

April, 2014 • Members

Sexually Transmitted Infections

Many infections are spread during sex. In this newsletter, we will talk about the 4 most common ones.

Human papillomavirus (HPV)

What it causes

Most of the time HPV goes away on its own and doesn't cause any problems. But many low-risk types of HPV can cause genital warts. High-risk types can cause cervical cancer.

Symptoms

Genital warts are a sign of infection with a low-risk type of HPV. The warts can sometimes itch, burn, or feel tender. They can cause bleeding after sex or an abnormal fluid coming from the vagina. Not all people will have symptoms.

There are no symptoms of the high-risk type of HPV. But signs of an infection can be seen on a Pap smear.

Testing

Testing is not needed to diagnose the low-risk type. But doctors might test these people for infection with a high-risk type. This is because people with genital warts are sometimes infected with both low-risk and high-risk types of HPV.

Since there are no symptoms of the high-risk type, it's very important for women to be screened. Doctors use the Pap test for this and an HPV DNA test that can detect high-risk types. Talk with your doctor about testing if you are 21 years old or older.

Treatment

HPV that causes genital warts cannot be cured. Medication can be used to help the warts go away. But the medication doesn't prevent them from coming back. They can be frozen or surgically removed but, again, may come back.

If the Pap test shows abnormal cells or cancerous cells, surgery is usually done. This can prevent abnormal cells from becoming cancer. And it can help prevent cancerous cells from growing and spreading.



Protect yourself

- Learn about sexually transmitted infections
- Practice safe sex
- Get tested
- Get vaccinated to protect against HPV and hepatitis B

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Chlamydia

What it causes

Chlamydia is an infection that can lead to pelvic inflammatory disease (PID). PID can cause pain in the belly and pelvis and pain during sex. It can also cause an abnormal pregnancy or make it so you can't get pregnant.

Symptoms

Many women have no symptoms. Others have pain in the belly and burning when urinating. Some have an abnormal fluid coming from the vagina or spotting between periods.

Testing

Many experts think women should be tested even when they don't have symptoms. It's important because:

- A person can be infected even when there are no signs of it
- There can be serious problems if it's not treated
- Treatment works well

Talk with your doctor about testing if you are:

- Sexually active and have symptoms
- Your sex partner has been diagnosed with the infection
- 25 years old or younger
- Over 25 and at high risk
- Pregnant

Treatment

Doctors treat chlamydia with antibiotics. Treatment can last 1 day or 7 days, depending on the drug used. The drugs can easily cure the infection.

Did you know?

- STIs are sexually transmitted infections. That means the infection is spread during sex with an infected person. STIs can be spread during oral and anal sex as well as vaginal sex.
- STIs include:
 - HPV
 - Chlamydia
 - Trichomoniasis
 - Gonorrhea
 - Herpes
 - Syphilis
 - HIV
 - Hepatitis B and C
- Many people don't know they are infected. This is because often there are no symptoms.
- If you are infected, you can spread an STI to your sex partner even when you don't have symptoms.
- If STIs are not treated, they can cause serious health problems.
- You can decrease your risk of getting an STI by practicing safe sex.

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Trichomoniasis

What it causes

Trichomoniasis is an infection that can cause a pregnant woman to deliver her baby early. Such babies are likely to weigh less than 5.5 pounds when born. The infection can also increase a person's risk of getting HIV.

Symptoms

Some women have a strong-smelling, yellow, green, or gray fluid coming from the vagina. There can be pain when urinating or during sex. Some people have an itchy, irritated genital area.

Testing

Experts think women who are at high risk should get tested. They also think women with HIV should be tested every year.

Treatment

Doctors usually give the patient a single pill to cure the infection. Sometimes a medicine can be applied to the skin. But this medicine doesn't work as well as the pill.

Gonorrhea

What it causes

A gonorrhea infection can also lead to PID. It can increase your risk of getting HIV, and it can cause damage to your joints and heart.

Symptoms

Many women have no symptoms. Others have pain or burning when urinating or frequent urination. Some have a yellowish fluid coming from the vagina or itching of the vaginal area. There can also be pain or tenderness in the belly, a heavy menstrual flow, and spotting between periods.

Testing

Talk with your doctor about testing if:

- You are sexually active and have symptoms
- Your sex partner has been diagnosed with the infection
- You are pregnant and at high risk

Treatment

Doctors treat gonorrhea with antibiotics. Sometimes the antibiotic won't work, and another one will have to be tried.

Additional information

Learn more about STIs and how to prevent them at these websites:

- Office on Women's Health
womenshealth.gov/publications/our-publications/fact-sheet/sexually-transmitted-infections.html
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
cdc.gov/STD/
- MedlinePlus
nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/sexuallytransmitteddiseases.html
- MedicineNet
medicinenet.com/sexually_transmitted_diseases_std_in_women/article.htm