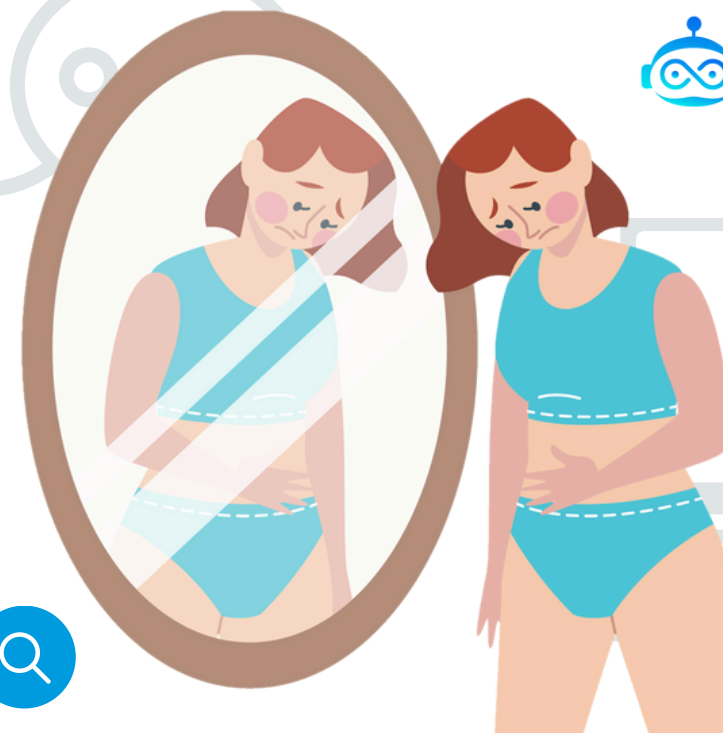


SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS

Should I feel ashamed of having an STI?

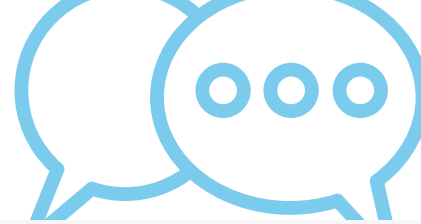
KEY WORDS sexually transmitted infections | stigma | support | education 

It's totally normal to feel a bit embarrassed or uncomfortable about having a sexually transmitted infection (STI), especially if you don't know anyone else that has or had one before. But it's important to understand that anyone can catch an STI (sometimes even when they've been very careful) and most people choose not to speak about it because they think of it as a very private topic.

Let's break down the misconceptions and false ideas that society has around STIs to help you sort your feelings out:

Fact #1: STIs don't care about your background or who you are.

This means that anyone can be at risk, regardless of their intelligence or social status. It's important for everyone to protect themselves and get tested regularly.



Fact #2: Having an STI doesn't mean you're reckless or promiscuous.

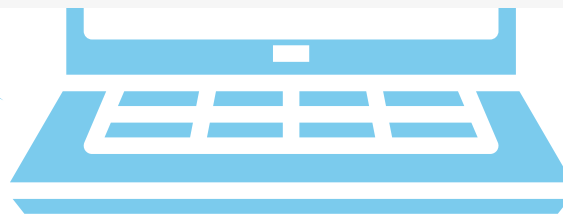
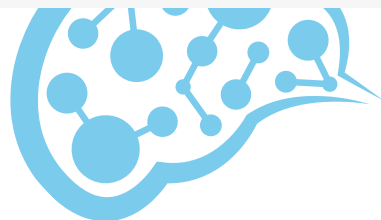
Having an STI does not reflect your character, goodness, or worth. It just means you're human and have been living life.

Fact #3: STIs are often treatable or can be managed.

Most STIs are just infections, like any other. Many can be treated with antibiotics, but require that you don't put off treatment for too long. Besides that, advancements in medicine have made it so that those STIs that are more serious like HIV can be managed today so that they don't ruin your quality of life.

Fact #4: Practicing safe sex or abstaining from penetrative sex does not always mean you can't get an STI.

This is because some STIs are spread through skin-to-skin contact. That's why it's a good idea to talk to your partner(s) about your sexual health before any sexual or physical contact occurs, and take other precautions to stay safe from non-sexual transmissions. For a detailed overview of how STIs can be contracted, we have just the topic for you.



As you can see – STIs happen and are actually common, you're not alone! But feeling embarrassed or even ashamed of having an STI can be difficult to deal with, even if you know all of the facts. What can actually help you deal with difficult emotions is choosing to **be open and honest with people you trust**. There is nothing wrong with you, and your network of friends, family and even your doctor can help you see that. If you are met with judgment or ignorance, it is merely a lack of education and understanding on the part of the other person. And if you ever feel judged by your healthcare provider in particular, remember that you have the option to find a new one.

In conclusion, STIs can be unexpected events in our life, but they are here to challenge us – not define us. You can move forward by accepting yourself and the situation, being open with your doctor and those you trust and learning from the experience. You got this!



**SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED
INFECTIONS**

