

Q&A - Sexual Transmitted Diseases (STDs)

● What is an **STD**?

STD stands for Sexually Transmitted Disease. These diseases are sometimes known as Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs). An STD is any disease that is passed by body fluids during vaginal, anal or oral sex. These fluids include semen (cum), vaginal fluids (the wetness in the vagina) and blood. A latex condom acts as a barrier to prevent these fluids from being exchanged. But, an STD including HPV can also be spread by contact with the skin of the genital or anal area if infection is present. It can also be spread by contact inside of the mouth.

● Am I at risk for **STD**?

If you are sexually active you may be at risk for STDs. Remember, when you have sex with someone, you are exposed to everyone they've had sex with before you.

● What are some common **STD**?

Some common STDs are HIV infection (AIDS), syphilis, gonorrhea, chlamydia, trichomoniasis, human papilloma virus infection (HPV), genital herpes and hepatitis B. While most STDs can be treated, many cannot be cured. They stay with you for your whole life.

● What are some common symptoms of **STD**?

Some STDs have no symptoms at all. Others appear and then disappear, while the infection remains. So you cannot always rely on symptoms to show that you've become infected. Some common symptoms to be aware of are: pain or burning while urinating, rashes, sores, blisters, itchiness, unusual discharge from the penis or vagina and pain during sex. If you think you might be infected with an STD, see a doctor or healthcare provider ASAP. Delaying treatment can cause the infection to get worse!

● What can I do to protect myself from **STD**?

The only way to be 100% safe from STDs and HIV/AIDS is to abstain from all sexual activities. If you are going to have sex, the correct and consistent use of latex condoms can help protect you from many STDs including HIV/AIDS. Latex condoms also help reduce the risk of unplanned pregnancy. You can't tell if someone is infected by looking at them. Even if you're very close – your partner may not know they have an STD –or they may be too embarrassed to tell you. It's up to you to protect yourself.