

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI)/ Reproductive Tract Infections (RTI)

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Sexually transmitted infections are infectious that spread through unprotected sexual intercourse with an inflamed partner. The main reason of infection are bacteria, viruses and different microorganisms that can enter a person's urethra, vagina, mouth or anus. Bacteria and viruses that grow in warm, moist places in the body cause STDs. Some STDs can transfer from one person to another through infected blood. For example, among people who share infected drug needles. Or a mother may infect her child during pregnancy, childbirth or nursing. STDs are not spread through casual contact. Shaking hands, sharing clothes, or sharing a toilet seat, for example, would not lead to STDs. Anyone can get a STD.

Reproductive Tract Infections (RTIs) are infections that occur in the reproductive tract of both men and women. The main sources of Reproductive Tract Infections are bacteria, viruses or protozoa. Reproductive Tract Infections are different from the sexually transmitted infection. The main reason of RTIs is use of unhygienic toilets. Imbalance of the normal bacteria in the reproductive tract is the reason of Reproductive Tract Infections (RTIs).

Health problems caused by STIs/RTIs

The outcomes of STIs/RTIs for reproductive health can be severe and life-threatening. They incorporate Pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), Infertility (in men and women), ectopic pregnancy, and unfavorable pregnancy results including premature delivery, preterm birth, and inborn disease. STIs/RTIs additionally increment the danger of HIV transmission. Most STIs/RTIs can influence the two people, and women are more infected than men.

STI symptoms in men

- Discharge or pus from the penis.
- Sores, blisters, Rashes or boils on the penis.
- Lumps on or near the genital area or penis swelling in the genital area.
- Pain or burning during urination.
- Itching in and around the genital area.

STI symptoms in women

- Pain in the lower abdomen
- Unusual and foul smelling discharge from the vagina.
- Lumps on or near the genital area.

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- Pain or burning during the sexual intercourse.
- Itching in and around the genitals.
- Sores, blisters, Rashes or boils around the genitals.

Diagnosis

A health care professional can diagnose STIs. They will ask personal questions about your sex history. It's important to be honest so you can get help. They may take a sample of fluid from the vagina or penis, or a blood test to confirm the problem. Laboratory tests can show what, if any, bacterial or viral STIs are present.

- Blood tests can show if you have a disease that infects the blood.
- Urine samples can show if you have a bacteria in your urine from an STI.
- Fluid samples can show if you have active sores and help diagnose the type of infection.

Treatment

Chlamydia

This is the most common bacterial STI in the United States. An estimated 1.4 million new cases are diagnosed each year. It is transmitted through unprotected vaginal and anal sex.

Sometimes people have no sign that they have this disease. A man with chlamydia may feel pain when urinating or see fluid drip from the penis. A woman may bleed between periods, feel pain when urinating, see a discharge or feel mild pain in the lower belly. From anal sex, a patient may have anal bleeding or pain.

Once diagnosed, a person can be treated with an antibiotic. If untreated, it can cause serious damage to a woman's reproductive system. It can make it difficult or impossible to get pregnant.

Gonorrhea

Gonorrhea can cause infections in the genitals, rectum, and throat. Young people, age 15-24, are most often affected. You can get it by having unprotected vaginal, anal, or oral sex with someone who has the disease.

It may show no symptoms. Or, a person may find a discharge from the penis or vagina, and feel pain when urinating.

Gonorrhea is treated with antibiotics. If untreated, it can cause serious damage to a woman's reproductive system. It can make it difficult or impossible to get pregnant. In men, if this is left untreated it may cause urethral stricture.

Syphilis

This is a potentially life-threatening bacterial infection from vaginal, anal or oral sex. It can spread if the sores caused by syphilis touch the skin of a healthy person. Sores can be found on the penis, vagina, anus, in the rectum, or on the lips and mouth. Syphilis can also spread from an infected mother to her unborn baby.

Usually, the first symptom is a painless open sore. Sores can form on your genitals, or the palms of your hands and soles of your feet. The second stage rash can look like rough, red or reddish brown spots.

Penicillin is a successful treatment. If syphilis is not treated, it can remain in the body for years. It can cause serious problems including paralysis (unable to move body parts), mental disorders, damage to organs and even death.

Genital Herpes

This infection is very common. One in six people (age 14-49) has genital herpes. Many people don't know they have it. This infection, caused by two viruses, Herpes Simplex Virus Type 1 (HSV-1) and Herpes Simplex Virus Type 2 (HSV-2).

The Herpes Simplex Virus Type 1 (HSV-1) is mostly spread by nonsexual contact but it can spread with oral sex. HSV-1 usually causes sores on the lips.

The Herpes Simplex Virus Type 2 (HSV-2) spreads when fluid from the infection touches a partner, often during sex. Genital blisters from HSV-2 may not be seen.

Blisters can form, break, cause pain and take weeks to heal. There is no known cure for HSV but symptoms can be treated with antiviral medicine.

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS)

AIDS results from an infection with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). It is not curable, and potentially deadly. It attacks the body's immune system.

Only blood, semen (cum), pre-seminal fluid (pre-cum), rectal fluids, vaginal fluids, and breast milk carry the virus. Infected

needles or other sharp tools can spread AIDS as well. An infected mother can give her baby the virus during pregnancy, childbirth or nursing.

Some people have no signs if they get it. Others may feel like they have a bad flu for a long time. The virus can go un-noticed for many years. If you think you've been in contact with an infected person, you should get tested.

Antiviral, HIV medicines are available to improve the life and health of an infected person.

Hepatitis B (HBV)

This STI is a serious virus that attacks the liver. Effective vaccines since the 1990s have helped to prevent this infection. There are fewer cases every year. Blood, semen and body fluids shared during sex can spread the virus. Many people are born with the disease from their infected mother. Getting care to people with long-term HBV is important but often people have no clear symptoms.

When symptoms are present, they can include fever, headache, muscle aches, fatigue, poor appetite, vomiting and diarrhea. Since HBV attacks liver cells, it can lead to cirrhosis, liver cancer, liver failure and possibly death. Dark urine, abdominal pain and yellowing of the skin or eyes are signs of liver damage.

There is no known cure for hepatitis B. Still, medications to treat chronic infection will help. Vaccine is the best protection. Acute HBV has no treatment. Chronic HBV is treated with antiviral medicines, interferon treatment, or a liver transplant. Vaccine is the best prevention.

Genital Warts

These warts are caused by the human papillomavirus (HPV). HPV is the most common viral STI the United States. It is spread through vaginal or anal sex. It can be passed even when an infected person has no symptoms.

The warts that develop are painless, fleshy, cauliflower-looking bumps. They grow on the penis or in and around the entrance of the vagina or anus. HPV may eventually cause cervical cancer.

Fortunately, there is a successful vaccine to prevent HPV and genital warts. The vaccine is given to children age 11 or 12, or for people age 20-26. There is no known cure for genital warts. However, they can be treated with topical ointments. Sometimes they can be removed with minor surgical procedures (e.g., cauterization (freezing or burning off the wart), chemicals, or laser). Vaccine is the best prevention.

Trichomoniasis

This STI results from a parasite. It is spread through sexual contact from the penis or vagina. It mainly affects young, sexually active women. Uncircumcised men are found to spread the infection more. Only about 30% of people with this STI have symptoms.

Men with this STI may feel itching or irritation inside the penis. They may see discharge or feel burning after urination or ejaculation. Women may notice itching, burning, redness or soreness, discomfort with urination. Or, they may have an

unusual discharge with a bad smell. Having trichomoniasis can make it feel unpleasant to have sex.

Without treatment, the infection can last for months or even years. Women with it may deliver underweight babies. Trichomoniasis can be easily treated with antibiotics.

After Treatment

Most STIs/STDs are cured after treatment. Some require life-long management with antiviral medicine. STDs can return with risky sexual behavior. Some people chose to get tested often, to ensure that they don't have a STI. It is possible to prevent STIs and limit your chances of getting another.