



STI/STD and HIV Facts

From the Centers for Disease Control

Bacterial Vaginosis (BV): Bacterial Vaginosis (BV) is the name of a condition in women where the normal balance of *bacteria* in the vagina is disrupted and replaced by an overgrowth of certain bacteria. It is sometimes accompanied by discharge, odor, pain, itching, or burning.

Any woman can get BV, but you're at **higher risk** of getting it if: you have a new sex partner or multiple sex partners.

Chlamydia: Chlamydia is a common sexually transmitted disease (STD) caused by the *bacterium*, *Chlamydia trachomatis*, which can damage a woman's reproductive organs. Young women are most vulnerable to this STD/STI. Even though symptoms of chlamydia are usually mild or absent, serious complications that cause irreversible damage, including infertility, can occur "silently" before a woman ever recognizes a problem. Chlamydia is known as a "silent" disease because about three quarters of infected women and about half of infected men have no symptoms. If symptoms do occur, they usually appear within 1 to 3 weeks after exposure. One dose treatments are available to cure this STI.

In women, the bacteria initially infect the cervix and the urethra (urine canal). Women who have symptoms might have an abnormal vaginal discharge or a burning sensation when urinating. When the infection spreads from the cervix to the fallopian tubes (tubes that carry fertilized eggs from the ovaries to the uterus), some women still have no signs or symptoms; others have lower abdominal pain, low back pain, nausea, fever, pain during intercourse, or bleeding between menstrual periods. Chlamydial infection of the cervix can spread to the rectum.

Men with signs or symptoms might have a discharge from their penis or a burning sensation when urinating. Men might also have burning and itching around the opening of the penis. Pain and swelling in the testicles are uncommon.

Chlamydia can be transmitted during vaginal, anal, or oral sex. Chlamydia can also be passed from an infected mother to her baby during vaginal childbirth.

Gonorrhea: Gonorrhea is a sexually transmitted disease (STD). Gonorrhea is caused by *Neisseria gonorrhoeae*, a *bacterium* that can grow and multiply easily in the warm, moist areas of the reproductive tract, including the cervix (opening to the womb), uterus (womb), and fallopian tubes (egg canals) in women, and in the urethra (urine canal) in women and men. The bacterium can also grow in the mouth, throat, eyes, and anus. Symptoms in males include a thick, yellow penile discharge.

Gonorrhea is spread through contact with the penis, vagina, mouth, or anus. Ejaculation does not have to occur for gonorrhea to be transmitted or acquired. Gonorrhea can also be spread from mother to baby during delivery.

People who have had gonorrhea and received treatment may get infected again if they have sexual contact with a person infected with gonorrhea. One dose treatments are available to cure this STI.

Genital herpes: Genital herpes is a sexually transmitted disease (STD) caused by the herpes simplex *viruses* type 1 (HSV-1) and type 2 (HSV-2). Most genital herpes is caused by HSV-2. Most individuals have no or only minimal signs or symptoms from HSV-1 or HSV-2 infection. When signs do occur, they typically appear as one or more blisters on or around the genitals or rectum. The blisters break, leaving tender ulcers (sores) that may take two to four weeks to heal the first time they occur. Typically, another outbreak can appear weeks or months after the first, but it almost always is less severe and shorter than the first outbreak. Although the infection can stay in the body indefinitely, the number of outbreaks tends to decrease over a period of years. The anti-viral treatments include Acyclovir, Famciclovir, and Valacyclovir.

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Syphilis: Syphilis is a sexually transmitted disease (STD) caused by the *bacterium* *Treponema pallidum*. It has often been called “the great imitator” because so many of the signs and symptoms are indistinguishable from those of other diseases. Syphilis is passed from person to person through direct contact with a syphilis sore. Sores occur mainly on the external genitals, vagina, anus, or in the rectum. Sores also can occur on the lips and in the mouth. Transmission of the organism occurs during vaginal, anal, or oral sex. Pregnant women with the disease can pass it to the babies they are carrying. Many people infected with syphilis do not have any symptoms for years, yet remain at risk for late complications if they are not treated. Although transmission occurs from persons with sores who are in the primary or secondary stage, many of these sores are unrecognized. Thus, transmission may occur from persons who are unaware of their infection.

The primary stage of syphilis is usually marked by the appearance of a single sore (called a chancre), but there may be multiple sores. The chancre is usually firm, round, small, and painless. It appears at the spot where syphilis entered the body. The chancre lasts 3 to 6 weeks, and it heals without treatment. However, if adequate treatment is not administered, the infection progresses to the secondary stage. A long-acting form of penicillin is required to cure syphilis.

Skin rash and mucous membrane lesions characterize the secondary stage. This stage typically starts with the development of a rash on one or more areas of the body. The rash usually does not cause itching. In addition to rashes, symptoms of secondary syphilis may include fever, swollen lymph glands, sore throat, patchy hair loss, headaches, weight loss, muscle aches, and fatigue. The signs and symptoms of secondary syphilis will resolve with or without treatment, but without treatment, the infection will progress to the latent and possibly late stages of disease.

The latent (hidden) stage of syphilis begins when primary and secondary symptoms disappear. Without treatment, the infected person will continue to have syphilis even though there are no signs or symptoms; infection remains in the body. This latent stage can last for years. In the late stages of syphilis, the disease may subsequently damage the internal organs, including the brain, nerves, eyes, heart, blood vessels, liver, bones, and joints. Signs and symptoms of the late stage of syphilis include difficulty coordinating muscle movements, paralysis, numbness, gradual blindness, and dementia. This damage may be serious enough to cause death.

Pelvic inflammatory disease: Pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) is a general term that refers to infection of the uterus (womb), fallopian tubes (tubes that carry eggs from the ovaries to the uterus) and other reproductive organs. It is a common and serious complication of some sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), especially chlamydia and gonorrhea. PID can damage the fallopian tubes and tissues in and near the uterus and ovaries. PID can lead to serious consequences including infertility, ectopic pregnancy (a pregnancy in the fallopian tube or elsewhere outside of the womb), abscess formation, and chronic pelvic pain. PID occurs when *bacteria* move upward from a woman's vagina or cervix (opening to the uterus) into her reproductive organs. Many different organisms can cause PID, but many cases are associated with gonorrhea and chlamydia, two very common bacterial STDs.

Symptoms of PID vary from none to severe. When PID is caused by chlamydial infection, a woman may experience mild symptoms or no symptoms at all, while serious damage is being done to her reproductive organs. Because of vague symptoms, PID goes unrecognized by women and their health care providers about two thirds of the time.

Trichomoniasis: Trichomoniasis is a common sexually transmitted disease (STD) that affects both women and men, although symptoms are more common in women. It is caused by a single-cell parasite and it is the most common curable STD in young, sexually active women. Most men with trichomoniasis do not have signs or symptoms; however, some men may temporarily have an irritation inside the penis, mild discharge, or slight burning after urination or ejaculation.



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Some women have signs or symptoms of infection which include a frothy, yellow-green vaginal discharge with a strong odor. The infection also may cause discomfort during intercourse and urination, as well as irritation and itching of the female genital area. In rare cases, lower abdominal pain can occur. Symptoms usually appear in women within 5 to 28 days of exposure.

Human papillomavirus: Human papillomavirus (pap-ah-LO-mah-VYE-rus) (HPV) is the most common sexually transmitted *virus* in the United States. There are more than 40 HPV types that can infect the genital areas of males and females. These HPV types can also infect the mouth and throat. Most people who become infected with HPV do not even know they have it. HPV is passed on through genital contact, most often during vaginal and anal sex. HPV may also be passed on during oral sex and genital-to-genital contact. HPV can be passed on between straight and same-sex partners—even when the infected partner has no signs or symptoms.

A person can have HPV even if years have passed since he or she had sexual contact with an infected person. Most infected persons do not realize they are infected or that they are passing the virus on to a sex partner. It is also possible to get more than one type of HPV at the same time. Most HPV has no symptoms and goes away on its own; however, some HPV can lead to genital warts and other types of HPV can lead to cervical cancer. Pap smears are the main way to check the health of the cervix and to catch signs before cervical cancer develops. One of the many treatment options available is cryotherapy or freezing.

There are two types of vaccines to protect against the worst types of HPV. Getting vaccinated can protect against the types of HPV most likely to cause cervical cancer or warts. Some states require HPV vaccination for all students.

Hepatitis B: Hepatitis B is a *virus* that infects the liver. You can have hepatitis B and not know it. You may not have symptoms. If you do, they can make you feel like you have the flu. But as long as you have the virus, you can spread it to others. A mother who has the virus can pass it to her baby during delivery.

Hepatitis B is caused by the hepatitis B virus. It is spread through contact with the blood and body fluids of an infected person. Among other causes, having sex with an infected person without using a condom is one way to contract Hepatitis B.

Sometimes the virus causes a long-term infection, called chronic hepatitis B. Over time, it can damage your liver. Over 90% of the cases of Hepatitis B will go away on their own.

There is a vaccination for Hepatitis B. Anybody who is planning to ever have sex or work in the health profession should be vaccinated. Some states require Hepatitis B vaccination for all students.

The Human Immunodeficiency Virus: The Human Immunodeficiency virus, commonly known as HIV is spread when infected bodily fluids from one person enter another person's body. Pre-cum, semen, vaginal fluids, blood, and breast milk are the fluids that can transmit the *virus*. Unprotected sex is the most common way people get infected with HIV in the U.S., followed by sharing needles. Women who are HIV positive can pass HIV to their baby before or during delivery or through breastfeeding after birth. HIV attacks the very cells which normally defend the body against illness. Eventually, HIV weakens the immune system to such an extent that the body can no longer fight off other diseases and infections.

HIV and AIDS are part of a continuum. HIV is the virus that infects the body and AIDS is the most advanced stage of HIV. So, not everyone who has HIV has AIDS, but, everyone who has AIDS is infected with HIV. How quickly someone with HIV advances to AIDS depends on many different factors. One important factor is how soon after HIV infection a person is diagnosed and gets into care. Also, just like any other health problem, different people's bodies respond differently to HIV. So, it is important to get tested, get care if you are positive and protect yourself and your partner(s).