There are millions of new cases of Sexually Transmitted Infections, or STIs, in the United States each year. STIs pass from person to person through bodily fluids and sexual activity. Many STIs begin with no symptoms or are asymptomatic. If left untreated, some STIs can progress into diseases with life altering side affects. Keep reading to find out more about STI prevention, identification, STIs and reproduction, and testing options.

Sexually transmitted infections, STIs, and sexually transmitted diseases, STDs, are often used interchangeably. An STD refers to an STI that has developed symptoms, while an STI may not have symptoms or may start as asymptomatic.

Many cases of STIs go unnoticed and are left untreated as a result. It is estimated that there are over 20 million new STI cases each year. Individuals most affected by STIs include those between the ages of 15 and 24, but anyone who is sexually active can contract an STI. Other groups who are most affected include; gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men, pregnant people, and some racial and ethnic minorities. There are many social and economic reasons why some groups tend to be at a higher risk for STIs than others.

Rates of STIs have continued to rise since 2016. Data from 2020 indicates that of the most common STIs, only chlamydia saw a very small decline (1.2%), but still remained the most common STI. Below are statistics from 2020 showing the rise in specific STIs.

- Chlamydia: 1.6 million cases
- Gonorrhea: 677,769 cases
- Syphilis: 133,945 cases
- Congenital Syphilis: 2,148 cases

Source: www.cdc.gov
There are eight common STIs: chlamydia, gonorrhea, hepatitis B virus (HBV), herpes simplex virus type 2 (HSV-2), human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), human papillomavirus (HPV), syphilis, and trichomoniasis. Chlamydia, trichomoniasis, genital herpes, and HPV accounted for 93% of all new STIs in 2018. If you are looking for information on testing, see page 5.

**CHLAMYDIA & GONORRHEA**

Chlamydia and gonorrhea often occur without symptoms but they can cause serious health issues. Both can be treated with medication from a healthcare provider. If left untreated in women, chlamydia and gonorrhea can cause Pelvic Inflammatory Disease, PID, potentially resulting in reproductive issues.

- Symptoms of chlamydia may include:
  - an unusual sore
  - smelly discharge
  - burning while peeing
  - bleeding between periods

- Symptoms of gonorrhea may include:
  - painful or burning sensation while peeing
  - increased discharge
  - burning while peeing
  - bleeding between periods

**HEPATITIS B VIRUS**

Hepatitis B can be prevented through vaccination. Many people received the Hepatitis B vaccine as a child. The Hepatitis B vaccine may be offered at clinics that have STI services. Approximately half of all infected will experience symptoms and some individuals who are infected will experience long-term effects including liver damage.

- Symptoms of Hepatitis B Virus may include:
  - Fever
  - Nausea
  - Fatigue
  - Vomiting
  - Loss of appetite
  - Abdominal pain

- Dark urine
- Clay-colored bowel movements
- Joint pain
- Jaundice

**GENITAL HERPES**

Genital herpes can be present with or without symptoms, much like oral herpes. Once a person contracts genital herpes, they will have it for life. There are medications to shorten and prevent outbreaks. When sores are present, the virus is most infectious.

**HUMAN IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS**

This virus is commonly abbreviated as HIV. People with STIs are more likely to develop HIV and those with HIV are more likely to get other STIs. There is currently no cure for HIV. A person with HIV can limit the risk for their sex partner(s) by taking medications and using condoms. PrEP medications are recommended for the sexual partners of individuals with HIV, to lower the risk of transmission.

Untreated HIV can lead to Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome or AIDS. Individuals with HIV should seek the needed medication and treatments to prevent the onset of AIDS. AIDS can have a prominent negative impact on quality of life and longevity.

- Fever
- Muscle Aches
- Fatigue
- Sore Throat
- Chills
- Rash

Source: www.cdc.gov
There are eight common STIs: chlamydia, gonorrhea, hepatitis B virus (HBV), herpes simplex virus type 2 (HSV-2), human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), human papillomavirus (HPV), syphilis, and trichomoniasis. Chlamydia, trichomoniasis, genital herpes, and HPV accounted for 93% of all new STIs in 2018. If you are looking for information on testing or treatment, see page 5.

**HUMAN PAPILLOMAVIRUS**

This virus, commonly abbreviated as HPV, is an STI that can cause genital warts in men and several types of cancer in both men and women. HPV is a very dangerous type of STI. A vaccine for adolescents to protect against HPV.

Many people will not know that they have HPV until they are tested. There are rarely any symptoms. Women may find out that they have HPV during a routine pap smear or when serious problems have developed.

**SYPHILIS**

Syphilis is an infection that can cause serious health problems if not treated. There are multiple stages in the development of syphilis. Typically symptoms start as sores in the infected area. Within the next few months, a rash may develop. It is possible for syphilis to become latent within the body, staying for years without showing symptoms.

Long term effects of untreated syphilis can be life-changing and even deadly, including:

- Muscle weakness, trouble with movement
- Dementia
- Hearing loss or deafness
- Vision loss or blindness
- Heart damage
- Damage to other internal organs

**TRICHOMONIASIS**

Commonly referred to as “Trich” this STI is caused by parasite. Trich is a treatable STI, but without treatment the infection can last months or years. Up to 70% of those with Trichomoniasis do not experience symptoms. Itching, burning, or discomfort may occur. A person infected with Trichomoniasis has an increased risk of developing and spreading other STIs.

**BACTERIAL VAGINOSIS**

Bacterial Vaginosis, commonly abbreviated as BV, is the most common vaginal condition among women between the ages of 15-44. BV is an imbalance of “good” and “bad” bacteria. Many people with BV do not have any symptoms. If you are concerned that you may have BV, your healthcare provider can perform an examine. BV is very treatable, but without treatment, issues can arise. Pelvic Inflammatory Disease is more likely to develop in someone with BV, as well as other STIs, including HIV.
REPRODUCTION & STIS
As previously mentioned, some STIs have an effect on reproduction, especially for people who are or can become pregnant. STI status can lead to Pelvic Inflammatory Disease, issues with reproduction, and issues during pregnancy for both mother and baby.

PELVIC INFLAMMATORY DISEASE
Untreated STIs can cause Pelvic Inflammatory Disease, or PID. The most common STIs to cause PID are chlamydia and gonorrhea. While PID is often a complication of STIs, sometimes it can be caused by other non-sexually transmitted infections. There are no tests to confirm if you have PID and symptoms may be very mild.

Symptoms of PID may include:
- Pain in lower abdomen
- Fever
- Unusual discharge with bad odor
- Pain or bleeding when you have sex
- Burning sensation when you urinate
- Bleeding between your periods

It is important to promptly see a healthcare provider if you believe that you may have PID or have been exposed to an STI. PID can be treated if detected early. Unfortunately, treatment will not reduce the damage done to the reproductive system. PID can occur from any STI, even if the infected individual has previously been treated for PID.

Complications of untreated PID include: Formation of scar tissue both outside and inside the fallopian tubes that can lead to tubal blockage, ectopic pregnancy (pregnancy outside the womb), infertility and long-term pelvic/abdominal pain.

PREGNANCY
Pregnant people can become infected with the same STIs that non-pregnant people experience. Because many STIs are ‘silent’, or have no symptoms, it is important for a pregnant person to be tested for STIs. This includes HIV testing, since those with STIs are more likely to develop HIV. STIs can be dangerous and life-threatening for the pregnant person and the unborn baby. Pregnant people should be tested for STIs even if they have been tested in the past.

Testing and treatment of STIs can help prevent serious health conditions for the baby. These conditions might be seen at birth or months later. Some STIs can be treated safely during pregnancy.

Those who are pregnant or are considering becoming pregnant can get tested for STIs with their healthcare provider or at a clinic. Use this tool provided by the CDC at gettested.cdc.gov to find a free, fast, and confidential testing site near you.

To help reduce the risk of contracting an STI while pregnant, it is important to consider the following safe sex practices:
Using a condom every time you have sex.
Being in a monogamous relationship with a partner who is STI negative.

Source: www.cdc.gov
STIs are easily spread. There are several steps that a person can take to help stop the spread of STIs. There is no guaranteed way to prevent STI transmission other than abstaining from sexual activity. But for those who are sexually active, below are highly encouraged suggestions for the practice safe sex.

**PREVENTION**

**SAFE SEX PRACTICES**

- Get tested for STIs and ask your partner(s) to get tested as well.
- Use male condoms.
- Ask your provider about getting vaccinated for Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) and Hepatitis B.
- Consider reducing your number of sexual partners.
- Consider asking your partner to be mutually monogamous. This means that you both agree to only be sexually active with each other.

**CONDONS**

Condoms are the only birth control that prevent pregnancy and prevent the spread of STIs. But in order for condoms to work as both birth control and STI prevention, they need to be used correctly and used every time partners engage in sexual activity. Condoms should be used throughout sexual contact.

**TIPS:**

- Check the expiration date before use.
- Latex condoms provide the best prevention against pregnancy and STIs.
- Use a pre-lubricated condom or water-based lubricant to help prevent tearing.
- Do not use oil-based lubricants due to an increased risk of tearing.
- Do not reuse condoms.

**TESTING**

STI testing is an important aspect of your healthcare. Being open and honest with your healthcare provider regarding your sexual history will help with the determination if you should be screened for STIs. There are also many clinics that offer free to low-cost options for STI screenings.

Use this tool provided by the CDC at [gettested.cdc.gov](http://gettested.cdc.gov) to find a free, fast, and confidential testing site near you.

It is recommended that everyone get tested for STIs between sexual partners. This applies especially to women under 25 years of age, everyone who is pregnant, those who have multiple or anonymous partners, and those living with HIV.

**What does a positive test mean?**

Finding out that you have tested positive for an STI is just the first step in prevention and treatment. Depending on which STI a person is diagnosed with, there may be a cure or various treatment options. It is also important to be completely honest with all current and past sexual partners about the diagnosis. To help stop the spread of the STI, all sexual partners should be encouraged to get tested themselves. Everyone who tests positive for an STI is encouraged to seek treatment from their healthcare provider.

Source: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)