

What Is an STI?

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are infections passed from one person to another through sexual contact.

COMMON STIs

Chlamydia and Gonorrhea

Bacterial infections that often show no symptoms, especially in women. Both infections can lead to serious complications if untreated, including infertility.

Human Papillomavirus (HPV)

The most common STI. Some strains cause genital warts, while others can lead to cervical, anal, or throat cancers. Most people with HPV never develop symptoms.



Genital Herpes

Causes painful blisters or sores around the genital area. Many people experience mild symptoms or mistake them for other conditions. The virus remains in the body permanently.

Syphilis

Progresses through stages if untreated, starting with painless sores and potentially leading to serious organ damage. Early detection and treatment are crucial.

HIV

Attacks the immune system and can progress to AIDS if untreated. Modern treatments allow people with HIV to live long, healthy lives, but early diagnosis and consistent medical care are essential.

“Almost half of all new STI cases in the United States happen in young people ages 15 to 24 years.”



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion

odphp.health.gov

Centers for Disease Control

www.cdc.gov/sti

in the know

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**STIs &
PREVENTION**
NEVER TOO SAFE



RISK FACTORS AND YOUNG PEOPLE

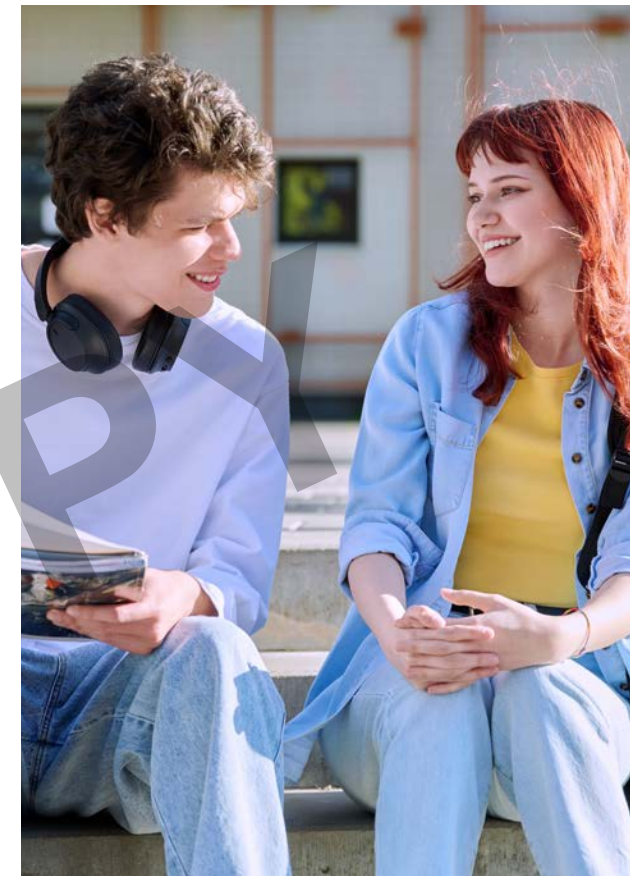
- ⊕ Biological factors play a significant role, especially for young women. For example, before and during adolescence, the cells in the cervix are thinner, making it easier for STIs like gonorrhea and chlamydia to take hold.
- ⊕ Behavioral factors common among young people increase risk exposure. These include having multiple sexual partners, inconsistent condom use, engaging in unprotected oral sex, and alcohol or drug use that impairs judgment about safe sex practices.
- ⊕ Social and educational factors also influence STI transmission among young people. Many young people lack comprehensive sex education, feel uncomfortable discussing sexual health with partners or healthcare providers, or have limited access to confidential sexual health services. Peer pressure and the desire to fit in can also influence risky sexual decisions.
- ⊕ Economic barriers often prevent young people from accessing regular STI testing, contraception, or treatment. Many worry about confidentiality or parental notification, which can delay seeking care.



REDUCING YOUR RISK

- Fortunately, there are many effective ways to protect yourself and reduce your risk of contracting STIs.
- Abstinence is the only method that is 100% effective at eliminating the risk.
- Consistent and correct condom use remains one of the most effective prevention methods.
- Regular testing is crucial, especially since many STIs show no symptoms. Get tested regularly if you're sexually active, and always get tested between partners.
- Vaccination can prevent certain STIs. The HPV vaccine is highly effective and recommended for all young people.

- Communication with partners about sexual health, testing history, and boundaries is essential. While these conversations might feel awkward initially, they become easier with practice and are vital for maintaining sexual health.
- Limiting sexual partners and being in a mutually monogamous relationship with someone who has tested negative for STIs significantly reduces risk.
- Avoiding alcohol and drugs before sexual activity helps ensure you make informed decisions about protection and consent.
- Seeking immediate care if you notice symptoms or have been exposed to an STI can prevent complications and reduce transmission to others.



Remember, STIs are medical conditions, not moral judgments. If you contract an STI, effective treatments are available, and with proper care, you can maintain good sexual health. The key is taking proactive steps to protect yourself and seeking help when needed.

