

STI

Sexually Transmitted Infections



Public Health
Agency of Canada

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TO PROMOTE AND PROTECT THE HEALTH OF CANADIANS THROUGH LEADERSHIP, PARTNERSHIP AND INNOVATION AND ACTION IN PUBLIC HEALTH.

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Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are an important and growing health issue in Canada. The best way to protect yourself against STIs is to not have sex. If you choose to have sex, make sure you use condoms and get tested for STIs.

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It is important that both you and your partner(s) are treated for STIs. Even if you are treated for an infection, you can get it again if you have sex with someone who is infected and has not been treated.

Chlamydia

What is it?

Chlamydia is a sexually transmitted infection caused by bacteria. It is very common, especially among teenagers and young adults aged 15-24 years old, particularly young women. Chlamydia can cause serious health problems, such as:

- infertility [not being able to have a baby] in men and women
- pelvic inflammatory disease
- chronic pelvic pain
- ectopic pregnancy [a pregnancy that occurs outside the uterus]

It must be treated.

How do you get it?

You can get chlamydia if you have unprotected oral, vaginal or anal sex with someone who already has the infection. If you are pregnant, it is important to get tested and treated for chlamydia before childbirth to avoid passing the infection on to your baby.

How can you tell if you have it?

The majority of people who have chlamydia do not have any signs or symptoms. You can pass it on to someone without even knowing that you have it.

If you have chlamydia and you do have symptoms, you might notice:

Female

- a change or an increase in discharge from your vagina
- vaginal itching
- bleeding between periods
- pain or bleeding during or after vaginal sex
- pain in your lower abdomen
- burning during urination

Male

- burning during urination
- discharge from your penis
- burning or itching around the opening of your penis
- pain in your testicles

How do you get tested?

For both males and females, your healthcare provider will probably ask for a urine sample to test. If you are female, your healthcare provider may also take samples from your cervix [the opening to the uterus] using a swab. You should also ask to be tested for other STIs such as gonorrhea. Tests for gonorrhea can be done using the same urine or swab samples as the test for chlamydia. You should also ask to be tested for syphilis, hepatitis B and HIV at the same time. These are done through a blood test.

How is it treated?

Chlamydia can be cured with antibiotics. It is important that you take all of your medication, even after you start to feel better. Your past and current partners should be told that they may have been exposed to chlamydia and need to be tested and treated. You do not have to tell your partner[s] yourself. They can be told that they should get tested for STIs through online anonymous postcards or through a nurse who will contact your partner[s] without telling them your name or how they might have been exposed.

If you are being treated for chlamydia, you and your partner[s] should not have sex until you have completed treatment and have been told that the infection is gone. Even if you are treated for this infection, you can get it again if you have sex with someone who is infected and has not been treated.

Certain STIs, such as chlamydia, gonorrhea and HIV often have no symptoms at all. It is important to be tested often to make sure you are not infected.

Lymphogranuloma Venereum (LGV)

What is it?

LGV is short for lymphogranuloma venereum. It is a sexually transmitted infection caused by a certain type of chlamydia bacteria. LGV can infect the:

- vagina
- mouth
- anus
- cervix (the opening to the uterus)
- penis

LGV is relatively rare in Canada but the number of cases is growing, especially among gay men and other men who have sex with men. Left untreated, LGV can cause serious health problems such as scarring and deformity to the genitals and rectum (the lower part of the large intestine) that may need surgery. It must be treated.

How do you get it?

You can get LGV if you have unprotected oral, vaginal or anal sex with a person who already has the infection.

How can you tell if you have it?

A painless sore or lump may appear where the bacteria have entered your body. It can clear up without treatment, but even if it does, you will still have the infection and need to be treated. Having a sore can increase the risk of getting or passing on other infections such as HIV, hepatitis B or hepatitis C.

In the second stage you may develop:

- flu-like symptoms
- swelling of your glands (lymph nodes)
- discharge from your genital or anal area

You may be able to feel swollen glands behind your ears, under your jaw, in your armpits and in your groin.

How do you get tested?

Your healthcare provider will take samples from the sores using a swab or by doing a urine test. If your glands are swollen, your healthcare provider may also take a sample of liquid from your glands. You should also ask to be tested for other infections such as gonorrhea, syphilis, genital herpes, hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV at the same time.

How is it treated?

LGV can be cured with antibiotics. It is important that you take all of your medication, even if you start to feel better.

Your past and current partners should be told that they may have been exposed to LGV and need to be tested and treated. You do not have to tell your partner[s] yourself. They can be told that they should get tested for STIs through online anonymous postcards or through a nurse who will contact your partner[s] without telling them your name or how they might have been exposed. You and your partner[s] should not have sex until you have completed treatment and have been told that the infection is gone. Even if you are treated for this infection, you can get it again if you have sex with someone who is infected and has not been treated.

Gonorrhea

What is it?

Gonorrhea is a sexually transmitted infection caused by bacteria. Gonorrhea can cause serious health problems such as:

- infertility [not being able to have a baby] in women
- pelvic inflammatory disease
- chronic pelvic pain
- ectopic pregnancy [a pregnancy that occurs outside the uterus]

It can also cause discomfort or pain in the testicles for males. It must be treated. Gonorrhea can infect the:

- penis
- rectum [the lower part of the large intestine]
- throat
- eyes
- cervix [the opening to the uterus]

How do you get it?

You can get gonorrhea if you have unprotected oral, vaginal or anal sex with a person who already has the infection. If you are pregnant, you can pass it on to your baby during childbirth. It is important to get tested and treated for gonorrhea before childbirth to avoid passing the infection on.

How can you tell if you have it?

You can pass on gonorrhea to someone without even knowing that you have it. You may have gonorrhea and not have any signs or symptoms, which is more common for females. If you have gonorrhea and you do have symptoms, you might notice:

Female

- a change or an increase in discharge from your vagina
- bleeding between periods
- pain or bleeding during or after vaginal sex
- pain in your lower abdomen
- burning during urination

Male

- burning during urination
- discharge coming out of your penis
- burning or itching around the opening of your penis
- pain in your testicles

How do you get tested?

For both males and females, your healthcare provider will commonly ask for a urine sample. She or he may also take samples using a swab from the cervix [the opening to the uterus] if you are female, or the penis if you are male. Taking swab samples helps find out the best treatment for the type of gonorrhea you have. This is important because certain types of gonorrhea do not respond to antibiotics. Your healthcare provider may ask you to come back to do another test in a few days or weeks to make sure the infection is gone. You should ask to be tested for other STIs such as chlamydia, which can be done using the same urine or swab samples. You should also ask to be tested for syphilis, hepatitis B and HIV, which are done through a blood sample.

How is it treated?

It is becoming more and more difficult to treat gonorrhea with existing antibiotics. If you have finished your treatment for gonorrhea and still have symptoms, you should go back to your healthcare provider because you may need a different treatment. A lot of people who have gonorrhea also have chlamydia and are treated for both infections at the same time.

Your past and current partners should be told that they may have been exposed to gonorrhea and need to be tested and treated. You do not have to tell your partner[s] yourself. Your partner[s] can be told that they should get tested for STIs through online anonymous postcards or through a nurse who will contact your partner[s] without telling them your name or how they might have been exposed. You and your partner[s] should not have sex until you have completed treatment and have been told that the infection is gone. Even if you are treated for this infection, you can get it again if you have sex with someone who is infected and has not been treated.

Part of safer sex is talking to your partner. Before having sex with a new partner, make sure you talk about using condoms and getting tested for STIs.

Syphilis

What is it?

Syphilis is a sexually transmitted infection caused by bacteria. Syphilis infections are on the rise in Canada, especially among gay men and other men who have sex with men. There are different stages of syphilis infection. During the first two years of infection, a person can pass on the infection, even if they do not have any symptoms. After these two years, the person can no longer pass on the infection but still has it. You can develop serious health problems including damage to the brain, heart and other organs in the body. It must be treated.

How do you get it?

You can get syphilis if you have unprotected vaginal, anal or oral sex with a person who already has the infection. If you are pregnant and have syphilis, you can pass on the infection to your baby before it is born or during childbirth. Syphilis in babies can cause serious health problems or death.

How can you tell if you have it?

You can pass on syphilis to someone without even knowing you have it. If you do have symptoms, they may include:

- an open sore that does not hurt, called a chancre. Chancres are typically found on the genitals, anus or throat. You may not notice this sore. The sore goes away even if it is not treated but you still have the infection. The presence of a sore can increase the risk of getting or passing on other infections, such as HIV, hepatitis B and hepatitis C.

- a body rash and/or feeling like you have the flu. These symptoms will also go away even if they are not treated. You may also have swollen glands (lymph nodes). Areas where you may be able to feel swollen glands include behind your ears, under your jaw, in your armpits and in your groin.
- damage to the heart, the brain and other organs of the body if left untreated for many years.

How do you get tested?

Your healthcare provider can order a blood test for you and may also take a sample from your sores using a swab to test for genital herpes. You should also ask to be tested for other STIs such as chlamydia, gonorrhea, hepatitis B and HIV.

How is it treated?

You should be treated for syphilis as soon as you know that you have it. Syphilis can be cured with antibiotics.

Once you have been treated for syphilis, you will need to go for follow up blood tests to make sure that the medication worked and that the infection is gone. Your healthcare provider will advise you on how often you need to be tested and when you are no longer able to pass on the infection. It is important that you attend all of these scheduled visits.

Your past and current partners should be told that they may have been exposed to syphilis and need to be tested and treated. You do not have to tell your partner[s] yourself. Your partner[s] can be told that they should get tested for STIs through online anonymous postcards or through a nurse who will contact your partner[s] without telling them your name or how they might have been exposed.

Sexual consent means saying yes to sexual activity. If one of you is drunk, on drugs, or feels forced, consent has not actually been given.

Trichomoniasis

What is it?

Trichomoniasis is a sexually transmitted infection caused by a parasite. Both men and women can get trichomoniasis, but it is more commonly found in women. Trichomoniasis can cause problems in pregnancy, such as your baby being born early or weighing less than normal. It can also lead to serious health problems such as pelvic inflammatory disease. Trichomoniasis can also increase the risk of getting and passing on HIV. It must be treated.

How do you get it?

You can get trichomoniasis if you have unprotected vaginal sex with a person who already has the infection. The infection is most commonly found in the vagina in women and the urethra [the opening of the penis] in men.

How can you tell if you have it?

The majority of people who have trichomoniasis do not have any signs or symptoms. You can pass it on without even knowing that you have it.

If you have trichomoniasis and you do have symptoms, you might notice:

Female

- a change or an increase in discharge from your vagina
- vaginal itching
- pain in your lower abdomen
- pain during vaginal sex
- burning during urination

Male

- burning during urination
- discharge coming out of your penis
- burning or itching around the opening of your penis

How do you get tested?

Your healthcare provider will check for infection by taking a swab of the discharge from the vagina. If you are male, testing is not usually done. Your healthcare provider will treat you based on the signs or symptoms, if you have them. You should also ask to be tested for other STIs such as chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis, hepatitis B and HIV.

How is it treated?

Trichomoniasis can be cured with antibiotics. It is important that you take all of your medication, even if you start to feel better.

Your past and current partners should be told that they may have been exposed to trichomoniasis and need to be tested and treated. You do not have to tell your partner[s] yourself. Your partner[s] can be told that they should get tested for STIs through online anonymous postcards or through a nurse who will contact your partner[s] without telling them your name or how they might have been exposed. You and your partner[s] should not have sex until both of you have completed treatment. Even if you are treated for this infection, you can get it again if you have sex with someone who is infected and has not been treated.

Even if you do not have any signs or symptoms, STIs can still have lasting effects on your health.

Human Papillomavirus (HPV) and Anogenital Warts

What is it?

HPV is short for human papillomavirus. There are many different types of HPV which can infect different parts of the body and in different ways. Of the types that are spread through sexual contact, some can:

- cause warts on your penis, scrotum and thighs
- cause warts on the inside or outside the vagina or anus
- cause cell changes that can lead to cervical, oral or anal cancers

You can be infected with more than one type at a time.

How do you get it?

A lot of people who are sexually active have HPV or will get it during their lifetime. You can get HPV if you have oral, vaginal or anal sex with a person who already has the virus. You can also get HPV from other sexual activity involving skin to skin contact. You or your partner[s] can still spread the virus even if you do not have any symptoms.

How can you tell if you have it?

You probably will not know that you have the virus since most people do not have symptoms. Depending on the type of HPV you have, you may get warts on your genitals or anus. Warts on your genitals or anus may look like bumps which can be cauliflower-like or may look like flat white patches. Some warts are very hard to see so you may feel them before you see them. Females may also know they have HPV if the results of their Pap tests show different from normal cells of the cervix (the opening to the uterus).

HPV Vaccine

You can protect yourself against some types of HPV with a vaccine that is given by needle. There are three HPV vaccines used in Canada. All vaccines protect against the two HPV types most commonly linked to cervical and other cancers; two of the vaccines also protect against types commonly linked to anogenital warts. For information on how to get the vaccine speak to your healthcare provider.

Even if you are vaccinated against HPV, it is still possible to become infected with other types of HPV that are not included in the vaccine. It is important to use condoms for vaginal, anal and oral sex to reduce your risk of HPV infection.

How do you get tested?

Your healthcare provider can usually tell if you have anogenital warts by doing a visual inspection. Regular Pap tests are important for all women who are, or have ever been, sexually active. This test can detect abnormal cell changes in the cervix (the opening to the uterus). Some types of HPV can cause these changes. Your healthcare provider will advise you on what follow up is needed if the results of your Pap test are abnormal. You should also ask to be tested for other STIs such as chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis, hepatitis B and HIV.

How is it treated?

HPV cannot be cured but anogenital warts will usually go away without treatment. Your healthcare provider can advise you on treating anogenital warts if they do not go away on their own. The different ways that anogenital warts can be removed include:

- freezing the warts with a very cold liquid called liquid nitrogen
- applying an ointment or liquid to destroy the warts
- surgery

Symptoms of STIs can come and go, but you still may be infected and you can still pass it on. It is important to visit your healthcare provider after you finish treatment to make sure the infection is gone.

Genital Herpes

What is it?

Genital herpes is an infection caused by the herpes simplex virus [HSV]. There are two types of HSV. HSV type 1 usually causes sores around the mouth called 'cold sores' but it can also cause sores on the genitals called 'genital herpes'. HSV type 2 usually causes genital herpes.

How do you get it?

Genital herpes is generally passed on through oral, vaginal or anal sex with a partner who has the infection, whether the person has sores or not. You can also get genital herpes in other ways.

You can spread herpes to other parts of your body by touching the sores or fluids from the sores and then touching elsewhere, for example, your eyes, mouth or genitals.

If you are pregnant, you can pass the virus on to your baby during pregnancy or childbirth. Tell your healthcare provider if you have herpes. They can give you medications to reduce the risk of your baby getting herpes while you are pregnant.

How can you tell if you have it?

Many people who have herpes will not have symptoms and may not know they have it. If you have herpes symptoms, you will most likely feel itching or tingling on your skin and then develop painful blisters that turn into sores. This is called an 'outbreak'. The sores usually go away on their own. When you first have an outbreak of herpes, you may also have painful swollen glands and feel like you have the flu. Areas where you may be able to feel swollen glands include behind your ears, under your jaw, in your armpits and in your groin. These symptoms may last several weeks. Being infected with herpes increases the risk of getting HIV or passing HIV on to a partner.

Can it keep coming back?

Herpes can keep coming back. These are called recurrences. There is no way to predict if or how often recurrences will happen. Your healthcare provider can give you information on how to manage the infection, including treatment to control recurrences. Some common causes of recurrences include:

- fatigue and stress
- existing illness
- overexposure to sun
- having your period
- pregnancy

How do you get tested?

Your healthcare provider will take a swab from your sores and may also order a blood test for genital herpes. With this blood test for genital herpes your healthcare provider may also ask for a test for syphilis. You should ask to be tested for other STIs such as chlamydia, gonorrhea, LGV, syphilis, hepatitis B and HIV.

How is it treated?

Genital herpes cannot be cured but it can be managed. There are medications that may help to prevent outbreaks or reduce the length of time that an outbreak lasts. Your healthcare provider may also prescribe medication for pain if your outbreaks are severe.

What can you do if you have a herpes outbreak?

- Keep the area clean and dry.
- Avoid using ointments and creams, which can cause the infection to spread.
- Wear cotton underwear.
- Wear loose fitting clothes.
- After urinating, avoid wiping the area. Pat it dry to avoid spreading the infection.
- If it hurts when you urinate, sit in a tub of warm water to urinate or pour warm water over the area while you are urinating.

How can you prevent passing on the virus?

- If you feel a burning or tingling sensation but have no sores, do not have sex. This is a sign that you may be developing an outbreak and even without sores, you can pass on the virus.
- Do not perform oral sex when you have a cold sore.
- You should not have sex if you have an outbreak of genital herpes. Wait until several days after the sores are completely healed.
- Consistent use of condoms and dental dams can lower your risk of passing on or getting the virus.

Hepatitis B

What is it?

Hepatitis B is a virus that can infect the liver and cause it to swell. In most people who are infected, the virus will go away on its own within a 6 month period. During this time the virus can be passed on to others. Once the body fights off the infection you are protected from ever getting the virus again and cannot pass it on to others. Some people who are not able to fight off the infection on their own need to be treated and other people may have the infection for life. Hepatitis B can lead to severe liver damage and cancer of the liver.

Hepatitis B vaccine

You can protect yourself against hepatitis B by getting the vaccine, which is given through a needle. All provinces and territories in Canada give the hepatitis B vaccine to children. If you did not get the vaccine as a child, your healthcare provider may suggest that you get the vaccine as an adult, especially before you travel to other countries. If you are at risk for getting hepatitis B and have not been vaccinated, contact your healthcare provider to get the vaccine. If you have hepatitis B, your sexual partner[s] should get the vaccine.

How do you get it?

You can get hepatitis B from having unprotected vaginal, anal or oral sex with a person who already has the infection. Hepatitis B can also be passed on by sharing personal items, such as nail clippers, toothbrushes and razors that may have blood on them, or by using needles or tattoo equipment that are not properly sterilized. A pregnant woman can pass hepatitis B on to her baby during childbirth, so if you are pregnant and have hepatitis B, it is important to tell your healthcare provider.

How can you tell if you have it?

You can have hepatitis B and not have any signs or symptoms, so you may pass the virus on without knowing it.

If you have hepatitis B, you might notice these signs:

- tiredness
- pain in your abdomen
- dark urine or pale stools (poop)
- lack of appetite
- nausea
- yellowing of the skin and/or the whites of your eyes

How do you get tested?

You can get a blood test. You should also ask to be tested for other infections such as chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis, hepatitis C and HIV.

How is hepatitis B treated?

Not all people infected with hepatitis B need to be treated. Most adults will fight off the virus on their own. For those who cannot fight off the infection, hepatitis B is treated by injections or oral antiviral medications. Your healthcare provider will advise you on the best treatment option.

Some people cannot fight off the infection or do not respond to treatment and will have it for life; they are chronically infected. Those who are chronically infected with hepatitis B can pass on the virus to others all their life.

It is estimated that one in four people living with HIV infection in Canada is not aware that they are infected. Getting tested regularly and treated early greatly increase your chances of living a normal life span.

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)

What is it?

HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) is the virus that causes AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome). HIV attacks your body's immune system, leaving it unable to fight certain infections such as pneumonia. When a person has HIV and becomes sick from one or more of these infections, they develop AIDS. Someone with HIV may not develop AIDS for many years.

How do you get it?

You can get HIV by:

- having unprotected sex (vaginal, anal or oral) with a person who already has the infection
- coming in contact with infected blood or blood products
- sharing needles or other drug equipment (syringes, cookers, water, filters, etc.) with someone infected with HIV

If you have HIV, it can be passed on to your baby during pregnancy, childbirth or while breastfeeding. If you are pregnant and have HIV, you can prevent the virus from passing to your baby by taking antiretroviral medication during pregnancy. If you do have HIV and give birth, it is important to avoid breast-feeding. HIV CANNOT be passed on through casual contact such as hugging, kissing or shaking hands, and cannot be spread by mosquitoes, toilet seats or sharing food.

Because of their weakened immune system, it is easier for someone infected with HIV to become infected with another STI. Being infected with an STI that causes sores, such as herpes or syphilis, increases the risk of getting HIV or passing HIV on to a partner.

How can you tell if you have it?

You can have HIV and not know it because you may have no symptoms for many years. HIV will not show up in a blood test immediately after you have been infected. It takes a while between when a person is infected with HIV and when the virus can be found with a test. The period of time can vary depending on the type of HIV test you are given. Talk to your healthcare provider to be sure that you are not being tested too soon after being exposed to HIV. You may develop mild flu-like symptoms 2 to 4 weeks after becoming infected. Common early symptoms of HIV infection can include:

- fever
- sore throat
- headache
- muscle aches and joint pain
- swollen glands (lymph nodes)

How do you get tested?

HIV can only be tested by doing a blood test. Some sites offer anonymous testing, meaning only you will know you took the test and what the result was. Anonymous HIV testing is only offered in specific locations. Contact your local public health department to learn more about the different HIV testing options in your area. You should also ask to be tested for other infections such as chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis, genital herpes, hepatitis B and hepatitis C. It is important that you follow up for your test results and any treatment you might need.

How is it treated?

There is no cure for HIV but it can be managed with antiretroviral medications. These medications help lower the amount of virus in your body and help you fight off other infections. Evidence shows that people infected with HIV who start treatment early on can have a relatively normal life span. Treatment can also decrease the risk of passing the virus on to others.

HIV and hepatitis B or C

Hepatitis B and C are caused by viruses that infect the liver. Hepatitis B and C and HIV are passed on from one person to another in similar ways such as being in contact with infected blood. You may be infected with hepatitis B or C and HIV and not know it. If you are infected with hepatitis C, it is common to have no symptoms, but you may develop mild flu-like symptoms. These can include:

- tiredness
- pain in the abdomen
- loss of appetite
- nausea
- sore muscles and joints
- yellowing of the skin and/or whites of the eyes

Being infected with HIV and hepatitis B or C can also cause:

- liver damage
- liver cancer that happens more quickly than in people who do not have HIV

People who have hepatitis B or C and HIV are also more likely to pass on the viruses to others because they carry more of the viruses in their blood. Among people who have both HIV and hepatitis C, hepatitis C is the most common cause of death.

You can be tested for hepatitis B and C and HIV at the same time by doing a blood test. There is no combination treatment for those infected with HIV and hepatitis B or C. You will need to be treated for HIV and hepatitis B or C separately. It is important to treat all infections, but the treatments can interfere with each other. Your healthcare provider can recommend the best treatment options for you.

In Canada, some people have been criminally charged for not telling sex partners that they were infected with HIV. If you have HIV, it is important to tell your partners you have it, to get treatment and to use condoms.

Pubic Lice & Scabies

What is it?

Pubic lice are also known as “crabs” because the lice look like tiny crabs. They are usually found around the genitals in the pubic hair. They can also be found in the chest, armpits, eyelashes or facial hair. You can get pubic lice from having close contact with someone who is infected. Lice can be clear to darker brown in colour. They live by feeding on human blood and lay their eggs at the base of the hair. Their eggs are called nits and can stay alive for up to 10 days.

Scabies are tiny bugs or mites that burrow below the surface of the skin and lay eggs. You cannot see scabies but a rash and itching are common symptoms.

How do you get it?

Pubic lice and scabies are passed on from one area of the body or person to another both by sexual and non-sexual contact. An example of non-sexual contact is sharing towels or sheets with an infected person. Pubic lice and scabies can live on objects such as clothing, towels, bedding and mattresses.

How can you tell if you have it?

If you have pubic lice or scabies you will feel itchy. For pubic lice, you might see tiny light brown insects or oval, whitish eggs on the hair. Bites can cause a rash or small bluish spots on your skin. For scabies, itching occurs mainly at night and a rash may appear between your fingers, on your wrists, abdomen, ankles, on the bend of your elbows or around your genitals.

How do you get tested?

You can usually tell if you have pubic lice by finding the adult lice or eggs on the hair. If you are not sure if you have pubic lice or scabies, see your healthcare provider. You should also ask to be tested for other STIs such as chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis, hepatitis B and HIV.

How is it treated?

Pubic lice and scabies are treated with special creams, lotions or shampoos available at the drug store without a prescription. Ask the pharmacist for help and then follow the directions carefully. Your partners, friends and family may also have lice or scabies and have to be treated too. Infants, pregnant women and those who are breastfeeding need a different treatment. Speak to a pharmacist to make sure that you use a treatment that will not be harmful.

Because lice and scabies can live on clothing, towels, bedding and mattresses, you need to:

- dry clean or machine wash all of your clothing in hot water
- wash all bed linen in hot water
- store quilts and blankets for one week in sealed airtight plastic bags if you cannot wash them
- vacuum everything that has been in contact that you cannot wash (mattress, carpets, etc.)

The best way to protect against STIs is to not have sex. If you are having sex, the best way to protect yourself against STIs is to always use condoms (male or female) without the spermicide nonoxynol-9 (N-9). N-9 can increase your risk of acquiring HIV and other STIs by irritating the fragile skin within the vagina and rectum [the lower part of the large intestine].

Risk Rater

Kissing

Kissing exposes you and your partner to A FEW STIs (herpes, hepatitis B).

Safer Sex Options: avoid kissing when cuts or sores are present in or around the mouth.



Skin to skin touching

Skin to skin touching exposes you and your partner to A FEW STIs (syphilis, HPV, genital herpes, pubic lice and scabies).

Safer Sex Options: condoms (male or female), dental dam, gloves, skip it.



Oral Sex

Giving oral sex exposes you to **MANY** STIs (chlamydia, LGV, gonorrhea, syphilis, HPV, genital herpes, hepatitis B, HIV).

Getting oral sex exposes you to **MANY** STIs (chlamydia, LGV, gonorrhea, syphilis, herpes, HIV).

Safer Sex Options: condoms (male or female), dental dam, skip it.



Vaginal Sex

Vaginal sex exposes you and your partner to **ALL** STIs (chlamydia, LGV, gonorrhea, syphilis, trichomoniasis, HPV, genital herpes, hepatitis B, HIV, pubic lice and scabies).

Safer Sex Options: condoms (male or female), skip it.



Anal Sex

Anal sex exposes you and your partner to **MOST** STIs (chlamydia, LGV, gonorrhea, syphilis, HPV, genital herpes, hepatitis B, HIV, pubic lice and scabies).

Safer Sex Options: condoms (male or female) with lubricant, skip it.



Exposure to infected needles

Contact with infected needles (including syringes, tattooing or piercing equipment which are not properly sterilized) exposes you to **A FEW** STIs (hepatitis B and HIV). It can also expose you to hepatitis C.



Birth control protects against pregnancy, not STIs. Always use condoms (male or female) even if you are using birth control.

IF YOU CHOOSE TO HAVE SEX, GET TESTED

When to go?

- before you have sex with a new partner
- if you or your partner have been sexually active and have not been tested or do not know your results
- if you know your current or past partner has or had an STI
- if the condom breaks or you have sex without one
- if you or your partner have shared needles for drugs, tattooing or piercing
- if you or your partner have any STI symptoms

What Should You Know?

Whether you are male or female, if you feel more comfortable with someone else in the room during your examination, tell your healthcare provider.

Everything you discuss with your healthcare provider is confidential. They cannot discuss things with anyone unless they:

- have your permission
- are making a referral that you have agreed to
- feel you are not able to understand medical advice or the results of your decisions
- suspect abuse and they are required to report to a child protection agency

Positive test results for chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis, hepatitis B and HIV are reported to your local health department. A nurse will contact you to offer to help with telling your current and past partners that they need to be tested. Your personal information is not given out to anyone and no one will know you have the infection except you, your healthcare provider and public health nurse.

What to Expect?

Male Exam

The healthcare provider will ask you a lot of questions about your sex life. They may do some or all of the following:

- ask for a urine sample
- check the external parts of the genitals including the testicles and penis for lumps or pain
- use a cotton swab to take samples from the throat, anus, and/or urethra [the opening of the penis]
- take a blood sample

Female Exam

The healthcare provider will ask you a lot of questions about your sex life. They will also ask you to undress from the waist down and will give you a drape to cover yourself. They may do some or all of the following:

- ask for a urine sample
- check the external parts of the genitals
- use a speculum to look at the inside of the vagina and at the cervix [the opening to the uterus]
- use a cotton swab to take samples from the throat, vagina, anus and/or cervix
- do a Pap test to check for changes in the cells of the cervix
- do a bimanual exam (the healthcare provider places one or two fingers inside the vagina and their other hand on the lower abdomen in order to feel the ovaries and uterus)
- take a blood sample

If You Choose To Have Sex, Use A Condom

Use lubricated latex or polyurethane condoms.

Keep condoms nearby so that they are easy to access when you need them.

Store your condoms in a dry place away from heat or light.

Check the expiry date on the package or condom box.

Never use two condoms together.

Never use a condom more than once.

How To Use A Condom

Open Carefully

Rough tearing or long fingernails can damage the condom.

Place & Pinch

Put the condom at the end of the penis and pinch out the air in the tip.

Roll It On

Unroll the condom right down to the base of the penis.

Afterwards

Whoever is wearing the condom should pull out right after they ejaculate and while their penis is still hard. Remember to hold the base of the condom when pulling out so that it does not come off.

Throw the used condom into the garbage

Never use a condom twice.

You Can Choose Not to Have Sex

You may not be ready for sex if:

You cannot talk to your partner about STI testing or using condoms.

You do not have condoms to protect yourself.

You feel pressured.

You are not sure about it.

Your partner is not ready.

You need to get drunk or stoned to do it.

Your partner wants to get drunk or stoned to do it.

Telling your partners

If you have an STI, it is important that your sexual partner[s] be tested as well to make sure the infection does not spread further. There are many ways to tell your partner[s] that they need to get tested for STIs. In Canada, there are new programs and tools that help people tell their partners anonymously that they need to get tested. Contact your local public health department for more information.

You need to ask your healthcare provider to test you for STIs. STI tests are not part of a routine check-up and will not show up in blood or urine tests ordered for other conditions.

You matter. Your choices matter.
You decide what is right for you.

Websites to Check Out

- ▶ sexualityandu.ca
- ▶ phac-aspc.gc.ca/std-mts/
- ▶ healthycanadians.gc.ca/health-sante/sexual-sexuelle/index-eng.php

Where to go for help

If you have questions, or want to be tested, you can go to a doctor or your local public health unit.