

UAB Health Education

STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS



Sexually transmitted infections/diseases (STI/STD) are infections caused by bacteria, viruses or parasites, spread by sexual contact with infected skin or bodily fluids, including blood, semen, vaginal, cervical or penile discharge. They can be spread without penetrative contact and without known symptoms. The most common STIs among college students include chlamydia, gonorrhea, human papillomavirus (HPV), herpes and trichomoniasis. Bacterial STIs are cured with antibiotics. Viral STIs can be managed with other prescriptions.

DIAGNOSIS

If you have symptoms concerning for an STI, you should make an appointment at Student Health Services. Your provider will take a full history and do a physical exam. They will also order a swab of the vaginal/penile discharge, urine sample or blood tests.

PREVENTION

- Abstinence is the only way to 100% prevent STIs
- Use condoms consistently and correctly
- Avoid intercourse with a new sexual partner until you have both been tested for STIs
- Plan ahead with your partner to ensure you are practicing safe sexual encounters
- Get vaccinated for HPV, Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B
- Know where you can access PrEP (Truvada) or PEP to reduce the risk of acquiring HIV

RESOURCES

FamilyDoctor.org <https://familydoctor.org/condition/sexually-transmitted-infections-stis/>

Mayo Clinic <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/sexually-transmitted-diseases-stds/symptoms-causes/syc-20351240>

CDC <https://www.cdc.gov/std/default.htm>

American Sexual Health Association <http://www.ashasexualhealth.org/>

SYMPTOMS

Many STIs are asymptomatic, meaning a person can be infected without any signs of infection. An untreated STI can cause serious complications such as permanent damage to the reproductive system.

Common symptoms include:

- Abnormal vaginal/penile discharge
- Burning with urination
- Pain in lower abdomen or genital area
- Pain during intercourse
- Sores, ulcers, bumps, rashes, itching in genital area
- Skin rashes
- Flu-like symptoms (in the case of HIV)

RISK FACTORS

Anyone engaging in oral, vaginal or anal sexual activity is at risk of acquiring an STI. Half of all sexually active people will get an STI by the age of 25. Symptoms do not need to be present to spread an STI. Anyone with the following types of contact can contract an STI:

- Genital to genital
- Anal to genital
- Oral to genital
- Hand to genital
- Oral to anal

SEE NEXT PAGE FOR A LIST OF COMMON STIs, SYMPTOMS, TRANSMISSION & TREATMENT INFORMATION



	SYMPTOMS	TRANSMISSION	TREATMENT
CHLAMYDIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often no symptoms • Penile/vaginal discharge • Abnormal vaginal bleeding or spotting • Painful urination • Abdominal pain or cramping, fever 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual activity • Oral sex can lead to infection of throat • Can be transmitted to newborn during vaginal birth 	Antibiotics. All current or recent sexual contacts must be treated. Both partners should avoid sexual activity for one week after treatment.
GONORRHEA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often no symptoms • Penile/vaginal white/yellow/green discharge • Painful urination • Abdominal pain or cramping, fever • Skin rash, swollen or painful joints 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual activity • Oral sex can lead to infection of throat • Can be transmitted to rectal areas • Can be transmitted to newborn during vaginal birth 	Antibiotics. All current or recent sexual contacts must be treated. Both partners should avoid sexual activity for one week after treatment.
SYPHILIS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chancre: Firm, round, painless sore on genitals, anus, or mouth, which heals within 6 weeks of infection • Rash on body, especially on palms of hands or soles of feet, swollen glands, fever, weeks to months after infection • Untreated syphilis can lead to serious cardiovascular and neurological complications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct contact with syphilis sore through vaginal, anal, or oral sex • Can be transmitted to baby during pregnancy or during vaginal birth. 	Antibiotics. All current or recent sexual contacts must be treated. Both partners should avoid sexual activity until sores are completely healed.
TRICHOMONIASIS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often no symptoms • Penile/vaginal frothy, yellow-green, odorous discharge • Penile/vaginal discomfort 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vaginal sex 	Antibiotics. All current or recent sexual contacts must be treated. Both partners should avoid sexual activity for one week after treatment.
HUMAN PAPILOMAVIRUS (HPV)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most people do not have symptoms • Some people may have genital warts • Certain types of HPV can cause cervical cancer, does not cause symptoms until advanced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual activity, skin-to-skin contact • Rarely, can be transmitted from mother to child during childbirth 	There is no cure for HPV. Discuss with your provider to treat warts with prescription cream or other methods. The HPV vaccine is recommended for all individuals up to age 45 but is typically given between ages 9-26 and prevents high-risk HPV subtypes that can cause cervical cancer and genital warts.
HERPES SIMPLEX VIRUS (HSV)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cold sores or fever blisters around the mouth are caused by HSV-1 • Genital sores can be caused by HSV-1 or 2, more commonly HSV-2 • Swollen lymph nodes, muscle aches and fever 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct contact with individual with active infection • HSV-1 can be spread by kissing 	There is no cure for herpes. Medications can reduce the frequency and duration of outbreaks.
HIV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often no symptoms for up to 10 years after infection. • Severe flu-like symptoms can occur within the first month of infection. • Years after initial infection: swollen lymph nodes, fever, night sweats, weight loss, diarrhea, unusual infections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oral, vaginal, anal sexual contact • Blood-to-blood contact 	Antiviral medications slow progression of disease.