

Understanding and Avoiding Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)

More than 20 diseases can be transmitted through sex.¹ Here are some tips that can help you protect your health.

What is STI?²

STI stands for sexually transmitted infection. STIs can be passed from person to person through bacteria and viruses in body fluids. STIs can cause life-threatening illness. STIs may cause:

- Sterility
- Stress
- Birth defects
- Lasting health problems
- Major illnesses such as HIV, cancer or blindness
- Death

STIs may harm pregnant mom and baby.³

Pregnant women can get the same STIs as women who are not pregnant. Many types of STIs can cause serious harm to unborn babies.

Take care of yourself.⁴

Here are some steps you can take to protect you from STIs. Be sure to talk with your partner(s) about safe sex.

- **Use a condom** (rubber) every time you have sex. There are male and female condoms. For each sex act, you need a new condom.
- **Get a regular checkup** for STIs, even if you don't have symptoms.
- **Make sure your partner gets tested** before you have sex.
- **Do not have sex if your partner has signs of an STI** such as a rash, sores or discharge (fluid) from the genital area.
- **Avoid drugs and alcohol.** If you are drunk or high, you may not make safe choices about sex.
- **Abstinence.** Not having sex is the best way to avoid an STI.



Some common types of STIs:⁵

- HIV and AIDS
- Genital herpes
- Gonorrhea
- Syphilis
- Chlamydia
- Hepatitis A, B and C
- Human papillomavirus (genital warts)
- Trichomoniasis

What are the signs of an STI?⁶

- Pain or burning from the penis, vagina or anus when you use the toilet.
- Discharge from the genitals that has an odd color or smell.
- Pain in the abdomen (women) or testicles (men).
- Lumps, sores, rashes or itching around the penis, vagina or anus.
- Some STIs have no symptoms. It is important to talk with your doctor if you believe you may have been exposed to an STI.

We are here to help you.

Talk with your doctor or nurse to learn more about STIs. You also can call MedCall®, the 24-hour nurse help line, toll-free. Call your local health department to find the closest STI clinic. To find out even more about STIs and another way to get a referral to an STI clinic, call the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) or visit the CDC website.

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Customer Care Center: **1-866-781-5094**

TTY line: **1-866-773-9634**

MedCall: **1-866-577-9710**

TTY line: **1-800-368-4424**

www.bluechoicescmedicaid.com

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): **1-800-232-4636**

www.cdc.gov

TTY lines are only for members with hearing and speech loss.



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Sources: ^{1,2,4} U.S. Nat'l Library of Medicine and the Nat'l Institutes of Health, *Sexually Transmitted Diseases* (Accessed August 2009): <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/sexuallytransmitteddiseases.html>

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *STDs & Pregnancy* (Accessed August 2009): <http://www.cdc.gov/std/pregnancy/STDs-and-pregnancy-fact-sheet.pdf>

^{5,6} Nat'l Institutes of Health, Eunice Kennedy Shriver, *Nat'l Institute of Child Health and Human Development, Sexually Transmitted Diseases* (Accessed August 2009): http://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/sexually_transmitted_diseases.cfm

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