symptoms include genital itching, burning, sores, or discharge. However, many STIs do not cause any symptoms. This is why testing is so important.

## Testing:

You should get tested if you think you may have an STI or if you had sex with a person who has an STI.

All sexually active people should be screened for HIV and Hepatitis C at least once.

Females 24 years or younger who have had sex should be screened for gonorrhea and chlamydia once a year.

Females 25+ years who have sex with multiple partners and do not use condoms should be screened for chlamydia and gonorrhea once a year.

Males who have sex with males should be screened at least once a year for HIV, syphilis, chlamydia, and gonorrhea and should also be screened for hepatitis A, B, and C at least once.

## Treatment:

Most STIs are treated with antibiotics or antiviral medications.

HIV, HPV, and Genital Herpes can be managed with medications; however, there is NO cure for these STIs. This is why prevention is so critical.

## Prevention:

Using condoms in every sexual encounter is the most important thing you can do to reduce your risk of infection.

Talk to your sex partner(s) about STDs and staying safe before having sex and never mix drugs or alcohol with sex.

All female patients should have a pap smear starting at age 21 years to screen for HPV.

All sexually active people 26 years or younger should talk to a healthcare provider about the HPV vaccine.

Talk to your healthcare provider to make sure your vaccinations for hepatitis A and B are up to date.