

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS

What are the different types of STIs?

KEY WORDS sexually transmitted infections | bacterial infections | healthcare | contraception 

When we talk about STIs, we are simply referring to infections that are primarily passed from one person to another through sexual contact. They can affect anyone, no matter of their age, gender, or sexual orientation, which makes it crucial for all of us to have a basic understanding of what they are and how they can impact us. STIs can lead to various symptoms, complications, and health issues if left untreated. Let's have a closer look at the different types of STIs.

I. Bacterial STIs:

Let's start with the bacterial STIs. As the name says, they are caused by bacteria and can usually be treated and cured with antibiotics (injections or pills). However, if left untreated, they can lead to serious health problems. There are various types of them, for example:

- **Chlamydia:** This one knows very well how to hide itself. Often showing no symptoms, chlamydia can cause pain during urination and unusual discharge from the genitals if it progresses.

- **Gonorrhea:** Similar to chlamydia in its stealthiness, gonorrhea can give you discomfort during urination and discharge.
- **Syphilis:** This one can be a bit of a shapeshifter, starting with painless sores and potentially moving on to rash stages. Without treatment, it can affect the heart, brain, and other organs, proving very dangerous.

2. Viral STIs

Viral STIs are caused by viruses. While some can be managed or controlled, some nasty ones exist which cannot be cured completely. Examples include:

- **Human Papillomavirus (HPV):** HPV is super common and usually clears up on its own. But some types can cause genital warts or even cancer. Good news is, vaccines exist today for the serious strains.
- **Herpes Simplex Virus (HSV):** HSV shows up as cold sores (HSV-1) or genital sores (HSV-2). There's no cure, but medication can help manage outbreaks.
- **Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV):** HIV messes with your immune system and can lead to the final stage of a weak immune system (AIDS) if not treated. There's no cure yet, but treatments have gotten better at keeping the virus in check.
- **Hepatitis B and C:** These can be problematic for your liver. Hepatitis B is more common, but you can get vaccinated against it. Hepatitis C can lurk without symptoms until it damages your liver.

3. Parasitic STIs

Next up are parasitic STIs. These little bugs are treated with specific medications and the types include:

- **Trichomoniasis:** This one's often sneaky with no symptoms, but when they do show up, it's itching, discharge, or burning when you pee. Luckily, it's treatable.

- **Pubic lice (Crabs):** These are tiny insects that live in pubic hair and cause itching. They are treated with over-the-counter lotions or shampoos.

4. Fungal STIs

The final category are fungal STIs. They're not as common, but can be contracted due to:

- taking antibiotics
- wearing tight underwear
- using perfumed products on your genitals

These infections make you super itchy and uncomfortable. They're treatable with antifungal medications.

Anyone can get an STI, so it's important to practice safe sex, like using condoms and talking openly with your partners about sexual health, and go to a doctor if you notice any unusual changes in your genitals. Regular check-ups and screenings at the doctor's office also give you a chance to get tested for STIs even if you're not showing any symptoms. Remember, many STIs can lurk without any signs, so getting checked regularly is key to catching them early.

Most importantly, **having an STI is nothing to be ashamed of**. It's just a health issue like any other. Get treated, talk about it, and help break the stigma. We've prepared a detailed infographic about the topic if you'd like to learn more here. Stay informed, stay safe, and don't hesitate to talk to a healthcare provider if you need help or advice.

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