

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES (STDs)

What is an STD?

An STD is an infection that you get from someone else by having sex. You can get an STD by having vaginal sex (penis in the vagina), anal sex (penis in the rectum), or oral sex (penis in the mouth or mouth on the vagina).

Are STDs common?

STDs are the second most common infections in the United States and Canada. (The most common is a cold.) Over a million people each year get STDs.

I have only had sex with my boyfriend. Do I have to worry about STDs?

Anyone who is having sex can get an STD. It is true that if you have had only one partner during your life, you are at less risk. But it is important to remember that you never know for sure if your partner has other partners. When you have sex with someone, it is as if you are having sex with everyone your partner has ever had sex with.

Is AIDS an STD?

AIDS is an STD, and it is very dangerous. But there are many other STDs that are much more common, and some of them are very dangerous too.

What are the most common STDs?

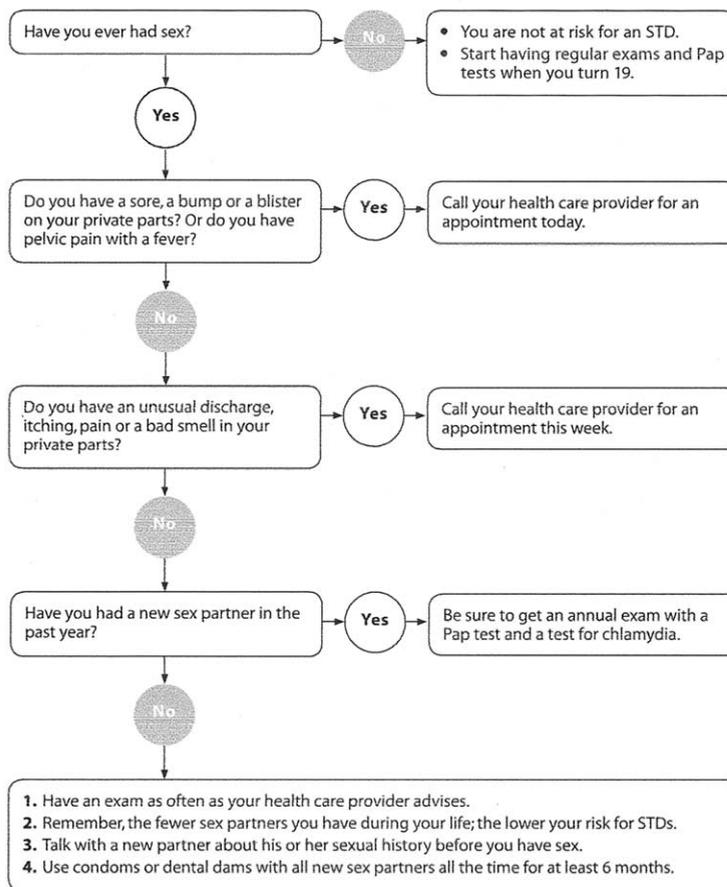
Chlamydia is the most common STD in the United States. Most women have no symptoms and do not know when they have chlamydia. If chlamydia is not treated, it may cause an infection in the pelvic organs called PID. PID can cause very bad pain during the illness and problems getting pregnant or having a normal pregnancy in the future. Chlamydia can be cured. Both you and your partner will have to take medicine.

Trichomoniasis, or “trich,” is another common STD. You may have a bad-smelling discharge, and your private parts may itch or burn. Some women have no symptoms. Trich can be cured easily if both you and your partner take medicine.

Herpes is caused by a virus. About one in every 4 adults has herpes. The first outbreak of herpes may cause painful, burning sores on your private parts as well as leg pain, headaches, and painful urination. There is no cure, but there are medicines that can prevent outbreaks and keep you more comfortable when you have an outbreak.

Warts may show up as bumpy growths on your private parts. About 4 in every 10 adults have a wart virus. For women, the biggest concern is that some kinds of warts may cause cancer of the cervix. Once you have a wart virus, you will probably have it forever, and you can give it to other people. Having an annual Pap test can help prevent problems with cancer of the cervix, and—if necessary—you can have the bumpy growths removed.

What should I do about STDs?



For More Information

American College of Nurse-Midwives
<http://www.midwife.org/focus>

The American Social Health Association
<http://www.ashastd.org>

This site provides up-to-date consumer-focused information on STDs. Brochures and newsletters are also available.

Centers for Disease Control
 CDC National STD Hotline: 1-800-227-8922 or 1-800-342-2437.

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