

Sexually Transmitted Infections

What Are Sexually Transmitted Infections?

Sexually transmitted infections (STI) are caused by germs that live on the skin or in body fluids like semen, vaginal fluid, and blood. The germs are passed from person to person through contact with skin, blood, or body fluids. STIs can get into the body through the vagina, mouth, anus, and open sores or cuts. They are not spread by casual contact, being in swimming pools, or by sitting on toilet seats.

STIs are very common. Any person can get an STI. STIs can be prevented, treated, or cured entirely.



Different Kinds of STIs

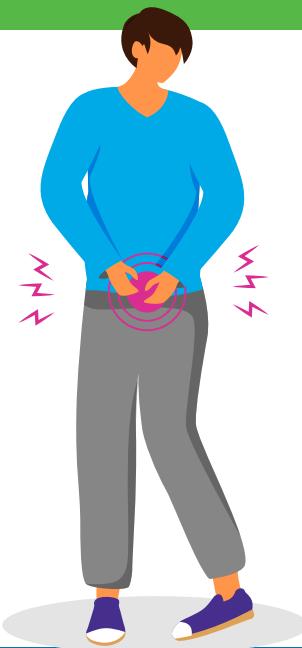
There are many kinds of STIs. They can be split into 3 groups:

- Parasites are very small insects that live off a person's body. An example is pubic lice or "crabs."
- STIs caused by bacteria can be cured by antibiotics. Some examples are chlamydia, gonorrhea, trichomoniasis, and syphilis.
- STIs caused by viruses can be controlled but not cured. If you get a viral STI, it will stay in your body for life. But symptoms of the virus may not always show up. A viral STI can be HIV, genital herpes, genital warts, human papilloma virus (HPV), and hepatitis B virus.

STI Symptoms

STIs don't always cause symptoms. Sometimes STIs cause only mild symptoms. It is possible to have an STI and not know it. That is why getting an STI test is important if you are having sex. Talk to your primary care provider* (PCP) about getting an STI test and how often you should get tested.

* Your primary care provider (PCP) is your personal doctor if you need a check-up, want advice about a health problem, or get sick or hurt.



Common symptoms to look for:

- Different color discharge from the penis or vagina
- Sores or growth on the genital area
- Burning while peeing or peeing often
- Itching and redness in the genital area
- Blisters or sores in or around mouth
- Abnormal vaginal odor
- Anal itching, pain, or bleeding

If you have questions, please call Customer Service at **1(415) 547-7800** or for SFHP Care Plus (HMO D-SNP) at **1(833) 530-7327** or **711** (TTY).

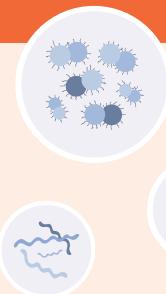
Sexually Transmitted Infections

Common STIs

- Pubic Lice or “Crabs”
- Chlamydia
- Gonorrhea
- Bacterial Vaginosis (BV)



- Trichomoniasis
- Syphilis
- Hepatitis B
- Herpes



- Human Papillomavirus (HPV)
- HIV



See the [California Department of Public Health \(CDPH\)](#) for more info about each STI.



You Can Prevent STIs

If you are having sex, you can lower your risk for getting STIs by practicing “safe sex.” This means:

- Using protection such as a condom or dental dam for vaginal, oral, and anal sex each time
- Asking your partners direct questions about their sexual past
- Knowing your partners and if they have any STIs
- Getting regular health exams



- Taking PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis). PrEP is a medicine people can take if they are at risk for HIV and want to prevent HIV. Talk with your PCP to learn more about [PrEP](#).



- Getting the [HPV \(Human Papillomavirus\) vaccine](#)
- Getting the [Hepatitis B vaccine](#)



Safe sex protects you and your partners. Talk with your PCP about your risk for STIs and if you need to be tested. Visit the [California Department of Public Health \(CDPH\)](#) for more info.

Get Tested and Know Your Status



Ask your PCP about [what STI tests you should get](#).



All people ages **13 to 64** should be tested for HIV at least once as part of your routine check-up. If you are [at risk for HIV](#), get tested at least once a year or more based on your risk.



If you are **pregnant**, STI screening can prevent perinatal (before, during and after pregnancy) transmission to a child. Learn more at [California Department of Public Health \(CDPH\)](#).



STI tests are quick and easy. Testing for an STI may involve a urine test, throat or rectal swab, or a blood test.

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STI Treatment

There are different treatments for different kinds of STIs

- Antibiotics can treat STIs caused by bacteria or parasites.
- There is no cure for STIs caused by a virus. But there is medicine that can help you deal with symptoms and lower your risk of spreading an STI.

Talk to your PCP about STI treatments that may be right for you.



What happens if STIs don't get treated?

STIs that are not treated can lead to serious health issues, such as:

- Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID) which can make it hard for you to have children
- Scar tissue that forms and blocks fallopian tubes
- Ectopic pregnancy (pregnancy outside the womb)
- Infertility (not being able to get pregnant)
- Long-term pelvis or stomach pain
- Higher risk of getting or giving other STIs like chlamydia, gonorrhea, or HIV
- Cervical cancer (getting the Human Papillomavirus “HPV” vaccine may prevent this)
- HIV which can be fatal if not treated

Get Sensitive Care with SFHP

STI services are part of “sensitive care.” This means if you are above the age of 18, you can choose any provider and go to them for STI services without a referral or pre-approval (prior authorization). The provider or health center does not have to be part of the SFHP network.



If you are age 12–18, you can go to a doctor for STI services without permission from your parent or guardian. Minors can talk to someone in private about their health concerns by calling the 24/7 SFHP Nurse Advice Line at **1(877) 977-3397**. Or you can use Teladoc® for a phone or video visit with a doctor at **1(800) 835-2362** or **online**.



For more details on benefits, please go to **SFHP**.

Sources:



STI Testing and Treatment
California Department of Public Health (CDPH)



Sexually Transmitted Diseases
MedlinePlus
medlineplus.gov

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