

Sexually Transmitted Infections

An estimated 65 million people in the United States are currently living with a sexually transmitted disease. These diseases are very common and easily transmitted through sexual contact. Many STI's are curable and all are treatable, but the only way to know if you have one is to get tested. Call the MU Student Health Center at 882-7481 for an appointment to get tested or to speak with a health professional about how you can protect yourself.

Commonly Asked Questions

What is the difference between an STI (sexually transmitted infection) and an STD (sexually transmitted disease)?

- Sexually transmitted infections include a broad range of infections primarily transmitted through sexual contact (vaginal, oral, or anal sex) and are often asymptomatic (display no symptoms). STIs are more easily transmitted through mucous membranes in the penis, vulva, and (less often) the mouth by allowing pathogens into the body. Some STIs can be transmitted through direct contact, such as in HPV (Human Papilloma virus) and Herpes Simplex, through sharing contaminated needles (HIV/AIDS), or perinatally.
- Conversely, sexually transmitted diseases cause illness or disease caused by infectious pathogens transmitted through sexual contact (vaginal, oral, or anal). STDs commonly elicit symptoms in the infected individual.
- Unfortunately, many STDs do not display symptoms and it is possible to be an asymptomatic carrier of STDs. That is why it is so important that both you and your potential partner get tested for STDs.

How common are STIs?

- In the United States, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that more than 65 million people are currently living with an STI and more than 19 million new infections are spread each year.
- While STI's are consistently listed in the top ten most frequently reported diseases in the United States, less than half of adults ages 18 to 44 have ever been tested for an STI other than HIV/AIDS.

Bacterial versus Viral STI's: What's the difference?

STI's can be separated into two categories based on the type of microorganism that causes them.

- **Bacterial STI's**
 - Caused by bacteria.
 - Cured with antibiotics
 - Examples: **Gonorrhea, Syphilis, and Chlamydia.**

- **Viral STI's**
 - Caused by a virus
 - Treatable, but not curable with antibiotics
 - Examples: **Human Papilloma Virus (HPV), Herpes, Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), and Hepatitis B.**

For a more information see brief overview below.

How can I protect myself? What is "Safer Sex"?

Protecting yourself sexually involves not only learning about STI's but practicing safer sex every time you engage in any sexual activity. While no sexual contact is 100% safe, here are some things you can do to minimize your risk of contracting or transmitting an STI.

- Prevent the exchange of bodily fluids such as blood, semen, and vaginal secretions or minimize this exchange by using a barrier method (male/female condom or dental dam) during oral, anal, or vaginal sex.
- Avoid direct oral, anal and genital contact or minimize contact by using a barrier method correctly and consistently.
- Form a trusted, honest, and communicative monogamous relationship.
- Limit your number of sexual partners.

- Talk to your partner about your STI status.
- Use a condom/dental dam properly and consistently, and only those made of latex or polyurethane (not “animal skins”) every time you have sex.
- Include **STI testing** as part of your regular medical checkup.
- Learn the common symptoms of STI’s (for those that have symptoms). Remember, most STIs do not display symptoms.
- Do not use drugs or alcohol in potentially intimate situations as they can inhibit your ability to make decisions and may affect your dexterity.
- Get vaccinated for Hepatitis A and B.
- Get vaccinated for HPV if you are a woman between the ages of 9 and 26.

Common STI Myths

1. “My partner doesn’t have any symptoms, we must be okay!”

- False. Most of the time, infected individuals are asymptomatic (do not display symptoms) but the person can still spread the infection to others. The only way to completely know your STI status is to get an STI test.

2. “STIs don’t affect college students!”

- False. This is a common misperception among college students. Often times students refer to themselves as the “three I’s”: *Infertile, Immortal, and Invincible*. But, almost two-thirds of STIs affect individuals ages 25 years and younger. Two of the most common STI’s which appear in college students – HPV and Chlamydia- often do not display any symptoms.

3. “There’s no way my partner has an STI, they have had only two partners.”

- False. Discussing sexual histories with a potential (or current partner) is an important part of protecting yourself (and your partner) from STIs and unintended pregnancy. However, knowing the number of partners does not necessarily determine whether your partner has had an STI or not, only that they might be at an increased risk for contracting an STI.
- The best advice is to communicate openly and honestly with your partner, practice safer sex, and both seek STI testing, regularly.

4. “I know I’m fine because I just recently had my annual exam. Isn’t STI testing included?”

- No. STI screenings are not necessarily a part of your annual medical exam or Pap test. Ask your healthcare provider about getting tested. Based on your history they will discuss with you which tests are most appropriate.
- The only way to know your STI status **for sure is to get tested.**
- Talking with your healthcare provider about sex and getting an STI test may seem scary, but early detection is important in preventing serious complications of undetected STI such as infertility or pelvic inflammatory disease (PID).

So where can I get tested?

Choosing where you want to get tested can depend on a variety of factors including confidentiality, cost, and location. Listed below are some resources located near Columbia, MO for testing options.

Student Health Center

The Student Health Center offers confidential STI testing for a nominal fee and your visit is free and covered by your health fee. Call 882-7481 to make an appointment or talk with one of the trained professionals at the Student Health Center.

Charges are based on the type of test required and could range from approximately \$10 to \$85. Students can charge the fees for the actual tests to their student account. To maintain your confidentiality, the cost will show up on your MU bill as a "health fee." Your medical visit is free for students. Call 573-882-7481 to make an appointment.

The Student Health Center is located at the corner of Hitt Street and Hospital Drive on the 4th floor of the University Physicians' Medical Building.

Boone County Health Department

BCHD offers free and confidential STI testing and treatment. This service is available every Tuesday from 5pm to 7pm as well as by appointment. BCHD also offers free and confidential oral or blood HIV tests. This service is available at the walk in clinic on Thursday afternoons or by appointment. BCHD also offers free male and female condoms.

Call 573-874-7356 for more information or to make an appointment. BCHD is located at:

1005 West Worley Street, Columbia MO, 65201 Visit them on the web at:

http://www.gocolumbiamo.com/Health/Clinic_and_Nursing/STD/index.php

Planned Parenthood of Kansas and Mid-Missouri

Planned Parenthood offers confidential and affordable STI testing. While the clinic accepts many private insurances as well as Medicaid, it also offers services based upon income and economic necessity. Call (573) 443-0427 for an appointment. Columbia's Planned Parenthood is located at 711 North Providence Rd, Columbia, MO 65203.

So I have an STI...now what?

Millions of people are currently living with an STI in the United States and throughout the world. Do not feel guilty, ashamed, or embarrassed when and if you find out you have an STI. One in four people will contract an STI at some point in their lives.

The stigma and shame some people feel because of being diagnosed with an STI may lead to neglecting their sexual health. Don't let embarrassment be a health risk for you. Most people soon realize that having an STI is not something they need to feel bad about, and that besides a few lifestyle changes, their life really isn't much different. If you are one of the millions of people living with an STI, here's what you can do:

Both partners should:

- **Get treatment.**
 - Bacterial STI's can be treated and cured with antibiotics.
 - Viral STI's can be treated and symptoms can be controlled with medication.
 - Take all of your medication as directed by your doctor, following the prescribed instructions.
- **Talk openly and honestly with your medical provider about your STI.**
 - Your provider is your best source of information. They can answer any questions you have as well as provide you with helpful resources.
- **Get connected.**
 - There are lots of resources available, including websites, counselors, and groups, that provide places to get information and to talk about any feelings you may have about your STI.
- **Avoid sexual contact until you have completed the whole treatment regimen** (for bacterial infections such as Chlamydia and Gonorrhea) or until symptoms have gone away (for viral infections such as Herpes). Continue use of barrier methods (condoms).
- **Practice safer sex.** Always use a barrier method (female/male condom or dental dam) when engaging in sexual activity, and do not use drugs or alcohol in intimate situations.
- **Talk with your current partner(s) about it.**
 - In general talking about sex is difficult and talking about STIs with your partner may seem like the last thing you want to do.
 - However, most people find that when they are comfortable with the person they're planning to have sex with, it's not as bad as it seems. Take a look at the **Communication** piece on the SHAPE Website for help getting started.

- **Talk and notify your previous partner(s) so they can get tested and/or treated.** You can do this with a simple phone call telling them to get tested.

Remember that having an STI doesn't change who you are, it just means a change in your actions regarding sex.

Sexually Transmitted Infections: A Brief Overview

For an online tutorial and other basic sexually transmitted disease information, check out this link from medline plus:

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/sexuallytransmitteddiseases.html>

- **Common Symptoms of STIs (in general):**

You should include STI testing as part of your regular medical treatment whether or not you experience symptoms. Here are some common symptoms (if at all) that may alert you to the presence of an STI:

- Pain and/or burning sensation when urinating
 - Discolored, smelly, or particularly heavy discharge
 - Warts, lesions, or sores in the genital area
 - Rash or itching in the genital area
 - Painful intercourse
 - Flu-like symptoms such as fever, abdominal pain and fatigue
- Some STI's, such as Trichomoniasis, public lice, and scabies are caused by other organisms and are curable with antibiotics or topical creams.

1. Bacterial

- **Chlamydia:** For more information visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at:
<http://www.cdc.gov/std/chlamydia/STDFact-Chlamydia.htm#Common>
- **Gonorrhea** - For more information on Gonorrhea, visit the CDC's website at:
<http://www.cdc.gov/std/Gonorrhea/STDFact-gonorrhea.htm#common>
- **Syphilis** - For more information on Syphilis, visit the CDC's website at:
<http://www.cdc.gov/std/syphilis/STDFact-Syphilis.htm>
- **Trichomoniasis ("Trich")** - For more information on Trichomoniasis, visit the CDC's website at:
<http://www.cdc.gov/std/trichomonas/STDFact-Trichomoniasis.htm>

2. Viral

- **Hepatitis B Virus (HBV)** - For more information on HBV, visit the CDC's website at:
http://www.ashastd.org/learn/learn_hepatitisB.cfm
- **Herpes Simplex Virus (HSV):** For more information on HSV, visit the CDC's website at:
http://www.ashastd.org/herpes/herpes_learn_questions.cfm

- **Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)** - For more information on HIV, visit the CDC's website at:

<http://www.cdc.gov/std/hiv/default.htm>

- **Human Papilloma Virus (HPV)** -For more information on the **HPV vaccine**, visit the CDC at:

<http://www.cdc.gov/std/hpv/> , and American Social Health Association at:

http://www.ashastd.org/hpv/hpv_learn.cfm

3. Other STIs

- **Scabies** – see below
- **Pubic Lice** – see below
- Check out <http://www.cdc.gov/std/> and <http://www.ashastd.org/> for facts, answers, and resources about STDs.
- For information about college students and STDs, take a look at: <http://www.smartersex.org/stis/stis.asp>
- Test your STD knowledge at: http://www.smartersex.org/quizzes/sti_quiz.asp

Sources:

<http://www.smartersex.org/>

http://www.cdc.gov/nchstp/dstd/disease_info.htm

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/sexuallytransmitteddiseases.html>

<http://www.ashastd.org/>

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTION SUMMARY

Infection	Pathogen	Prevalence	Symptoms	Transmiss.	Protection	Treatment	Testing	CX
Chlamydia Silent Epidemic- often no symptoms;	Bacteria	Most common teens/youn g adults; In 2005, 976,445 infections reported; increase 5.1% from 2004 (CDC)	Discharge, Painful/bu rn- urination, vaginal bleeding, lower ab pain, nausea, fever (1-4 wks post)	Oral, anal, vaginal intercourse , peri- natally, (rare) hand to eye	Long, mutually exclusive, STI tested, barrier methods, abstain sex contact	Treat and Cure Antibiotics	Culture, \$40 SHC; prescreenin g of pregnant females	Sterility, Pelvic Inflamm- atory. Disease (PID);
Gonorrhea -often do not show symptoms (80% women; 10% men); occurs 2-10 days exposure	Bacteria	In 2005, 339, 593 infections reported (CDC)	Affect GI tract, mouth, rectum; yellow, bloody discharge, same as above; 90% men exhibit symptoms	Oral, anal, vaginal; no toilet seats (dies in few seconds)	Same as above	Treat &Cure, antibiotics; drug resistant	Culture of discharge- urethra or cervical opening; \$40	Sterility, PID, tubal pregnancie s, arthritis, inflamm- ation of heart valves

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Syphilis	Treponema pallidum spirochete, requires warm, moist area to live	8,724 cases in 2005 (CDC)	Vary by stage; chancres, rashes, swollen glands, fatigue, hair/weight loss	Open lesions, oral, anal, vaginal, perinatally, kissing; direct contact with sore	Monogamous relationship, regular testing, barrier use, abstinence	Early stages treated and cured, antibiotics early on	Report to state	Disfigurement, neurological disorder, heart disease, blindness, death
Trichomoniasis (Trich)	Protozoan, one celled organism	7.4 million cases annually (CDC)	W: frothy, unpleasant odor discharge, itching, spotting; M: if occur, swelling groin, irritation, frequent urination, pain urination	Vaginal intercourse	Same as above	Oral antibiotics (typically in one dose); treat and cure		

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Infection	Pathogen	Prevalence	Symptoms	Transmiss.	Protection	Treatment	Testing	CX
Hepatitis B Vaccine preventable disease	Virus	Declined since 1980 to estimated 600,000 cases annually; 1.25 million chronically infected (CDC)	50% do not show symptoms; flu-like symptoms-fatigue, headache, fever, nausea, vomiting	Bodily fluids such as semen, blood, urine; intimate or sexual contact-kissing, oral, anal or vaginal sex, unclean needles	Three dose vaccine, clean needles, protected sex	No cure		Can cause severe liver disease and death
Herpes Simplex 1 & 2; skin condition; HSV-1 typically cold sores/fever blisters on mouth; HSV-2 typically genital sores	Virus	Approximately 45 million (20%) in US has genital herpes; 1 in 5 adults	sores, blisters, cuts, pimples, rash on cervix, vagina, penis, mouth, anus, buttocks; occurs 2-20 days post exposure; 4-5 times per year	Skin to skin contact, touching, kissing, vaginal, anal, oral sex; can occur even when no sores are present; no toilets, hugging or drinking same glass	Barrier methods offer some protection, avoid contact with sores	No cure; antiviral medications lessen outbreak frequencies		

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTION SUMMARY

Infection	Pathogen	Prevalence	Symptoms	Transmiss.	Protection	Treatment	Testing	CX
HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus); weakens immune system unable to fight disease; can lead to AIDS (Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome)	Virus	In 2005; 37, 331 cases annually (CDC); at end of 2004;	No symptoms; average time 7-10 yr, develop opportunistic infections AIDS=fatigue, fever, weight loss, swollen lymph nodes, sweats, skin sores	Blood, semen, vaginal fluids, breast milk; behaviors=sharing needles, anal, vaginal, oral (rare), blood transfusions, perinatally	Don't share needles, use barrier method	No cure, antiviral meds	Oral or blood	
HPV (Human Papilloma virus)-most common STI among young, sexually active youth; highly contagious; Vaccine preventable	Virus	6.2 million infected in U.S. annually; 20 million living with disease; 50% sexually active men/women become infected	Genital warts genitals, anus, urethra, throat (rare), cervix; usually asymptomatic	Direct skin to skin contact; oral, vaginal, anal sex, can transmit when warts are not present	Barrier methods, with direct sexual contact	No cure, wart removal		Cervical Cancer

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTION SUMMARY

Infection	Pathogen	Prevalence	Symptoms	Transmiss.	Protection	Treatment	Testing	CX
Scabies	Mite-burrows under skin; usually sexually transmitted		Intense itching (at night), small bumps or rash appear between fingers, penis, buttocks, breasts wrists, thighs	Close personal contact and through bedding		Prescription medicines		
Pubic Lice- "crabs"; Attach and eggs to pubic hair, underarm hair, eye lashes, eyebrows	Insect		Intense itching in genitals and anus; mild fever, irritability	Intimate and sexual activity; contact with infected bedding, clothing, upholstered furniture and toilet seats		Over The Counter (OTC) medication		