

## STDs (Sexually Transmitted Diseases)

### What are STDs?

Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) are diseases passed from one person to another during sexual activity. STDs can be serious, painful and may have long term effects, especially if left undetected and untreated. They infect your sexual and reproductive organs. The most common STDs on college campuses identified in young adults include: chlamydia, genital herpes and HPV. Bacterial STDs like gonorrhea, chlamydia and syphilis, are relatively easy to cure with antibiotics if detected and treated early. Genital herpes, genital warts, Hepatitis B and HIV are viral infections that cannot be cured, but the symptoms can be treated and managed. Sometimes you can have an STD with no signs or symptoms. Other times, the symptoms spontaneously go away, but you still have the infection.

### How are STDs spread?

STDs can be spread during vaginal, oral and anal sexual contact with an infected person. Skin to skin contact with the mouth or genitals can spread certain STDs, even if penetration did not occur.

### You can protect yourself from STDs

Anyone who is sexually active can get or transmit an STD, so it's important to reduce your risk.

Abstain from sexual contact to eliminate all risk or engage in behaviors that don't involve skin to skin contact, or contact with the bodily fluids of your partner(s) like: fantasy, massage and mutual masturbation. If you decide to engage in other sexual behaviors consider the following:

- **Use a condom!** Condoms provide the best protection against STDs now available. For oral sex, use a condom or latex square.
- **Think about your alcohol and drug use.** Research shows that alcohol and drug use increase unprotected sex.
- **Talk with/examine your partner.** Share sexual histories and past diagnosis of infections. Look closely at your partner for any signs of STDs - a rash, a sore, redness or discharge in the genital area. If you see anything you're worried about, don't have sex!
- **Don't share vibrators or other sex toys.**
- **Know the signs and symptoms of STDs.** If you notice a symptom that worries you, get it checked. Remember, some STDs are easily cured.
- **Be checked for STDs every time you have a health exam.** This is very important since many people are infected but have no signs of an STD. If you or your partner has more than one partner, you may need an STD checkup every six months, or after an act of unprotected sex that may have caused an STD.
- **Get Hepatitis B and possible HPV immunizations.** The vaccines are safe and effective. Hepatitis B is a serious and sometimes fatal disease. HPV (human papilloma virus) can cause external warts and abnormal cells on the cervix. A series of three shots/vaccinations is required to obtain protection for each of these infections.
- **Request** that your sexual partner(s) be tested for STDs before you engage in sexual activities with them! Screening tests for STDs usually include tests for chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis, hepatitis B and HIV. If a partner was infected with one of these infections recently, the tests may be negative. You and your partner should be retested at the appropriate time. (Refer to tables later in this handout for timeframes.)
- **There is no routine screening** test for human papilloma virus (HPV) or genital herpes. The diagnosis for warts is made by visual check or biopsy. Testing for active herpes is done on a sample taken from an open sore. A blood test to screen for herpes simplex can sometimes assist the clinician in diagnosing herpes in individuals who have unexplained genital ulcers. Routine blood screening for herpes is not indicated in low risk populations (those without a history of genital ulcers).

## **What To Do**

It's normal to feel guilty, ashamed or embarrassed if you think you have an STD. If you do have these feelings, don't let them prevent you from getting tested.

## **How can I talk to my partner about STDs?**

### **Before I become infected**

The key to prevention is to limit your risk. It can be difficult to bring up the topic with a prospective sexual partner. Keep in mind that if your partner cares about you and you about him/her, you will want to keep each other safe from any diseases. Below are some tips to help communication before you have sex.

- Think about how you will bring up condom use with your sexual partners. Develop statements that you feel comfortable with to introduce the topic.
- Bring up the topic of sex, sexual histories and STD testing outside of the bedroom - during dinner, on a walk, etc. This helps both you and your partner stay focused and not get lost in the moment of passion. Include discussions about oral herpes simplex virus (HSV)/cold sores when asking about histories.
- Suggest that BOTH of you get tested for STD's, including HIV. Remember, being tested does not mean you are worried that either you or your partner is infected. Make testing something you do together, for each other.
- Let each dimension of your relationship develop at the same pace. Allowing the intellectual, mental, spiritual and emotional aspects grow, along with the physical, usually results in more open communication, healthier relationships and increased levels of trust because you and your partner have gotten to know each other better. Many people find that allowing a relationship to develop in this way makes sex better!

### **After I am diagnosed with an STD**

It can be scary and shocking to be diagnosed with an STD, especially if it is viral and not curable (like herpes or human papilloma virus). However, many couples face these diagnoses together and learn ways to enjoy a fully satisfying sexual life. If you're not currently in a relationship, you can still enjoy dating and sexual activities with a new partner, as long as precautions are taken to reduce the likelihood of transmission. Inform your new partner of your history prior to sexual activities.

- Tell your partner you have been diagnosed. It may be recommended that he or she get tested also.
- Discuss the information you have received from your health care provider with your partner - he or she will have questions too. Seek more information (books, videos, Web sites), if needed.
- Remember that your partner may feel angry and defensive and have the same questions and thoughts you do. Allow your partner time to absorb the information and to process their reactions. In order to work through a diagnosis, repeated discussions may be necessary, as trust needs to be rebuilt into the relationship (if you decide to stay in the relationship).
- Make an appointment together to talk with a counselor or the sexual health educator at McKinley to discuss ways to alter your sex life to decrease possible exposure, or for tips on how to talk to your partner.
- People with STDs often feel angry and isolated. Keeping those feelings inside can do more harm than good. Consider sharing your feelings with someone you trust: a friend, family member or counselor. Remember you're not alone.

Most bacterial STDs are treated with a high dose of antibiotics. It is important to do exactly what your provider recommends, and be sure to use all of your medicine. You should also consider telling your past and present sexual partner(s). If they aren't treated, they can spread the STD - they can even give it to you again. Ask your provider when you can resume sexual activity.

## BACTERIAL STDs (CURABLE with medication treatment)

### Bacterial STD CHLAMYDIA

**Diagnosis:**

**Men:** Urethral swab or urine specimen\*

**Women:** Vaginal/cervical swab or urine specimen\*

**When to be tested:**

2-3 weeks after exposure. \* All Gonorrhea/Chlamydia urine specimen tests are scheduled through the Lab – *It is important not to void/urinate 2 hours before testing.*

**What to watch for:**

- Symptoms may appear 7-21 days after infection.
- Many women and some men have no symptoms.

**Men:**

- Watery or white discharge from the penis.
- Burning or pain when you urinate.
- Pain or swelling in the testicles.

**Women:**

- Unusual discharge from the vagina.
- Bleeding from the vagina between periods.
- Burning or pain when you urinate.
- Abdominal pain, sometimes fever and nausea.

**How did you get this STD?**

- Vaginal, anal and sometimes oral sex with someone who has chlamydia.
- All sexual partners (of a person testing positive for chlamydia) in the last 60 days need treatment regardless of the clinical findings.

**What can happen?**

- Can be cured if treated with recommended medications.
- YOU CAN GIVE CHLAMYDIA TO YOUR SEXUAL PARTNER(S).
- Can lead to a more serious infection.
- Reproductive organs can be damaged.
- Fertility may be affected for both men and women, if left untreated.
- May be transmitted to newborns during childbirth.

### Bacterial STD GONORRHEA

**Diagnosis:**

Oral or anal swab or urine specimen\*. **Men:** Urethral swab. **Women:** Cervical swab.

**When to be tested:**

2-3 weeks after exposure. \* All Gonorrhea/Chlamydia urine specimen tests are scheduled through the Lab – *It is important not to void/urinate 2 hours before testing.*

**What to watch for:**

- Symptoms may appear 7-21 days after infection.
- Many women and some men have no symptoms.

**Men:**

- Watery or white discharge from the penis.

- Burning or pain when you urinate.
- Pain or swelling in the testicles.

**Women:**

- Unusual discharge from the vagina.
- Bleeding from the vagina between periods.
- Burning or pain when you urinate.
- Abdominal pain, sometimes fever and nausea.

**How did you get this STD?**

- Vaginal, oral or anal sex with someone who has gonorrhea.
- All sexual partners (of a person testing positive for gonorrhea) in the last 60 days need treatment regardless of the clinical findings.

**What can happen?**

- Can be cured if treated; drug resistant cases are growing nationwide.
- You should be retested 3 months after treatment, to make sure you have not been re-infected.
- YOU CAN GIVE GONORRHEA TO YOUR SEXUAL PARTNER(S).
- Can lead to more serious infection.
- Reproductive organs can be damaged.
- Fertility may be affected for both men and women, if left untreated.
- May be transmitted to newborns during childbirth.

**Bacterial STD  
SYPHILIS**

**Diagnosis:**

Blood draw

**When to be tested:**

12 weeks (3 months) after exposure

**What to watch for:**

**1st Stage:**

- Symptoms usually appear 1-2 weeks after infection.
- A painless, reddish-brown sore/chancere on the mouth or genitals.
- Chancre lasts 1-5 weeks.
- Chancre heals.

**2nd Stage:**

- Symptoms usually appear 2-6 weeks after chancre disappears.
- A rash appears on the body.
- Flu-like feelings.
- Rash and flu-like feelings go away, but you still have syphilis.

**How did you get this STD?**

- Vaginal, oral or anal sex with someone who has syphilis.
- Sexual partners need treatment.

**What can happen?**

- Can be cured if treated with recommended medications.
- YOU CAN GIVE SYPHILIS TO YOUR SEXUAL PARTNER(S).
- A pregnant woman with syphilis can pass it to her baby (in the uterus).
- Can cause heart disease, brain damage, blindness and death if left untreated.

**Bacterial STD  
NGU**

**Men - (Nongonococcal or nonspecific Urethritis, NSU) Women – Cervicitis**

**Diagnosis:**

**Non-specific diagnosis –**

**Men:** Urethral swab or urine sample. **Women:** Cervical swab

**When to be tested:**

2-3 weeks after exposure

**What to watch for:**

- Symptoms usually appear 7-21 days after infection.
- Most women and some men have no symptoms.
- Discharge or burning in the vagina.
- Burning or pain when you urinate.
- Yellow or white discharge from the penis.

**How did you get this STD?**

- Vaginal or anal sex with someone who has a NGU infection.
- Sexual partners need testing and possible treatment.

**What can happen?**

- Can be cured if treated with recommended medications.
- YOU CAN GIVE NGU INFECTIONS TO YOUR SEXUAL PARTNER(S).
- Can lead to more serious infection.
- Reproductive organs can be damaged.
- Fertility may be affected for both men and women, if left untreated.
- May be transmitted to newborns during childbirth.

**Bacterial STD  
TRICHOMONIASIS (Trich)**

**Diagnosis:**

**Men:** Urine test      **Women:** Vaginal swab

**When to be tested:**

2-3 weeks after exposure

**What to watch for:**

- Symptoms usually appear 4-20 days after infection.
- Some women and most men have no symptoms.

**Women:**

- Heavy, yellow/green or grey discharge from the vagina.
- Itching, redness and swelling around the genitals.
- Vaginal odor.
- Pain with intercourse or when you urinate.

**Men:**

- Thin, white discharge from the penis.
- Burning or pain when you urinate.

**How did you get this STD?**

- Vaginal sex with someone who has trichomoniasis.
- Sometimes passed by sharing moist objects - such as towels, washcloths, bathing suits and sex toys.

- Partners need treatment.

**What can happen?**

- Can be cured if treated with recommended medications.
- YOU CAN GIVE TRICHOMONIASIS TO YOUR SEXUAL PARTNER(S).
- Uncomfortable symptoms will continue.
- May cause pregnancy complications.

**VIRAL STDs (Treatable, not curable)**  
**Viral STD**  
**GENITAL HERPES (HSV-1 and HSV-2)**

**Diagnosis:**

Made by taking a swab sample from active sores/lesions. Blood tests may assist diagnosis in patients with history of unexplained ulcerative disease.

**When to be tested:**

Culture/swab when sores are present. Blood test when sores are not present, at least 100 days after contact/post-exposure. (It can take from 3 weeks to 4 months after exposure to HSV for antibodies to be detected in the blood.)

**When not to be tested:**

The value of blood test is reduced in low risk populations (those without a history of genital ulcers). Blood tests, which detect antibodies to HSV-1 or HSV-2 infection can be helpful, although the results are not always clear-cut.

**What to watch for:**

- Symptoms usually appear 2-30 days after infection with the virus.
- Some people have mild or no symptoms.
- Flu-like symptoms.
- Small, painful blisters on the genitals (or mouth).
- Itching or burning before blisters appear.
- Painful ulcers when the blisters break.

**How did you get this STD?**

- Vaginal, oral or anal sex - or skin to skin contact with someone who has herpes.
- Oral herpes can be transmitted to the genitals during oral sex.
- Asymptomatic transmission can occur (when no blisters are visible).

**What can happen?**

- YOU CAN GIVE HERPES TO YOUR SEXUAL PARTNER(S).
- Herpes symptoms can be treated, but an infected person will always have the virus.
- May be transmitted to newborns during childbirth.

**Viral STD**  
**HEPATITIS B**

**Diagnosis:**

Blood draw

**When to be tested:**

12 weeks (three months) after exposure

**What to watch for:**

- Symptoms usually appear 2-6 months after infection.
- Fatigue and weakness.
- Anorexia (loss of appetite).
- Jaundice and darkened urine.
- Fever and abdominal pain.

- Majority of those infected have no symptoms.

**How did you get this STD?**

- Vaginal, oral or anal sex with someone who has the virus (it is 100 times more infectious than HIV).
- Sharing needles (to inject drugs) with someone who is infected.
- Close, frequent contact with infected blood, semen, vaginal secretions, saliva or someone with whom you share a needle.

**What can happen?**

- YOU CAN GIVE HEPATITIS B TO YOUR SEXUAL PARTNER(S).
- You can develop a lifelong infection (carrier state), chronic liver disease or hepatoma (liver cancer).
- You can infect future children if you become a carrier.
- Vaccination can prevent Hepatitis B.

**Viral STD**  
**HUMAN PAPILLOMA VIRUS, GENITAL WARTS (HPV)**

**Diagnosis:**

**Men:** Visual exam    **Women:** Visual exam; sometimes detected on pap smear.

**When to be tested:**

12 weeks (three months) after exposure

**What to watch for:**

- This is the most common STD in college populations!
- Symptoms usually appear within 3-6 months after infection with the virus.
- In some cases, symptoms may not appear for years (maybe 30 yrs).
- Small, bumpy growths on the genitals and anus.
- Itching and burning around the genitals.
- Intra-anal warts may be transmitted with anal-receptive intercourse
- Most warts do not go away without treatment.

**How did you get this STD?**

- Vaginal, oral or anal sex or skin to skin contact with someone who has the virus.
- Asymptomatic transmission (no visible warts) can occur.

**What can happen?**

- Vaccination is available to prevent the most serious strains of HPV.
- YOU CAN GIVE HPV TO YOUR SEXUAL PARTNER(S).
- Viral load in young healthy individuals can be cleared to non-detectable levels in an average of 8-24 months.
- More warts may appear, but transmission is possible without visible lesions/warts.
- May lead to abnormal pap test results, cervical cancer, penile cancer or anal cancer.
- May be transmitted to newborns during childbirth.

**Viral STD**  
**HIV/AIDS**

**Diagnosis:**

Blood draw

**When to be tested:**

12 weeks (three months) after exposure

**What to watch for:**

- Symptoms appear several months to several years after infection with the virus.
- Unexplained weight loss.
- Persistent diarrhea.

- Swollen lymph glands.
- Purple bumps on the skin and inside the mouth, nose and rectum.
- Recurrent yeast infections.

#### **How did you get this STD?**

- Vaginal, anal and possibly oral sex with someone who is infected with the virus.
- Sharing needles (to inject drugs) with someone who is infected with the virus.

#### **What can happen?**

- YOU CAN GIVE HIV TO YOUR SEXUAL PARTNER(S) OR SOMEONE WITH WHOM YOU SHARE A NEEDLE.
- HIV cannot be cured. Most people die from a disease linked to HIV infection.
- A pregnant woman can pass the virus to her baby.

#### **Remember ...**

*You can be infected without symptoms if you have been exposed to an STD.  
Symptoms should be taken seriously. Even if symptoms "go away" on their own, you may still be infected.*

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If you would like to consider **Personal Counseling** please contact:

Annamaria Silveri, PhD (313) 993-1459

Rachel Bennett, LMSW (313) 993-1170

If you would like to make an appointment with the **Health Clinic** please contact:

Olga Parfenov, FNP-BC (313) 993-1185

In case of **Emergency** contact:

UDM Public Safety (313) 993-1123 or 911

or

Henry Ford Hospital Emergency Room – 2799 W. Grand Blvd., Detroit, MI 48202

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#### **Other Resources**

- CDC National STD Hotline **1-800-227-8922**
  - En Español **1-800-344-7432**
  - TTY for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing **1-800-243-7889**
- National AIDS Hotline **1-800-342-AIDS**
- CDC Sexually Transmitted Disease web site <http://www.cdc.gov/std/>

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#### **References:**

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [Sexually Transmitted Diseases Treatment Guidelines 2006](#). *MMWR* 2006;55(No. RR-11). August 4, 2006.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [Sexually Transmitted Disease Surveillance, 2006](#). Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, November 2007.