

What to Watch For

Many people have an STD with no symptoms.

If you have symptoms, you may notice any of these things.

Women

- **An unusual discharge** or smell from your vagina.
- **Pain in your pelvic area** - the area between your belly button and sex organs.
- **Burning or itching** around your vagina.
- **Bleeding** from your vagina that is not your regular period.
- **Pain deep inside** your vagina when you have sex.

Men

- **A drip or discharge** from your penis.

Women and Men

- **Sores, bumps or blisters** near your sex organs, rectum or mouth.
- **Burning and pain** when you urinate (pee) or have a bowel movement.
- **Need to urinate** often.
- **Itching** around your sex organs.
- **A swelling or redness** in your throat.
- **Flu-like feelings**, with fever, chills and aches.
- **Swelling in your groin** - the area around your sex organs.

**If you have any
Symptoms,
Stop having sex. Go to
a doctor or STD clinic.
Get checked now!
Don't put it off.**

What is STD?

An STD (sexually transmitted disease) is an infection that is passed during sex.

STDs Are Serious

- Some STDs infect only your sexual and reproductive organs. Others (HIV, hepatitis B, syphilis) cause general body infection.
- Sometimes you can have an STD with no signs or symptoms. Or the symptoms may go away. Either way, you still have the STD until you get treated.

How STD Is Spread

- STD is spread during vaginal, anal and oral sex, and sometimes by genital touching.
- Some STDs (HIV and hepatitis B) are also spread by contact with infected blood.
- STD germs need to live in warm, moist areas. That's why they infect the mouth, rectum and sex organs (vagina, vulva, penis and testes).

What to Do

Get Checked

- Don't just hope the STD will go away. It won't!
- Most county health departments have special STD clinics. Private health care providers also treat STD.
- If you don't know where to get help, call your local family planning clinic for information. Your case will be kept private.
- You may feel embarrassed about having an STD. It may be hard for you to go to a provider or clinic for help. But you must get treatment for the STD. This is the only way you will get well.

Get Treated

- Many STDs can be cured. Others cannot be cured. But all STDs can be treated.
- Many STDs can be treated with antibiotics. Do exactly what your provider tells you. Be sure to use all of your medicine.
- You also must tell your sexual partner(s). If they aren't treated, they can get sick. They can spread the STD. They might even give it to you again!

Protect Yourself

Stay safe

- **Not having sex is the best way to protect yourself** from STD. Having sex with only one uninfected partner who only has sex with you is safe.

If You Have Sex

- **Use latex condoms** with a water-based lubricant every time you have vaginal, anal or oral sex. Condoms will help protect you from STD much of the time. Both men and women should carry condoms.
- **Use plastic (polyurethane) condoms** if you're allergic to latex. These come in both male and female styles.
- **Talk to your partner** about past sex partners and about needle drug use. Don't have sex with someone who you think may have an STD.
- **Look closely at your partner** for any signs of STD - a rash, a sore or discharge. If you see anything you're worried about **don't have sex!**

Take Action

- **Get checked for STD** regularly. Ask your healthcare provider to help you decide how often and which tests you should have.
- **Know the signs and symptoms** of STD. If you notice a symptom that worries you, get checked!

If You Have an STD

- **Tell your sex partner(s).** Your partner must get tested and treated too. Otherwise he or she could give the STD to someone else or back to you.
- **Wait to have sex.** Ask your provider how long after treatment you must wait.

Talk with your partner about how you'll protect yourselves from STD.