

# Sexually transmitted infections



A sexually transmitted infection (STI) is a disease (bacteria, virus, or parasite) that is usually passed from one person to another through sexual activity.

Over four million people globally receive treatment for STIs every year, yet many cases are undiagnosed because people don't know they are infected, as some STIs don't display symptoms.

## Examples of STIs

- **Chlamydia:** Chlamydia can cause a severe infection and lead to infertility in women.
- **Genital warts:** Appear as little bumps or growths in the genital and/or anal area of the body.
- **Genital herpes:** Herpes sufferers experience bursts of painful sores or blisters in the genital area from time to time.
- **Syphilis:** Syphilis initially appears as a painless sore on the genitals or around the mouth, lasting about two to six weeks.
- **Trichomoniasis:** The trichomonas vaginalis parasite causes symptoms ranging from mild irritation to severe inflammation.

## Getting tested for an STI

If you're sexually active, particularly with multiple partners, it's suggested you frequently test for STIs (every three to six months) because anyone who has unprotected sex can contract an STI.

## Reasons to get tested may include:

- Starting a new relationship.
- Receiving information that reveals a previous risk of infection.
- Learning that a present partner has undisclosed risk factors for infection.
- Observing signs or symptoms of infection in yourself or a partner.

## Treatment for STIs

Genital herpes, an STI caused by a virus, can't be cured but there is medication available to reduce severity. STIs like chlamydia and syphilis are caused by bacteria and can be cured.

## Preventing STIs

Reduce your chances of contracting an STI by having sex with a partner who has been tested for STIs and who only has sex with you, or wear a condom.

## Where to go for treatment

Family planning clinics offer testing and treatment, but you can also go to a private doctor or clinic.

Most STIs can be prevented through responsible sexual behaviour, therefore always use a condom.