

# STIs: Getting Tested



Getting tested for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) is a good way to protect your health and the health of your sexual partner(s).

## What are STIs?

- ✓ There are many different types of sexually transmitted infections (also called STDs).
- ✓ Some common STIs include HIV, herpes, chlamydia, HPV, syphilis, gonorrhea and hepatitis B.

## How do you get an STI?

- ✓ STIs are passed from one infected partner to another through vaginal, anal or oral sex. Some STIs can be passed through intimate touching or kissing and other skin-to-skin contact.
- ✓ Some STIs, like HIV and hepatitis, can also be passed by sharing needles, syringes or other equipment for drugs, steroids, vitamins, tattoos or body piercing.

## What is STI testing?

- ✓ There is no single test to check for all STIs.
- ✓ A health care provider will ask questions to help decide which STIs to test for.
- ✓ It is important to give honest answers.
- ✓ They will also look for signs and symptoms of infection.
- ✓ You may need to take a urine test, blood test or other lab test. It can take a few days to get results from certain tests.

## Why should I get tested?

- ✓ If left untreated STIs can cause serious health problems. Some of these include cervical cancer, liver damage, brain damage, and the inability to have children.
- ✓ Getting tested protects your partner. If you have an STI, tell your partner(s). He or she should get tested too.

## Can STIs be treated and cured?

- ✓ All STIs can be treated. Some can be cured.
- ✓ Some STIs cannot be cured. But early treatment will help lower your risk of long-term health problems.

## What are the symptoms of STIs?

- ✓ A person can have an STI and not have any symptoms.
- ✓ But if you do have symptoms, they may include:
  - Genital discharge or itching.
  - Pain or burning when urinating.
  - Sores, bumps, warts or blisters on the genitals, anus or mouth.
  - Pain in the lower abdomen or when having sex.



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## If I don't have any symptoms, how will I know if I need to get checked?

- ✓ Ask yourself these questions:
  - Have I ever had vaginal, anal or oral sex without using a latex condom or barrier?
  - Have I had sex with someone I think may have an STI?
  - Have I ever shared needles, syringes or other equipment for drugs, steroids, vitamins, tattoos or piercings?
- ✓ If you answer yes to any of these questions, talk to a health care provider. He or she can help you decide if you need to get tested.

## Where can I get tested?

- ✓ Health departments, community clinics, STI or family planning clinics and private doctors usually offer STI testing.
- ✓ Many STI clinics provide free or low-cost testing and treatment.
- ✓ Talk to your doctor about vaccines that protect against hepatitis B and HPV.

## How can I protect myself from STIs?

- ✓ The most reliable protection is choosing not to have sex and to never share needles for drugs, steroids, vitamins, tattoos or piercings.
- ✓ If you do have sex, always protect yourself. Use latex condoms correctly and every time you have vaginal, anal or oral sex. Use a latex barrier for oral sex with a woman.
- ✓ Choosing to have sex with only one uninfected partner, who also has sex with only you, will also lower your risk.
- ✓ Talk to your partner(s) before you have sex. For your protection, insist on using a condom.

To find out more about STIs or to find a testing center in your area, visit [gettested.cdc.gov](https://gettested.cdc.gov)



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