

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS

FACT SHEET

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are infections caused by some bacteria, viruses and other organisms. They can be passed from person to person through any form of sexual activity, including vaginal, anal and oral sex. Some STIs can be passed through skin-to-skin contact alone.

Get Checked Now

Young South Australians aged 16–30 can access an online self-screening questionnaire and a free test for Chlamydia and Gonorrhoea without seeing a doctor.

Go to www.getcheckednow.com.au

SHINESA

Chlamydia*

- Often has no symptoms.
- May cause pain when urinating, a discharge from the penis or vagina, or pain in the lower abdomen.
- May cause bleeding between periods and after sex.
- Can be serious as it may cause pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), inflammation of the testes and infertility if not treated.
- Diagnosed with a urine or swab test.
- Treated with antibiotics.

Gonorrhoea*

- May cause burning or discharge from the penis, increased vaginal discharge or severe abdominal pain, but may sometimes have no symptoms.
- Infection of the throat may follow oral sex. There are usually no symptoms, but the infection can still be transmitted.
- Infection of the rectum causes pain and anal discharge.
- Infection of the eye causes a red, painful eye.
- May also cause PID and infertility.
- Diagnosed by urine and swab tests.
- Treated with antibiotics.

HPV (Human Papilloma Virus)

- May appear as lumps (genital warts) around the vulva or in the vagina, on the penis, around or inside the anus.
- They may be painless or cause some irritation/itch.
- Visible warts can be removed by freezing them or applying a wart paint.
- HPV can be present without any visible warts.
- Some types of HPV infect the cervix and over time can cause cervical cancer. These are not the same types of HPV that cause visible genital warts.
- Vaccination can prevent some types of HPV.

Genital Herpes

- Can be transmitted through vaginal, anal and oral sex, as well as skin-to-skin contact.
- Usually appears as small painful blisters at first, which become shallow ulcers and scab over and heal up.

- First episode is usually the worst. Some people never have another episode.
- Repeat episodes are usually milder and may come on with stress or ill health.
- Anti-viral tablets can be taken to prevent repeat episodes and reduce the risk of passing the infection to others.

Mycoplasma Genitalium

- May cause discharge from the penis, discomfort on urination, abnormal vaginal discharge, and bleeding between periods and after sex.
- Untreated it can cause similar complications to chlamydia and can lead to infertility.
- Diagnosed with a urine or swab test.
- Treated with antibiotics.

Trichomonas

- Can cause a thin, yellow-green vaginal discharge which may feel irritating and have a strong smell or a discharge from the penis, but may have no symptoms at all.
- Diagnosed by a urine or swab test.
- Treated with antibiotics.

HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus)*

- Spread by blood-to-blood contact (e.g. sharing injecting equipment) or by exchange of fluids (semen, vaginal discharge, anal mucus) during sex.
- It can be passed to a baby during pregnancy, childbirth or breastfeeding (medications can significantly reduce this likelihood).
- People who come into contact with the virus may experience a flu-like illness for a short period.
- HIV will damage the immune system if untreated. Although there is not currently a cure, there are medications (called antiretrovirals) to prevent this damage, reduce the amount of virus in the blood and prolong life significantly.
- Diagnosed by a blood test.
- Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) is treatment that can be accessed within 72 hours of suspected exposure to HIV. Ring the PEP Hotline: 1800 022 226.

Syphilis*

- Primarily transmitted through direct contact with the sores or rash of an infected person. It may also be spread through direct contact between the mucous membranes of the mouth, genitals or anus.
- Initially, this infection may produce a painless sore in the mouth or genitals.
- Skin rash, patchy loss of hair, feeling generally unwell or moist lumps around the genitals and anus may develop later.
- If not treated, these symptoms may disappear and can recur within the next 2 years.
- It can be passed to a baby during pregnancy.
- Diagnosed by symptoms and a blood test.
- Treated with an antibiotic injection.

Hepatitis B*

- Spread by exchange of body fluids (blood, semen, vaginal discharge, anal mucus) during unprotected vaginal, anal or oral sex, and sharing injecting equipment, unsterilised tattooing/ piercing equipment, and sharing personal items such as toothbrushes, razor blades and nail clippers.
- Someone with Hepatitis B may not develop symptoms for many years but can still pass the infection to others.
- It can be passed to a baby during pregnancy.
- If untreated it can lead to liver failure or liver cancer.
- Diagnosed by a blood test.
- There's a vaccination to protect against Hepatitis B and treatment is available.
- Household contacts should be vaccinated.
- People who have chronic Hepatitis B but do not have any liver damage do not need treatment; however, they do need close monitoring.

Hepatitis A

- Spread by small amounts of infected faeces entering the mouth (e.g. licking around the anal area or another part of the body which has had contact with the anal area, such as fingers), but can also spread by contaminated food and water.
- Diagnosed by symptoms and a blood test.
- Can affect the liver and cause symptoms such as tiredness, fever, nausea, joint or stomach pain, dark urine, jaundice (yellow skin and eyes) or loss of appetite.
- There's a vaccination to protect against Hepatitis A.
- It is recommended that people who have anal/oral sex be vaccinated to prevent them from being infected with Hepatitis A.

Hepatitis C

- Affects the liver and may cause serious damage.
- Sexual transmission is rare, although the risk of infection increases when HIV or other STIs are present. It is spread by blood, so sharing needles, tattooing or body piercing with used needles/equipment, and people with blood transfusions prior to 1990 may be at risk.
- Diagnosed by a blood test.
- Anyone with Hepatitis C can be treated. No vaccination is available.

* Notifiable STIs

Some STIs are notifiable (Chlamydia, Gonorrhoea, Syphilis, HIV and Hepatitis B). This means that the Communicable Disease Control Branch (SA Health) will be notified by the doctor or nurse ordering the test if the result is positive. Anyone diagnosed with these infections will be asked to provide their sexual contacts over the last 3–6 months (the time period depends on the infection and its incubation period). These individuals can be contacted (notified) anonymously to explain the risk of infection and the need for testing and treatment as appropriate.

Prevention of STIs

- Come prepared! Use condoms.
- Practise safer sex. Make sure you and your partner/s have had a recent STI check.
- Talk about any past infections with your sexual partner/s.
- Don't share injecting equipment or anything that comes into contact with blood (e.g. tattoo equipment).
- When there are sores, lumps or ulcers around the mouth or genital area, or unusual discharge, avoid vaginal, anal and oral sex or any activity involving skin contact with the affected area.

Non STIs

Some non-sexually transmitted infections can also cause a discharge. These include Bacterial Vaginosis and Candida (Thrush). Although these conditions do not always require treatment you should see a health professional if you are concerned about any changes in your discharge.

When to consult a doctor

You should see a doctor when symptoms of an STI are first noticed or if a sexual partner is diagnosed with an STI or has symptoms of an STI. Even if you have no symptoms, you can get an STI check at the doctor or sexual health clinic. Routine STI screening is recommended for any new sexual contact, or if your partner has had a new sexual contact.

CONTACT
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Clinic & Counselling Appointments and General Enquiries

Tel 1300 794 584

Clinic locations and times are available at www.shinesa.org.au

Sexual Healthline

Tel 1300 883 793 **Country callers (toll free)** 1800 188 171

Talk to a sexual health nurse about any sexual health issue.

Available 9am – 12.30pm, Monday – Friday

National Relay Service

www.relayservice.gov.au

133 677 (TTY/Voice) 1300 555 727 (Speak & Listen) 0423 677 767 (SMS Relay)