

## Getting Tested

Getting tested for STI's is free, confidential and widely available. You get tested at your GP surgery, GUM clinic or sexual health clinic.

Most STI's are easily treated by antibiotics or anti-viral medication.

When you go to get tested, the doctor or nurse will ask you a series of questions and then tell you which tests they think you will need. These tests might involve:

- a urine (pee) sample
- a blood sample
- swabs from the vagina, which you can usually do yourself
- an examination of your genitals
- a blood test (if testing for HIV or syphilis)

The results from some of the tests, and treatment if necessary, will be available the same day. Other results may take up to two weeks to get back. You will be asked how you'd prefer to get these results.

The doctor or nurse will be able to give you further advice about safe sex and sexual health.

This sexually transmitted infections leaflet is part of a wider range of health and wellbeing information from DISC.

Ask your Support Worker if there are any more health and wellbeing issues that you would like to receive information about.



Health and Wellbeing



# Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI's)



## What are STI's?

Sexually transmitted infections, usually called STI's, are infections that are passed from person to person when having unprotected sex or genital contact.

You can get an STI by having unprotected vaginal sex, anal sex or oral sex. Unprotected sex is when you do not use a condom when you have sex.

To greatly reduce your chances of getting an STI, you should always practice safer sex and use a condom correctly every time you have sex.

Both men and women can get STI's, and the number of people being diagnosed with an STI is rising. In 2012, nearly half a million in England people were diagnosed with a sexually transmitted infection.

Not all STI's have symptoms, so you may not even know you have one. If you have had unprotected sex, it is advisable to visit your GP, genito-urinary medicine (GUM) clinic, or sexual health clinic to get tested. Tests are free and check for a number of different infections.



## Types of Infections

- Genital warts—small lumps on the genitals and/ or around the anus. You can have these and not know.
- Chlamydia—the most common STI in the UK. You can have Chlamydia without knowing as it often has no symptoms. Left untreated it can cause complications, but is easily treated with antibiotics.
- Genital Herpes—stays with you for life once caught. There are not always symptoms, but can range from mild sores to blisters on the genitals. Can be treated with anti-viral medication.
- Gonorrhoea—symptoms include discharge from the penis or vagina. Can cause complications if left untreated. Clears with antibiotics.
- HIV—attacks the immune system and develops into AIDS when the body is unable to defend against bacteria or germs. Treatment does not clear the virus from the body.
- Hepatitis C—a virus which attacks the liver. Treatment is difficult and the infection can lead to liver cirrhosis or cancer.
- Syphilis—spreads to the bloodstream if left untreated and cause other health problems. Treated with antibiotics.

## Are You at Risk?

1. *If you didn't know for sure that a partner didn't have an STI, should you have safer sex?* a) Yes b) No c) Sometimes

2. *How can an STI be passed on?* a) Through vaginal, anal or oral sex b) Anal sex only c) Oral sex only

3. *If you have oral sex, should you use a condom or dental dam?* a) Yes b) No c) Sometimes

4. *What should you do if you have any unusual itching, soreness or discharge from your penis, vagina or anus?* a) Go to a GUM/ sexual health clinic or your GP b) Phone a sexual health advice line c) Leave it

5. *Which of the following will protect you against pregnancy and STI's?* a) Condoms b) Contraceptive patch c) Contraceptive implant

6. *Do STI's always have symptoms?* a) Sometimes b) Always c) Never

If you answered mostly A's: well done, you know how to protect yourself against STI's.

Mostly B's: you know a lot about protecting yourself, but could be taking some risks. You may want to have an STI test.

Mostly C's: you are putting yourself at risk from STI's. You should contact your GP, GUM or sexual health clinic.