

# STD and HIV Prevention



**You can get sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) when you have all types of sex, including sexual intercourse, oral sex and anal sex.**

They spread easily because you can't always tell if someone has one. STDs can be serious health risks if they aren't treated.

If you have an STD, this increases your risk of getting HIV (human immunodeficiency virus). HIV is the virus that causes AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome). HIV is also a sexually transmitted disease.

When you have sex, always use a condom. Follow these and other safer sex practices to avoid getting and spreading STDs and HIV.

## Common STDs

STDs can be passed from person to person through blood, skin-to-skin contact, and bodily fluids (from your penis or vagina). Some STDs are caused by bacteria and some are caused by viruses. Some symptoms of common STDs are:

- **abnormal discharge from your vagina or penis**
- **pain when urinating or during sex**
- **lower abdominal pain**
- **testicular pain in men**

Common STDs caused by bacteria include chlamydia, gonorrhea, trichomoniasis and syphilis. These STDs can be treated with antibiotics.

STDs caused by viruses include genital herpes, human papilloma virus (HPV) or genital warts, and hepatitis B. Because these STDs are caused by viruses, you always have them even if you aren't having symptoms. There are medicines to help manage these STDs.

HIV is also caused by a virus. HIV makes your body's immune system weak and less able to fight off infections. There is no vaccine or cure for HIV, but there are treatment options to help you manage it so you can live a full life.

## STD and HIV Testing

STDs don't always have symptoms so you need to get tested to find out if you have one. This is the first step to getting treated. **STD testing is your personal responsibility.** Your doctor will not automatically test you. If you are sexually active, especially with new partners, you are at risk for STDs. Ask your doctor to be tested.

Your doctor will usually test for STDs by taking a blood or urine sample. He might also test for HIV by scraping mucus off the inside of your cheek. For women, ask your doctor to test you during your annual pelvic exam and Pap test. For men, get tested once a year.

If you test positive for HIV, get a second HIV test just to be sure. Also, if you think you've been exposed to the HIV virus, you might need to wait 3 to 6 months to get tested. It can take awhile for HIV to show up. Because of this, continue to use condoms and practice safer sex.

If you test positive for any STD, talk to your doctor about additional testing, as well as your treatment options.



To learn more, visit  
**HealthyAdvice.com/  
PreventSTDs**

You can also visit these websites:

- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**  
[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)
- **National Prevention Information Network**  
[www.cdcnpin.org/  
scripts/std/std.asp](http://www.cdcnpin.org/scripts/std/std.asp)

## STD and HIV Prevention

Use these safer sex practices to help protect yourself and others from STDs and HIV:

- **Don't have sex with more than one partner during the same period of time.**
- **Use a new latex condom every time you have sex.**
- **Get tested together.** Wait to have sex until you and your partner have been screened for STDs.
- **Be honest.** If you have HIV or other STDs, share this information with your sexual partner.
- **Get screened for HIV and STDs regularly, especially if you have new sexual partners.** If you've had unprotected sex with more than one sexual partner since your last screening, get tested for HIV once a year.
- **Get vaccinated.** There are vaccines to prevent HPV and hepatitis B. The HPV vaccine is recommended for males and females up to age 26. The hepatitis B vaccine is usually given to newborns, but can also be given to adults who have never been vaccinated.
- **Wait to have sex.** The more partners you have in life, the more you're at risk of STDs. And for women, your risk of getting HPV increases if you have sex before you're 18. Before this age, the cells in your cervix can't fight off the HPV virus as well.

### Remember:

- STDs and HIV spread easily during sexual activity, so use condoms every time you have sex. And talk to your doctor about other ways to stay safe.
- Get tested for STDs and HIV during your annual checkups.
- STDs and HIV can be treated, but not always cured. Talk to your doctor about ways to treat and manage them.

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