

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW!

Even if you consider yourself to be conservative and cautious when it comes to sexual behaviour, you may be at higher risk for STIs than you think. Even if you only have one sexual partner at a time (i.e., you are monogamous), your risk for STIs can be quite high.

Most cases of STIs have no symptoms so it's easy for people to bring STIs with them into a new relationship. These infections can have some serious implications for your health and well-being so this is something you should definitely pay attention to.

MORE COMMON THAN YOU THINK

STIs such as Human Papillomavirus (HPV), genital herpes (HSV-2) and Chlamydia are very common.

For example:

- Research indicates that up to 40% of sexually active young women may be infected with an STI by age 19¹
- In the first six months of 2010, more than 45,000 cases of chlamydia were diagnosed and reported in Canada. Because most cases have no symptoms that actual number of infections is much higher²
- Up to 10.5% of people will have been infected with genital herpes by age 30³

1. Forhan, S.E., et al. (2009). Prevalence of sexually transmitted infections among female adolescents aged 14 to 19 in the United States. *Pediatrics*, 124, 1505-1512.

2. Public Health Agency of Canada. (2010). Reported cases of notifiable STI from January 1 to June 30, 2009 and January 1 to June 30, 2010 and corresponding annual rates for the years 2009 and 2010. <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/std-mts/stdcases-casmts/index-eng.php#gonorr-rates-taux>.

3. CDC. (2010). Seroprevalence of herpes simplex virus type 2 among persons aged 14-49 years, United States, 2005-2008. *MMWR Weekly*, 59, (15), 456-459.

4. McKay, A. (2007). The effectiveness of latex condoms for prevention of STI/HIV. *The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality*, 16, 57-61.

5. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d.). Unintended pregnancy prevention. <http://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/unintendedpregnancy/contraception.htm>.

DO I NEED TO GO FOR STI TESTING?

If one or more of the statements below describes you, then you should go to a doctor or walk-in clinic to find out about appropriate STI testing:

- You have been informed by a current or past sexual partner that they have been diagnosed with an STI
- You have possible symptoms of an STI (eg. sores/bumps on your genitals, discharge from your penis or vagina)
- You have had more than one or have a new sexual partner
- You have been engaging in unprotected sex (eg. penile/vaginal or penile/anal intercourse) without a condom

For more information visit

www.weknowsex.ca

AM I AT RISK?

Preventing Pregnancy and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)



Most people with an infection don't know they have it.

Even if you have only had a couple of sexual partners in your lifetime, there is a high probability that you have had sex with someone who has an STI.

WHAT YOU CAN'T SEE CAN STILL HURT YOU

Most people with an STI will not have the symptoms. For those who do have symptoms, they can include things like wart-like growths, pain or burning while urinating, rashes, sores, blisters, itchiness, unusual discharge from the penis or vagina and pain during sex. If you think that you might be infected with an STI, see a doctor or healthcare provider immediately. Delaying treatment could cause the infection to get worse.



Health Outcomes/ Implications of STIs

STIs, particularly if they are undiagnosed and not treated can cause serious damage to your health.

For example:

- Undiagnosed Chlamydia infection can cause pelvic inflammatory disease, infertility and chronic pelvic pain
- If undiagnosed, HPV infection can lead to, in rare cases, cervical cancer
- Genital herpes can lead to outbreaks of painful blisters or sores on the genital area
- HIV/AIDS seriously damages the immune system leading to multiple health complications including death

PROTECTING YOURSELF FROM STIs

Get Smart- Get Tested!

If you're sexually active, getting tested for STIs is definitely a good idea, especially if you have had sex without a condom. Getting tested for some of the common STIs is easy. The good news is that most colleges and universities have student health services where you can get tested for STIs like Chlamydia and HIV. There are also public health clinics in most communities where you can get STI testing.



CONDOMS: A SMART AND EASY WAY TO REDUCE RISK

Consistently using latex or polyurethane condoms is highly effective in significantly reducing your risk of transmitting or becoming infected with an STI.

Laboratory tests have shown that condoms block particles the size of HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus), HPV (Human Papillomavirus), HSV (Herpes Simplex Virus), Chlamydia, and gonorrhea and studies comparing people who use condoms consistently with people who don't use condoms during sex have found that consistent condom use reduces the risk of contracting such infections⁴. Also, when used properly, condoms are effective in preventing unwanted pregnancy⁵.