

Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)

- STDs are also called venereal diseases. You get STDs by having sex (vaginal, oral, or anal) with someone who already has an STD.
- Sexually transmitted diseases are caused either by a **bacteria (germ)** or a **virus**.
- Some STDs can be cured and others can't.
- STDs can affect your health and life.
- Having an STD may put you at risks for **HIV**, the virus that causes AIDS.



Understanding the facts about STDs

It is important to understand that:

1. STDs affect men and women of all races, rich or poor.
2. You may not feel sick.
3. Sometimes, when you feel sick, you can confuse an STD with other diseases.
4. Diseases caused by STDs are worse and happen more in women than in men.
5. STDs in women can cause cervical cancer.
6. If diagnosed and treated early, most STDs get better and go away.

HIV Infection and AIDS

- AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome) is caused by the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), which destroys the body's ability to fight off infection.
- You can get the virus by having sex and/or by sharing needles used to inject intravenous drugs.
- There is no cure for HIV/AIDS.

Chlamydial Infection

- In men and women, chlamydial infection can cause an abnormal genital discharge and burning when urinating.
- In women, if not treated, it can cause pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), this can lead to infertility.
- Many people with chlamydial infection have little or no symptoms.
- It is treated with an antibiotic.

Genital Herpes

- Herpes infection causes painful sores in the genital area. The herpes sores go away in two to three weeks, but the virus stays in the body for life and the sores can come back.
- You can treat it with antiviral medicine. This medicine helps control the symptoms but does not get rid of the herpes virus.
- If you are pregnant and have genital herpes, you can give it to your baby.

- Untreated infection in newborns can cause mental retardation and death.

Genital Warts

- Genital warts are small, hard, painless bumps in the vagina, on the penis, or around the anus. If untreated, they may grow and look like cauliflower.
- Genital Warts can cause cervical cancer and other genital cancers.
- Genital warts are treated with medicine that you put on your skin; by freezing, or, if they come return after treatment, with injections. If the warts are big, they can be removed by surgery.

Gonorrhea

- The symptoms are a discharge from the vagina or penis; painful urination or difficulty urinating.
- The most common complications happen in women, problems like: PID, ectopic pregnancy (baby growing in your tubes) , and infertility.
- Penicillin is used to treat gonorrhea.

Syphilis

- The first symptom is a painless open sore on the penis or around or in the vagina, mouth, anus and hand. The sore usually goes away by itself.
- However, if you do not treat syphilis, it can get worse. You can get a rash or it can infect your heart and central nervous system.
- Penicillin is used to treat syphilis.

What Can I Do to Prevent STDs?

The only way to prevent STDs is not to have sex. If you decide to have sex, there are things that you can do to lower your risk of getting an STD.

- Have sex with only one partner who does not have an STD
- Always use a condom and use condoms correctly.
- Use clean needles if injecting intravenous drugs.
- Teenagers should wait until they are older to have sex. The younger people are when they start having sex, the more likely they will get an STD.
- The risk of getting an STD increases with the number of partners.

If you are sexually active you should:

- Get regular checkups for STDs even if you do not have symptoms, and especially if having sex with a new partner.
- Learn what the symptoms of STDs are. See your doctor if you have any symptoms.
- Avoid anal sex, but if practiced, use a male condom.
- Try not to douche because it takes away some of the normal bacteria that protects your vagina and increase the risk of getting some STDs.

If you have STD, you should:

- Get treated as soon as possible to lower the risk of passing it to others and your baby.
- Tell all recent sex partners and urge them to get a checkup.
- Take all the medication given. Most STDs are easy to treat.
- Do not have sex while being treated for an STD.

REMEMBER

It is up to you to learn more about STDs. Then, you can make choices about ways to lower your risk of getting an STD and spreading it to others.

If you have any questions about STDs, call:

AIDS Hotline confidential toll-free number
1-800-342-AIDS

CDC National STD and AIDS Hotline
1-800- 227-8922

MetroPlus Care Management Line
1-800- 579 – 9798

The information contained in this publication should not be used as a substitute for medical care and advice of your doctor. There may be variations in treatment that your doctor may recommend based on individual facts about you

Source: Office of Women's Health in the Department of Health and Human Services

MetroPlus Health Plan
160 Water Street, New York, NY 10038
Member information:

1-800-303-9626

For information about MetroPlus Health Plan:
1-800-475-METRO

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES (STD)

