

partner(s).

Want to get tested? Have other questions?

- You can ask your family doctor or go to a walk-in clinic for testing
- Safer Six: go to www.safersex.ca to book an appointment
- Hassle Free Clinic: see www.hasslefreeclinic.org or call [416-922-0566](tel:416-922-0566) for more information
- Birth Control and Sexual Health Centre: visit www.birthcontrolsexualhealth.ca or call 416-789-4541 for more information
- The Special Treatment Clinic at the Women's College Hospital Bay Centre: Call 416-351-3700 or visit www.womenscollegehospital.ca/care-programs/the-bay-centre-sexual-health/ for more information
- Planned Parenthood Toronto's (PPT) Health Services offers testing for youth 13-29 years old. Call 416-961-0113 to book an appointment

For youth ages 13-29

Planned Parenthood Toronto Health Services

Offers drop-in and scheduled appointments
Call 416-961-0113 or visit www.ppt.on.ca

For youth ages 13-19

Teen Health Source

Offers anonymous and confidential sexual health information for teens by teens.
Text (647) 905-6455 , call (416) 961-3200, email teenhealthsource@ppt.on.ca
Chat online and visit www.teenhealthsource.com

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STIs series

STIs 101

STI stands for sexually transmitted infection. STIs are very common and anyone can be at risk for STIs whether you're straight or 2SLGBTQ+, or have one sexual partner or more than one sexual partner. Most STIs are treatable or at least manageable.

What are the 3 different kinds of STIs?

- **Bacterial** STIs like gonorrhea and chlamydia can be cured with medication.
- **Viral** STIs like Herpes and HIV cannot be cured but symptoms can be treated.
- **Parasite** STIs like scabies or pubic lice can be cured with skin medication.

Transmission

- You must engage in sexual activity with someone who has an STI to get an STI.
- Most STIs are transmitted when vaginal fluid, anal fluid, semen (cum) or pre-cum from someone with an STI enter/go inside your vagina*, penis*, anus or mouth.
- Some STIs, like HIV, are also transmitted when blood from someone with those STIs gets into your bloodstream through open sores, cuts, tiny tears and veins.
- Herpes and HPV are transmitted through skin to skin contact, particularly genital skin to genital skin contact.

*We know that these aren't the words everyone uses for their bodies (eg. trans folks), and support you using the language that feels best for you. **Symptoms**

- The most common symptom of all STIs is no symptom at all.
- Many STIs share common symptoms such as unusual discharge from the penis or vagina, or bumps or sores in and around the genitals.
- What's most important is to pay attention to your body. If something seems unusual to you, get it checked out at a sexual health clinic or with your clinician.

Want to reduce your risk? Here's some things to try:

- If you can, ask partners about their STI history and if they've been tested. Get tested yourself when you and/or your partner has a new sexual partner. If you have new partners often, try to get tested every 3-6 months.
- Use condoms for oral, vaginal or anal sex with a penis or dildo.
- Use gloves for vaginal or anal sex with fingers/fists.
- Use condoms cut up one side or dental dams for oral-vaginal or oral-anal sex. Using non-microwaveable plastic wrap can also reduce your risk.
- There are vaccines to prevent hepatitis B and some strains of HPV. Talk to your clinician for more information.
- Using condoms, dams and gloves is the most effective but it can also help to: use withdrawal (pull out), avoid having sex when you're menstruating, don't floss/brush your teeth just before oral sex, and avoid sex when you're really drunk or high.

Testing

- Getting tested is a good way to take care of yourself and your partners. You may want to get tested when you or your partner(s) have a new partner(s).
 - HIV, syphilis and hepatitis B are tested by taking your blood.
 - Chlamydia and gonorrhoea are tested in people with cervixes by a cervical swab or a urine test. In people with testicles, they are tested by a urine test.
 - Herpes is tested by taking a swab (a q-tip) of the sore. Low-risk HPV (genital warts) is tested by a clinician's visual examination. You have to have a visible outbreak of sores or warts to get tested.

** People with cervixes are usually designated female at birth while people with testicles are usually designated male at birth. People with testicles don't always identify as male and people with cervixes don't always identify as female

- A cervical screening (formerly pap test) can detect the

possibility of high-risk HPV (i.e. abnormal cells that could lead to cervical cancer) in people with cervixes. All people with cervixes over 25 who are sexually active (oral, vaginal or finger play) should get screened every 5 years.

- STIs have testing "windows" which means you have to wait a period of time after having sex before you can get an accurate test.
 - For chlamydia and gonorrhoea, you can get an accurate test 48 hours to 2 weeks after having sex.
 - Things that require a blood test (like syphilis and HIV) can take between 6 weeks and 3 months to show up on a test.
 - For herpes, you can only be reliably tested when you have a visible outbreak of sores.
- Be sure to ask your clinician what you are being tested for. Don't assume you have been tested for something (for example, having a cervical screening test does not mean you have been tested for STIs). If you want to be tested for something in particular, ask explicitly.
- Some STIs are reportable. This means that if you test positive, anonymous follow-up with your past partners may be required. Talk to the clinician about this before you get tested.
- Each clinic books STI testing appointments differently. Ask the clinic for details.

Treatment

- Curable STIs can usually be treated with antibiotics or topical treatments.
- If the STI you have cannot be cured, like herpes or HIV, you can get treatment to reduce your symptoms.
- If you don't get tested and treated, there can be serious consequences for your health.

Remember

- It's your right to get STI testing and to know what you are being tested for.
- Most STIs are curable or at least manageable. It's no fun to have an STI but it doesn't mean the end of your sex life if you test positive for one.
- Many people can have STIs for a long time and not know it, so it's not always easy to tell who you got the STI from. If you test positive for an STI, don't assume it's your current sexual