

Fact Sheet

Safe Sex and Sexually Transmissible Infections



Sexually transmissible infections (STIs) can be passed between people when they have sex. If a person has an STI it might make them sick. A person can easily find out from their doctor, a Family Planning clinic or sexual health clinic if they have an STI. People can take medicines to treat STIs.

How do people get an STI?

An STI can be passed from one person's body to another person's body when they have sex together. Some of these ways are:

- When a man puts his penis into a woman's vagina
- When a man puts his penis into a person's anus
- When a man puts his penis into a person's mouth
- When a person puts their mouth on a woman's vulva
- When a person puts their mouth onto a person's anus
- When people share sex toys such as dildos

A person cannot catch STIs from toilet seats, in swimming pools, or from drinking from a dirty glass.

A person cannot always tell if the person they are going to have sex with has an STI.

Safe sex

When people use a condom and lubricant (lube) to have sex it is called 'safe sex'. Safe sex is when both people are looking after each other's health. Safe sex is used to help stop a person getting an STI from another person. Safe sex is used to help stop a person giving an STI to someone else.

Condoms with lubricant help to protect people from catching STIs.

A condom is a thin cover that is put on a man's penis before having sex. Condoms are usually made out of a special type of rubber called latex. The condom stays on the penis while having sex. The condom catches the man's semen when he has an orgasm (cums). This stops the semen getting inside the other person's vagina or anus.

Lubricant (lube) is slippery stuff that a person can put on the outside of a condom. It makes the condom slippery, and stops it from breaking. Sometimes condoms break if it is not wet and slippery in the woman's vagina, or because a man or woman's anus is not wet and slippery. The best type of lubricant to use is water based lubricant. Do not use other things like Vaseline or creams because they can make condoms break.

Using condoms and water based lubricant is the best way for a person to protect themselves from getting STIs. A person can buy condoms and lubricant from a chemist, supermarket, Family Planning clinic or sexual health clinic. If a person is allergic to latex, they should go to a chemist or supermarket to buy non-latex condoms.



How can people tell if they have an STI?

People may not know that they have an STI because there may be no changes in their body. Sometimes they might notice some changes in their body.

In women

Most of the time healthy women have some discharge coming out of their vagina. This is the wetness a woman might have noticed on her underpants or on the toilet paper and it is normal to have this. It is good for women to know what their normal discharge is like, because it can change when they get an STI. Some of the changes a woman may have in her discharge from her vagina if she has an STI are:

- Her discharge might become thicker and smellier
- There may be more discharge than usual
- The discharge might have a little bit of blood in it even though it is not her period time

Some other changes a woman might notice in her body are:

- A burning or itchy feeling around the vulva and in the vagina
- Blisters, sores or hard lumps between the tops of the woman's legs, on or around the vulva, vagina or anus
- Pain and burning when she is urinating
- Pain when she is having sex

In men

Some of the changes a man may have if he has an STI are:

- Yellow or white discharge coming out of the penis all the time
- Blisters, sores or hard lumps on or around the penis or anus
- Burning or pain when he is urinating
- Pain in his testes

A person should see a doctor if they notice any changes.

If a person has any of these changes, they should go to their doctor, a Family Planning clinic or sexual health clinic right away. They could get very sick if they do not go. The doctor or nurse will check if there is an STI.

If a person has an STI, they should not have sex until they have been told by the doctor that their infection has gone away.

If a person has an STI, the doctor or nurse can give them tablets or sometimes an injection or other treatments.



Some types of STIs

Chlamydia

Chlamydia is a common STI especially in young people. Most people who have chlamydia do not know they have it. It can be easily passed to another person when having sex. The doctor can give the person tablets and the chlamydia will go away.

Genital warts

People can catch warts from other people when they have sex. Warts are hard lumps on the skin of the penis, vulva or around the anus. Warts do not hurt.

Genital herpes

People can catch herpes from other people when they have sex. Herpes is painful blisters on the skin of the penis, vulva or around the anus.

HIV

HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus. HIV is a serious STI and is more common in Australia in gay men. It can be hard to talk about HIV because it can make people very sick. When people get very sick with HIV it is called AIDS. There is no cure for HIV but there are tablets that can make people with HIV stay healthy.

Having an STI test

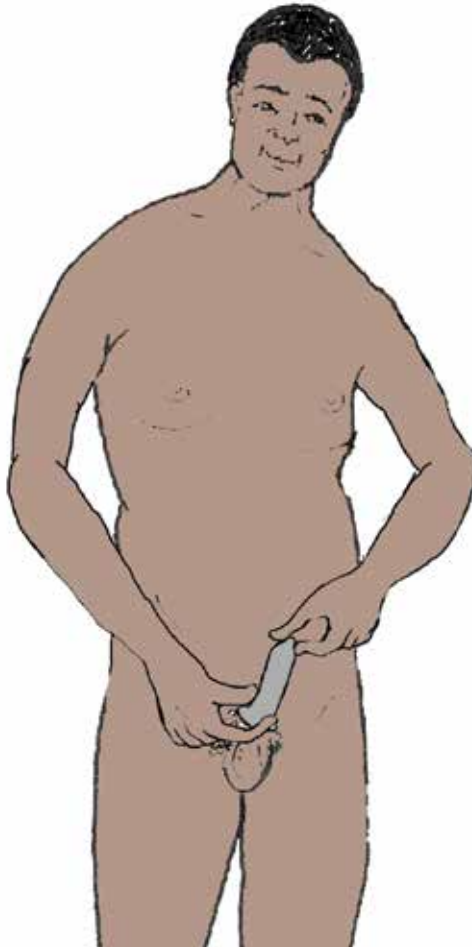
There are a few different ways to test if someone has an STI. Sometimes the person will need to do a urine test (wee into a jar). Sometimes a person needs to have a blood test or some other test. The doctor or nurse may also need to look at the person's private body parts.

Everyone who has had sex with someone new without using a condom should go to their doctor, a Family Planning clinic or sexual health clinic for a check-up. A person who is worried about whether they have an STI should also get an STI test.

Two people who have been together for a long time, and do not have sex with anyone else, might decide not to use condoms together. They should go to a doctor, Family Planning clinic or sexual health clinic to talk about having a test for STIs together before they decide to stop using condoms.

There is information about how to contact Family Planning and sexual health clinics in the fact sheet called 'Where to go for help or advice'.

How to use a condom



1. Check the use by date on the condom packet
2. Tear open the condom packet. Take the condom out of the packet
3. Hold the tip of the condom
4. Put the condom on the penis. Roll the condom all the way down the penis
5. Put water based lubricant (lube) on the outside of the condom
6. Leave the condom on when having sex
7. After sex hold onto the condom while taking the penis out
8. Slip the condom off the penis
9. Put the condom in a tissue. Put it in the bin

The Family Planning NSW resource, *Sex Safe and Fun*, has more information about condoms and safe sex. This resource includes step by step pictures on how to use a condom. For more information go to the fact sheet called 'Resources'.



What you need to know:

- You cannot always see if someone has an STI. You or another person might have an STI and not know about it
- Protect yourself from STIs by using condoms with water base lubricant (lube) when you have sex
- Use water based lubricant (lube) when you use a condom to stop it breaking
- You can buy condoms and lubricant (lube) from a chemist, supermarket, Family Planning clinic or sexual health clinic
- If you notice any changes to your private body parts and think it might be an STI you can go to a doctor, Family Planning clinic or sexual health clinic for an STI test
- If you have had sex without a condom and you are worried about getting an STI you can go to a doctor, Family Planning clinic or sexual health clinic for an STI test
- If you have an STI, the doctor or nurse can give you tablets or sometimes an injection or other treatments

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Reviewed Oct 2013/FPNSW 10/13