

Introduction to Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)

What is an STI?

A sexually transmitted infection (STI) is an infection passed from person to person through sexual contact, either through infected body fluids or direct contact.

Anyone, male or female, who has had sex or is sexually active may be at risk of an STI.

What are the signs and symptoms of common STIs?

Many people with STI show no symptoms. Nonetheless, the STI still needs to be treated as soon as possible. If one does experience symptoms, they may appear as the following:

- Thicker, yellow/greenish or blood-stained discharge from the genitals
- Itching, swelling, or redness in the genitals
- Pain in the genitals during sex
- Abnormal bleeding after sex
- Pain while urinating or increased frequency of urination
- Broken skin, abnormal growths or ulcers in the genital areas
- Pain the lower abdomen

Please see a doctor as soon as possible if you:

- have any symptoms, or
- have no symptoms but are sexually active, or
- feel you may have been exposed to an STI.

Common STIs

Chlamydia & Gonorrhoea

- Both are bacterial infections that may cause heavier yellowish discharge and/or abnormal bleeding from the genitals.
- Both infections often do not cause noticeable symptoms at all.
- If untreated, they may lead to pelvic infection, infertility or a spread in the blood to cause a more serious illness.
- Gonorrhoea and chlamydia can be treated with antibiotics.

Syphilis

- Syphilis is a bacterial infection.
- Often, syphilis has no symptoms and can only be detected on a blood test. However, if symptoms appear, individuals may experience:

Primary Stage	Secondary Stage	Tertiary Stage
Painless ulcer around the genitals and anal region	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rashes on palms, soles, and body• Mouth ulcers• Hair loss	Damage to bones, joints, blood vessels, and organs

- Syphilis can be cured with antibiotics, such as penicillin injections.

Genital Herpes

- Genital herpes is a viral infection caused by the Herpes simplex virus type 1 or 2
- Painful blisters and ulcers may form on the external genitals, anus or cervix. Type 1 also causes cold sores on the lips.
- The outbreak usually lasts within 1-3 weeks.
- Genital herpes can recur but frequent episodes can be suppressed with antiviral drugs.
- Unless one has symptoms of herpes, it is **not** usually tested for.

Genital Warts

- Genital warts are a viral infection caused by Human Papillomavirus (HPV).
- In men, they may occur on the tip or shaft of the penis, the scrotum, or the anus. Women with HPV may experience small growths on the skin, which can increase in size and number.
- They can also develop in the mouth or throat of a person who has had oral sexual contact with an infected person.
- Some HPV infections can even lead to cervical, anal and genital cancers.
- A vaccine is currently available to prevent HPV infection.

Hepatitis B

- Hepatitis B is a viral infection of the liver which is passed through infected blood and sexual body fluids.
- Symptoms may include a flu-like illness with jaundice, but in some cases, no symptoms will appear at all.

- A small percentage of infected individuals may develop liver disease.
- Most people recover fully from the infection although some may become long-term carriers of the virus and infect sexual partners.
- A vaccine is available to protect individuals against the infection.

HIV

- HIV is the virus that causes AIDS and can be passed through infected blood and sexual body fluids.
- Initially, HIV infection may cause no symptoms at all. However, some may experience a flu-like illness with fever, rash, swollen neck and armpit glands. These symptoms may progress to fever, weight loss, diarrhoea, night sweats, and oral thrush.
- Other skin infections may appear before a more serious illness and AIDS begin.
- Anti-HIV medications are available to control the infection and early treatment helps keep infected individuals healthy while preventing AIDS.

How can one protect themselves from STIs?

To protect yourself from STIs:

- Use condoms every time you have sex
- Attend regular STI screenings
- Know your HIV status
- Get vaccinated against the different STIs

What should one do if they contracted an STI?

If one thinks they may have been exposed to STI or have any of the symptoms, one can visit the DSC Clinic for a sexual health screening.

If you have been diagnosed with any STI, avoid all kinds of sexual activity until you have completed treatment. With some types of STIs, your sexual partner(s) also need to be treated before you resume sexual activity.

Do also consume your medication consistently and as prescribed.

Reach Out to Us

If you still have queries, feel free to call us at the following numbers:

HIV/STI Hotline (8am – 5pm)

1800 252 1324

Health Info Recorded Hotline (24 hours)

+65 6295 2944

Appointments

+65 6293 9648

You may also visit www.dsc-clinic.sg for more information, or find us at the DSC Clinic, 31 Kelantan Lane #01-16 S(200031).

Disclaimer

We have attempted to provide full, accurate, and up-to-date information in this patient information leaflet, based on current medical evidence and opinion. However, information and advice may vary from different sources and over time. If you have any further questions, do see your doctor or healthcare provider.

Updated **Sep 2022**.