

Sexually Transmitted Diseases

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Date: _____

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CHLAMYDIA

What is Chlamydia?

The bacteria that cause Chlamydia usually infects a woman's cervix or it may infect the urethra in both men and women. It can also infect the rectum, throat, or eyes.

Who has it Chlamydia?

A lot of people have Chlamydia – **as many as 1 in 10 young women test positive for it.** About 3 million cases of Chlamydia happen every year in the US, but only about half of those are reported and treated. In California alone, there were almost 150,000 reported cases of Chlamydia last year.

How do you get Chlamydia?

You can get Chlamydia from **any type of sex.** Chlamydia infections like to live in the type of tissue that lines the openings of your body – like the vagina, the urethra, the rectum, or the throat. It can get passed between two people any time these tissues come together – which happens most often during unprotected vaginal or anal sex. It's less common – but not impossible – to get Chlamydia from oral sex.

How do you know you have Chlamydia? What are Chlamydia symptoms?

Most people who have it don't know because they don't have symptoms.

Among young women, Chlamydia is sometimes called the "Silent Epidemic" because it causes so much damage in so many people without even showing any symptoms. A few people might have a thick yellow or clear discharge from the penis or vagina, pain or burning when they pee, or pain or bleeding during sex.

How do you test for Chlamydia?

Clinicians can do a **simple and painless urine test** to find out if you have Chlamydia. They may also collect a swab sample from the vagina or the cervix or the urethra for males during a physical exam.

Can you get rid of Chlamydia?

Chlamydia can be cured with antibiotics. The best way to cure Chlamydia and keep from infecting your partners, is to avoid sex for seven (7) days, until the antibiotics have done their job. If you do end up having sex while the antibiotics are still working it is *really* important to use a condom or else it is likely the medicine you took won't work. If you got medication to take at home make sure you take all of the pills, even if you start to feel better – otherwise the infection might not go away completely.

How do you keep from getting Chlamydia?

The only method that is 100% effective in preventing STDs is abstinence, but if you're sexually active, the best way to avoid Chlamydia is to **be mutually monogamous with someone who has tested negative** for Chlamydia. Condoms give good protection against Chlamydia. It's important for both partners to get tested because it's easy to get re-infected if one partner still has it. If you test positive for Chlamydia, get tested again three (3) months later to make sure you don't have it again. If you're sexually active and under 25, you should get tested for Chlamydia every year – better safe than sorry.

What's the worst that could happen?

For women, a Chlamydia infection can lead to **Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID), an infection of parts of the reproductive system** like the uterus, ovaries, and fallopian tubes. That means if you have Chlamydia and you don't get it treated, you might not be able to have babies if and when you want to. PID can also lead to problems like chronic pelvic pain or ectopic pregnancy.

In men, untreated chlamydia may spread to the testicles, causing pain, and in rare cases, infertility.

Chlamydia infection also increases your likelihood of getting HIV. Pregnant women who have Chlamydia can pass it on to their babies during birth, which could cause blindness or lung damage.

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SYPHILIS

What is Syphilis?

Syphilis is a sexually transmitted disease caused by a kind of **bacteria**. It usually starts by causing painless sores (called chancres) or rashes on the skin, but over time it can become much more serious.

Who has it?

In California alone, **there were 1,900 reported cases of Syphilis in 2009**. Most reported cases of syphilis in the US are in men who have sex with men (MSM). The biggest increase in reported syphilis cases between 2004 and 2008 was in young people 15-24 years old.

How do you get Syphilis?

Syphilis is spread through **contact with sores (called chancres)** or other symptoms of syphilis. It can be spread by having oral, vaginal, or anal sex, or by kissing someone who has a syphilis sore on their mouth.

How do you know you have Syphilis?

The signs of syphilis can be so mild that you may never notice them. The first sign is a painless sore, called a chancre. This sore can be on or near the vagina, penis, mouth, or anus. It heals by itself even if it is not treated, but unless you get treated, you will still have syphilis.

After a few weeks or months without getting treated, you may have a rash on the palms of your hands or soles of your feet, swollen glands, joint pain, fever, hair loss, sore throat, or headaches. These signs may also go away without treatment, but you still have the disease.

How do you test for Syphilis?

Clinicians may **look at any sores or other symptoms** you have to see if they are syphilis. If you don't have symptoms, your doctor may also take a **small sample of blood** from you to test for syphilis.

Can you get rid of Syphilis?

Yes – if you have syphilis, **a health worker will give you an antibiotic shot**. To keep from infecting your partners, you should avoid sex until you have taken all the antibiotics and your partner has been tested and treated if necessary.

How do you keep from getting it?

The only method that is 100% effective in preventing STDs is abstinence, but if you're sexually active, the best way to avoid syphilis is by being mutually monogamous with someone who also does not have syphilis. Condoms may reduce the risk of passing syphilis to a partner, but since it can be passed by touching the syphilis chancres, which might not be covered by a condom, condoms aren't 100% effective.

What's the worst that could happen?

Syphilis can be very dangerous if you don't treat it. It can cause blindness, brain damage, heart disease, or death. Pregnant women who have syphilis can pass it to their baby, which could make the baby very sick. You could also pass it on to your partners, even if you aren't aware of symptoms. Syphilis infection also increases your likelihood of getting HIV.

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HIV (AIDS)

What is HIV?

HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) is the **virus** that causes AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome). HIV attacks the white blood cells, which makes it hard for a person's body to fight off infections.

Who has it?

There are over 1.1 million people living with HIV/AIDS. HIV is definitely NOT just a "gay" disease - about half of new infections are in straight people.

How do you get HIV?

You get HIV through **contact with an infected person's bodily fluids** - blood, pre-ejaculate (pre-cum), semen, vaginal fluids, and/or breast milk.

How do you know you have HIV?

You or your partner can have HIV and not know it. **It can be months or years before you feel sick or have any serious signs, but you can still pass HIV to others.** Though some people have no symptoms, signs of HIV may include: rapid weight loss, fever, diarrhea, night sweats, or feeling very tired. The only way to know for sure is to get tested.

How do you test for HIV?

The test for HIV usually uses a blood sample. **Many health centers offer rapid testing using a sample from a cheek swab or a blood sample.** HIV doesn't show up in the test results right away - it can take up to 3 months after someone has been exposed to HIV for them to test positive.

Can you get rid of HIV?

HIV cannot be cured. There are some medicines that can slow down the progress of HIV for a long time, but the virus is still in the body. It can still be passed to others, even if the person who has it feels fine. If you have HIV, your doctor will make a treatment plan for you, with special medicines. Tell your partner(s) if you have HIV.

How do you keep from getting HIV?

If you're sexually active, the best way to avoid HIV is by **being mutually monogamous with someone who's been tested** for HIV. Using a condom every time you have vaginal or anal sex greatly reduces your risk of getting HIV. Make sure you're putting it on right - and check that expiration date!

What's the worst that could happen?

Over time, **HIV and AIDS keep your body from being able to fight off diseases.** People who have HIV are at a higher risk for certain serious or life-threatening infections. HIV can cause dangerous weight loss, mental problems, cancer, blindness, and even death. A mother who has HIV can pass it on to her baby before the baby is born, during childbirth, or through her breast milk.

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GONORRHEA

What is Gonorrhea?

Gonorrhea – sometimes called “the Clap” – is caused by a certain type of bacteria. Most often, it infects the penis or vagina, but it can also infect the rectum, throat, or eyes.

Who has it?

Gonorrhea is a common STD in the US. **About 700,000 people get Gonorrhea every year**, but less than half of those infections are reported and treated. Rates are particularly high among young people. In California alone, there were 25,535 reported cases of Gonorrhea in 2008.

How do you get Gonorrhea?

The bacteria that causes Gonorrhea likes to live in moist areas of the body like the vagina, penis, eyes, throat, and rectum. You can get Gonorrhea from contact with any of these areas on someone who is infected – that includes **all types of sex, including oral, vaginal, and anal sex.**

How do you know you have Gonorrhea?

Most people who have it don't know it because they don't have symptoms. Men are more likely to have symptoms than women. Men might experience burning when they pee, a white, yellow, or green discharge from the penis, or painful, swollen testicles . A few women have pain when they pee or pain in their lower abdomen .

How do you test for Gonorrhea?

Any clinician can do a **simple and painless urine test** to find out if you have Gonorrhea. Your doctor may also collect a swab sample from the vagina, cervix , urethra, rectum or throat during a physical exam.

Can you get rid of Gonorrhea?

Gonorrhea can be cured with antibiotics. A clinician may give you an antibiotic shot along with other medicine to take in the clinic, or he or she may prescribe pills.

To keep from infecting your partners, you should avoid sex until you have taken all the antibiotics and your partner has been tested and treated if necessary. If you do end up having sex while the antibiotics are still working it is *really* important to use a condom or else it is likely the medicine you took won't work.

If you get antibiotic pills, make sure you take them all even if you start to feel better – otherwise the infection might not go away completely.

How do you keep from getting Gonorrhea?

The only method that is 100% effective in preventing STDs is abstinence, but if you're sexually active, the best way to avoid Gonorrhea is to **be mutually monogamous with someone who has tested negative** for Gonorrhea.

If you test positive for Gonorrhea, get tested again three (3) months later to make sure you don't have it again. Condoms do decrease your chances of getting Gonorrhea, but it's important for both partners to get tested because it's easy to get re-infected if one partner still has it.

If you're sexually active and under 25, you should get tested for Gonorrhea every year – better safe than sorry.

What's the worst that could happen?

For women, a Gonorrhea infection can lead to **Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID), an infection of parts of the reproductive system**, like the uterus, ovaries, and fallopian tubes. That means if you have Gonorrhea and you don't get it treated, you might not be able to have babies if and when you want to. If a woman has gonorrhea while she is pregnant, Gonorrhea could harm the baby's eyes during birth.

Rarely, a man with untreated gonorrhea could get a bad infection that causes scarring of the tubes that carry sperm. If this happens, he might not be able to have children.

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HPV & GENITAL WARTS

What is HPV?

There are **over 100 different types of Human Papillomavirus (HPV)**, but only a few of those cause genital warts. Other types of HPV can cause cervical cancer.

Who has it?

HPV, the virus that causes genital warts and abnormal pap smears, is the most common STD in the US. **About 6 million people get it each year, and at least 75% of sexually active men and women get it at some point in their lives.** Most people fight off the virus on their own, but about 1% of all HPV-infected people develop genital warts. An even smaller number of women with HPV – about 12,000 women each year – develop cervical cancer if the HPV is untreated. HPV is also linked to other rare cancers of the penis, vulva, vagina, and anus.

How do you get HPV?

Any skin-to-skin contact with infected areas can pass along HPV, even if the person who has HPV doesn't have any visible warts or other symptoms. You can also get it from oral, vaginal, or anal sex.

How do you know you have HPV?

Most people who have it don't know it because they don't have symptoms. Even people who have the type of HPV that causes genital warts might not see anything. Some people may see small bumps in or around the vagina, penis, or anus. The bumps may grow in bunches or clusters and they may itch.

How do you test for HPV?

There is currently no screening test for HPV itself or for warts.

For women, clinicians can do a simple test called a Pap smear to look for cervical abnormalities (pre-cancer or cancer). If you think you have warts, your doctor will look at your genitals using a bright light to see the warts.

Can you get rid of HPV?

Most of the time, HPV goes away on its own.

The warts may go away on their own, too. If they do not go away, or they are bothering you, your doctor can remove the warts. There are also some medicines that you can use at home that cause the warts to go away. **Even if the warts go away or are removed, the virus may stay in your skin and can be spread to others.**

How do you keep from getting HPV?

HPV can infect areas that are not covered by a condom - so condoms may not fully protect against HPV.

The best way to avoid genital warts and other types of HPV is to **get the HPV vaccine**, which is available for youth between 9 and 26 years old for free or at a reduced cost at many clinics in California.

The only method that is 100% effective in preventing STDs is abstinence, but if you're sexually active, you can also decrease your risk of genital warts and other types of HPV by being mutually monogamous with someone who does not have HPV or who has had the HPV vaccine.

What's the worst that could happen?

Some types of HPV can lead to cervical and other cancers. In rare cases, pregnant women may pass genital warts on to their baby, which could make the baby very sick.

The kinds of HPV that cause genital warts are different from the kinds that causes cervical cancer.

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TRICHOMONIASIS

What is it?

Trichomoniasis (often called "Trich" – pronounced like "trick") is a sexually transmitted infection caused by a **parasite**. It infects the vagina in women, or the urethra in men.

Who has it?

In 2007, there were over 7.5 million estimated new cases of Trichomoniasis in the US. Trichomoniasis is **the most common curable STD** in young, sexually active women.

How do you get it?

Trichomoniasis is spread through **body fluids** during unprotected vaginal, or anal sex.

How do you know you have it?

Many people who have Trichomoniasis don't know it because they **don't have symptoms**. Some women will have a yellow or green discharge from their vagina, pain or burning when they pee, or pain or bleeding during sex.

How do you test for it?

For women, your doctor will give you a **painless physical exam and take a swab test**. Tests for men are not widely used.

Can you get rid of it?

Yes – a clinician will prescribe you antibiotic pills. To keep from infecting your partners, you should avoid sex until you have taken all the antibiotics and your partner has been tested and treated if necessary.

How do you keep from getting it?

The only method that is 100% effective in preventing STDs is abstinence, but if you're sexually active, the best way to avoid Trichomoniasis is by **being mutually monogamous** with someone who also does not have trichomoniasis. Since it's passed in body fluids, condoms are good at preventing passing Trichomoniasis to a partner.

What's the worst that could happen?

You could pass it on to your partners, even if you don't have symptoms when you have sex. **Trichomoniasis also increases your likelihood of getting HIV and other STDs**. Pregnant women who have Trichomoniasis are at risk of having their babies too early.

HERPES

What is Herpes?

Herpes is an **infection caused by a virus**. Genital Herpes infection often causes blisters or sores on genitals.

Who has it Herpes?

Genital Herpes is more common than a lot of people realize – **about 1 in 5 people between 14 and 49 is infected**. As many as 90% of people with Genital Herpes are unaware that they have the virus.

How do you get Herpes?

Any **skin-to-skin touching with infected areas can pass along herpes**, even if the person who has herpes doesn't have any visible sores or other symptoms. Once you have herpes, the virus is always in your body, so it can pass by oral, vaginal, or anal sex.

What are the symptoms of Herpes?

Some people have no symptoms at all. But many people who have herpes get **blisters or sores** on their vagina, penis, thighs, or buttocks. These blisters or sores are different for everyone – some people only get them once; other people have "outbreaks" many times over their lifetime.

How do you test for Herpes?

If you have them, your doctor will **look at your sores or blisters** and maybe take a sample from them. If you don't have symptoms your doctor can take a **sample of blood** to test for the herpes, although the results are not always clear-cut.

Can you get rid of Herpes? Are Herpes curable?

No – **once you have herpes, you have the virus for the rest of your life**. But there are medicines that help the sores heal more quickly and decrease your partners' risk. Taking the medicine everyday can make the outbreaks less frequent.

How do you keep from getting Herpes?

The only method that is 100% effective in preventing STDs is abstinence, but if you're sexually active, the best way to avoid herpes is by being **mutually monogamous** with someone who also does not have herpes. Condoms may reduce the risk of passing herpes to a partner, but since it can be passed by touching, condoms aren't 100% effective.

What's the worst that could happen?

You could pass it on to your partners, even if you don't have sores or blisters when you have sex.

Herpes infection increases your likelihood of getting HIV. Pregnant women who have Herpes can pass it on to their babies during birth, which could make them really sick.

Rarely, when a person first catches herpes, the virus can spread to the spinal cord and brain.

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