

Health Information for Students Regarding STDs

Student Health Service offers STD testing and treatment. You will receive confidential care and treatment from our experienced providers. If you'd like to talk with a provider or wish to be tested, please call (414) 288-7184 to schedule an appointment. Ask for up-to-date pricing when you call. Please ask to speak with a nurse if you have questions.

Frequently Asked Questions:

1. What is an STD?

STD stands for Sexually Transmitted Disease. It represents several types of diseases that can be passed from one person to another through sexual contact. An STD is a disease that you can get or give someone by having sex (oral, vaginal, anal) or through other intimate contact with a partner. STI (sexually transmitted infection) and VD (venereal disease) mean the same thing as STD.

2. How do I know if I have an STD?

If you are sexually active tell your doctor and get regular check-ups. Many STDs have no symptoms. When symptoms do occur, men and women may experience symptoms differently. Common STD symptoms for women may include: unusual vaginal discharge, sores, bumps, burning with urination, pelvic pain, vaginal itching, and vaginal odor. Common symptoms for men may include: discharge from the penis, burning with urination, sores, bumps, redness, and testicular pain.

3. How do you get tested?

STD testing includes a pelvic/physical examination and may include urine testing, blood testing, and/or a vaginal/cervical sample. STD testing for men includes an examination of the genitals and may include urine testing and/or blood testing.

4. I've never had intercourse. Could I still get an STD?

Yes! STDs such as Herpes, Genital Warts, Pubic Lice (Crabs), and Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) can be transmitted by any contact involving finger-genital contact, genital-genital contact, and oral-genital contact. They can be transmitted from partner to partner with or without visible signs or symptoms. Many people pass an STD to a partner without knowing it.

5. Can condoms prevent all STDs?

No. Using condoms decreases your risk of getting HIV, Chlamydia, Gonorrhea, and Trichomoniasis. Since condoms don't cover all skin surfaces they are less likely to protect you from diseases spread by skin-to-skin contact (e.g. Herpes, Genital Warts).

6. Can you catch STDs by sitting on a public toilet or sharing towels?

No. STDs are spread through direct contact with an infected person. Occasionally, Pubic Lice (Crabs) can be passed through contact with infected items like clothes, sheets, or towels.

7. Is cervical cancer an STD?

Yes. Virtually all cases of Cervical Cancer are caused by the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) which is sexually transmitted. Less than 5% of women who are infected with HPV will develop Cervical Dysplasia (abnormal cells) or Cervical Cancer. It is not possible to identify which women will develop these abnormalities. Routine cervical screening (i.e. Pap smear) is recommended. Pap smears are recommended to start at age 21, and then every two years for women ages 21-29.

8. Can my boyfriend get screened for HPV (Human Papilloma Virus)?

No. There is no test available for men.

9. Can you get genital herpes from someone who never had genital ulcers?

Yes. 20% of sexually active Americans are infected with the Herpes Simplex II Virus (HSV II) which causes most cases of Genital Herpes. Many infected individuals never develop symptoms of the disease and may unknowingly pass the infection to their sexual partner who may develop genital ulcers. HSV II can be transmitted during oral sex leading to oral ulcers. Herpes Simplex Virus I is the virus associated with cold sores, and this too can be transmitted to the genital area during oral sex causing genital ulcers.

10. How do I know if I have Herpes; and if I have it, which strain it is?

The best way to determine if you have Herpes is by having a culture (swab) of an ulcer during time of breakout. There is also a blood test available to tell if you have HSV I or HSV II. However, this test cannot tell how long you've had it or where your ulcers/sores will be if you get a break out. If you have concerns regarding Herpes, you should speak to a healthcare provider to help you determine which tests would be helpful.

11. Can STDs make you infertile?

Yes. 10% of women infected with Gonorrhea or Chlamydia will develop Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID), an infection of the uterus, fallopian tubes, or ovaries. PID can lead to scarring which can lead to infertility.

12. If I had unprotected sex on Saturday, can I come to Student Health Service Monday for STD testing?

Yes. However, it can take several weeks from the time of exposure and infection until symptoms occur or tests turn positive. Regardless of your initial results, you should be re-tested in 6 weeks, even if you have no symptoms.

13. Are all STDs curable?

No. Some are not curable. Even those that are curable with antibiotics can have complications if not treated early.

14. If I had a pap smear would my doctor tell me if I had an STD?

No. A pap smear is looking for pre-cancerous or cancerous cells. Talk to your medical provider about STD testing at the time of your pap smear.

15. If I got tested for HIV, was I tested for all STDs?

No. Each STD has its own test. Talk to your medical provider about what tests you may need.

16. I've just been diagnosed with an STD. Does this mean that my partner has lied or cheated on me?

No. Not everyone will have symptoms of an STD even if they are infected. A partner can pass a disease without even knowing they have it, and unfortunately, you may be the one who ends up experiencing symptoms. Also, you may have received your STD from a previous partner years ago and are just now seeing the signs of the disease.

17. How can I tell if my partner has an STD?

Ask. Talk to your partner before having any sexual contact. Discuss individual risk factors. Risk factors include: having had several sexual partners, sharing needles, or having an STD in the past. **And most important of all, protect yourself!**

18. Is STD testing confidential?

Yes. We need your written consent to release any medical information to anyone including parents and guardians.

19. How often should I be tested for STDs?

Your medical provider may recommend additional STD tests based on your sexual history, signs, symptoms, etc. Sexually active women under the age of 25 and sexually active men or women, who are not in a long-term, mutually monogamous relationship, should have yearly Chlamydia testing, yearly HIV testing, and bi-annual pap smears (women).

20. How do I keep from getting an STD?

- a. Practice abstinence by avoiding sexual contact of any type (oral, anal, vaginal). Some STDs, like herpes, can be spread without having intercourse.
- b. Be faithful. Make sure that you and your partner are tested. Have sex with each other and no one else.
- c. Use condoms correctly and every time you have any type of sexual contact, even if intercourse doesn't take place. Use a condom from the very start to the very end of each sexual act. Use a latex or polyurethane condom (if latex allergy is present).
- d. Birth control methods (pills, patches, shots, implants, diaphragms) will not protect you against STDs.
- e. Talk with your partner about STDs and using condoms before any sexual acts occur. It's up to you to make sure you are protected. Don't leave it up to your partner.
- f. Talk frankly with your medical provider about your sexual history. Don't be embarrassed - medical providers are here to help you; and the more information that you can provide to them, the better care you will receive.
- g. Have yearly STD testing especially if you have changed partners.
- h. Avoid drugs and alcohol. These substances can lead to risky sexual behavior, such as not using a condom.