Love STIMGS



A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO Sexually Transmitted Infections

With Love from Me to You

Some gifts a lover can give you, you may not appreciate

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS (STIs)

You don't need to have a lot of sexual partners to get a sexually transmitted infection (STI). Anybody who has sex – male, female, straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual – can get one.

STIs are also known as STDs (sexually transmitted diseases). Some of them used to be called VD (venereal disease) – named after Venus, the Goddess of Love.



WHODUNNIT? AND WHO WAS IT THEY DUNNIT WITH?



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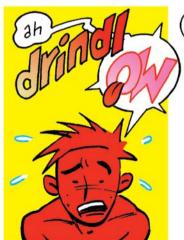
























BURNING QUESTIONS

How do you know if you've got an STI?

For Steve, it was pretty obvious. But a lot of times it isn't. You may show no symptoms at all. Women are less likely to show symptoms than men.

The most common signs in men or women are:

- Any unusual or smelly discharge of liquid from the vagina or penis.
- Pain or burning when you urinate (pee).
- Itching, rashes, lumps, ulcers, sores or blisters on or around the genitals.
- · Pain in the genitals.
- · Pain during sex.
- Pain in the testicles or lower abdomen (area above pubes).

For women, bleeding between periods or after sex, or pain in the lower abdomen (area above your pubes) can be a sign.

When do the symptoms show?

Symptoms usually appear within two to 14 days, but they can take up to four weeks (sometimes even longer). Many people infected with HIV do not have any signs or symptoms, or they may not be noticed. Some people who become infected have flu-like symptoms a few days or weeks after infection.

HIV may not show up on a test immediately. It can take between three weeks and three months after being infected for the test to show up positive.

Some common STIs, like chlamydia, often don't have any symptoms (particularly in women). So you could be infected (and infectious), but not know it.

How do you catch an STI?

The usual way is through

Sex.

Semen, vaginal fluid and blood can all carry an infection.

The man doesn't have to ejaculate (cum) to infect a partner. A small amount of pre-cum can leave the penis before or without ejaculation, and can be just as infectious. And you don't even need to have full sex. Some STIs can be passed

full sex. Some STIs can be passed from person to person by genital contact alone (when the penis just touches the vulva, vagina or anus) or through sharing sex toys.

Some STIs (including herpes) can also be passed from person to person through oral sex (when you lick or kiss your partner's genitals). For crabs and scabies (which are crawling insect-like creatures), skin contact alone is enough.



















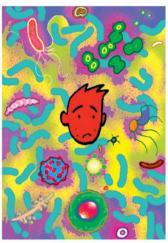












There are more than 25 STIs.

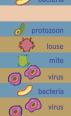
These are some of the most common:



Genital warts (human papilloma virus or HPV) virus
NSU (Non-specific urethritis)
Chlamydia
Herpes
Gonorrhoea (clap, drip, sting)

Less common (but not rare) are:

TV (Trichomonas vaginalis)
Pubic lice (crabs)
Scabies (itch)
Hepatitis B
Syphilis (pox)
HIV



Some infections that affect the genital area, such as Thrush (candidiasis) and Bacterial vaginosis, can be spread through sex. But you can suffer from them even if you haven't had sex. Cystitis (an infection of the bladder) can be triggered by sex, but you can't pass it on to someone you have sex with.

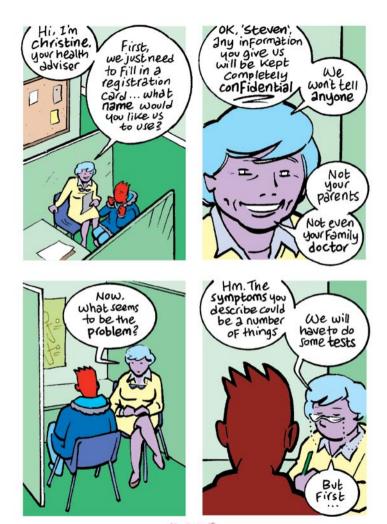
What have you got? The only way to find out for sure is to get yourself checked out...





















IF YOU THINK YOU COULD HAVE AN STI. . .

- Go to your general practice, or a sexual health or genitourinary medicine (GUM) clinic or a young person's clinic. Contraceptive clinics and some pharmacies may also provide testing for some infections.
- Don't have sex until you are treated and given the all-clear.
- Tell anybody you had sex with, so they can be tested and treated.

Hunt the clinic

Most large hospitals have a clinic. Names vary. Try looking in the phone book under:

- · Sexual Health Clinic
- GUM (or Genitourinary Medicine) Clinic
- Sexually Transmitted Infection (or STI) Clinic
- · Sexual health clinic

You can phone your local hospital switchboard. Or phone **fpa**, visit www.fpa.org.uk or call the Sexual Health Line (see back cover).

Free & confidential

You can be any age to go to a clinic, even if you are under the legal age of consent to sex, which is 16 for gay, straight, lesbian or bisexual sex.

And you don't have to give your real name. And it's free. Don't put off visiting a clinic or doctor because you think your family will be told – they won't.

But staff may need to involve other services if they believe you, or another person, to be at significant risk of harm (such as physical or sexual abuse).

They will discuss this with you.

Tests

The doctor or nurse at the clinic will normally give you a full sexual health check. This means looking at your genitals and checking other areas of your body, including your mouth. Some STIs can be diagnosed by sight e.g. pubic lice, genital warts. Tests are carried out on blood and urine samples, or 'swabs' (cotton buds) are used to pick up samples of discharges or secretions.

Some tests can be completed while you wait. For others the results take longer. You will probably be asked to phone for some results (while others may be given to you in person or sent by text). If you want an HIV test, ask. An HIV test is not automatic and will only be done after you have had a chance to discuss it with a health adviser or other health professional.

Treatment

Most STIs can be completely cured if found early enough. Treatments can include:

- Antibiotics for bacterial infections such as chlamydia. Be sure to take ALL the tablets.
- Viruses such as HIV never leave the body, but treatment can relieve some symptoms.
- Lotions are used to treat crabs and scabies.

Advice

Anyone can ask to see a health adviser at a clinic to talk about relationships, sexuality, sexual problems or STIs.











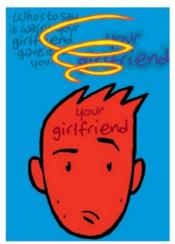




































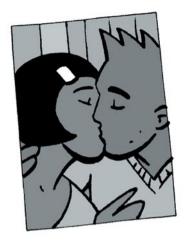






























LETTING PARTNERS KNOW

Let partners know you have an STI

Telling can be difficult. You may have lost touch. You may be scared. You may be really angry.

But it's really important to let any sexual partner who could be infected know as soon as possible.

Encourage them to visit a clinic and get themselves checked out. (If you go to the clinic together, you will be seen separately.)

Sexual health clinics can help. The health adviser can arrange to send out 'contact slips' that ask the person to go to their general practice or sexual health clinic.

It won't give your name and won't necessarily say what the infection is.

But whatever happens, nothing will be done without your agreement.

If an STI is not treated

It doesn't go away. As long as you have an STI, you can pass it on to somebody else — and perhaps cause permanent damage to your health, or your partner's health.

In the long-term, men can experience pain and swelling in the testicles and penis, and in the joints and eyes. They may become less fertile.

Women are even more likely to suffer long-term damage, including pelvic pain and damage to the fallopian tubes (tiny tubes that carry the egg from a woman's ovary to her uterus). This can cause difficult pregnancies. It may even mean they cannot have a baby.

Pregnancy

If a pregnant woman has an untreated STI, this may be passed on to her baby either in the womb or during birth. Most STIs can be treated during pregnancy without harming mother or baby.









SO YOU THINK YOU KNOW WHODUNNIT?



Well, maybe. As nice a bloke as he seems, at some time during this story STEVE might have told a lie. Perhaps ANITA is not thinking straight, or being totally honest with herself. DAWN certainly seems guilty about something. And that CALVIN, he gets around...

You could only be sure if you could trust everyone to always tell the truth. So you can never really say for certain who might have given what to whom.

HPV vaccine All girls aged 12–13 years are offered an injection against HPV which will help to protect them from cervical cancer. It doesn't protect against genital warts. Soon a catch-up scheme will offer the injection to all girls up to the age of 18. If you want more information look at www.fpa. org.uk or speak to your school nurse. Remember that you still need to use

a condom to help protect against 511s and pregnancy.

How to avoid getting and passing on STIs Go in for safer sex – sex that makes it harder to pass on an infection. Here are some suggestions:

- You can make love without penetration (when the penis enters the vagina or anus) – kiss, hug, cuddle, lick, stroke, massage, bath, dance, snog, wrestle, romp, fondle, nibble, rub, shower, play...
- Oral sex is riskier if you or your partner have sores in or around the mouth, or inflamed gums.
- For oral sex, use a male or female condom, or a dam to cover the anus or female genitals. A dam is a soft latex or polyurethane (plastic) square.
- Vaginal and anal sex is riskier if you have any cuts or sores on your genitals.
- Anal sex is especially risky for both partners, because the skin in the rectum is delicate and breaks easily.
- · For vaginal and anal sex, use condoms.

If you are concerned about pregnancy...

It's important to get advice and have a pregnancy test done as soon as possible. You can have a free test done at:

- A young person's clinic or Brook clinic
 - Most contraceptive clinics
- Some general practices
- Some sexual health/ GUM clinics
- Most NHS walk-in centres (England only)
- You can buy a pregnancy test from the pharmacy.

How fpa can help you

sexual health direct is a nationwide service run by fpa. It provides:

- confidential information and advice and a wide range of booklets on individual methods of contraception, common sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy choices, abortion and planning a pregnancy
- details of contraception clinics, sexual health clinics and genitourinary medicine (GUM) clinics.

fpa helplines

England

50 Featherstone Street London EC1Y 8QU 0845 122 8690 Mon-Fri 9am-6pm

Northern Ireland

0845 122 8687 Mon-Thurs 9am-5pm Fri 9am-4.30pm

www.fpa.org.uk

BROOK

tel 0800 0185 023 www.brook.org.uk For your nearest clinic for young people under 25

All of these Helplines are **CONFIDENTIAL**





SEXWISE

tel 0800 282 930 www.ruthinking.co.uk For advice about sex and personal relationships for 12-18-year-olds

LONDON LESBIAN AND GAY SWITCHBOARD

tel 020 7837 7324
For information and advice on being gay, lesbian or bisexual

SEXUAL HEALTH LINE

tel 0800 567 123 24-hour advice on all aspects of STIs (including HIV)

FRANK

tel 0800 776 600 www.talktofrank.com For information and support on drugs

YOUTH ACCESS

tel 020 8772 9900 www.youthaccess.org.uk For your nearest young people's confidential counselling service