

Protect Yourself from STIs



According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are a major health concern in the United States. Over 25 million new infections occur each year, with half of those infections occurring among young people between the ages of 15–24. Reduce your risk of getting an STI by learning the facts and taking steps to protect yourself.

How Do You Get an STI?

Most STIs are passed from person to person during sexual contact through blood, semen, vaginal fluids, or other bodily fluids. Some infections can be transmitted non-sexually, through blood transfusions, sharing needles used for drugs, or from mother to child during childbirth.

Signs and Symptoms

Quite often, STIs don't have symptoms, or it can take years after exposure to an STI for symptoms to appear. The best way to find out if you have an STI is to be screened. Mayo Clinic lists the following as the most common symptoms:

- sores or bumps on the mouth, genitals or rectal area
- painful or burning urination
- discharge from the vagina or penis
- unusual or odorous vaginal discharge
- sore, swollen lymph nodes, usually in the groin area
- lower abdominal pain
- a rash on the trunk of the body or on the hands or feet
- pain during sex

Stay Safe

There are many ways to reduce your risk of getting an STI. Mayo Clinic recommends:

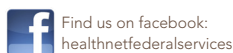
- abstaining from sex
- having one monogamous, uninfected partner
- using a condom or a dental dam
- waiting to have sex in a new relationship until after getting tested for STIs together
- not drinking or using drugs – you may be more likely to take sexual risks
- avoiding anonymous or casual sex
- talking with your partner about practicing safe sex
- getting vaccinated - vaccines exist for human papillomavirus (HPV), hepatitis A and hepatitis B

If you think you might be infected, don't be embarrassed to get medical help. See your doctor right away, since prompt treatment can reduce the risk of long-term effects.



Use a condom to reduce your risk of getting an STI.

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