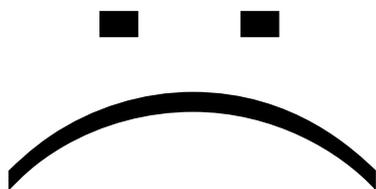


Worried about a love bug?



Advice and facts about
sexually transmitted infections

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Sexual encounter

For most people, having sex is a positive part of life. Sexual relations are an expression of desire and confirmation. Obviously, having sex doesn't just mean inserting the penis into the vagina, rectum or mouth. Sex can be much more than vaginal intercourse, anal sex or oral sex. Masturbating together is having sex. Using sex toys on your own or together with someone else is also having sex. Each sexual encounter entails a risk for sexually transmitted infection.

What causes infections?

Sexually transmitted infections are caused by bacteria and viruses.

- Chlamydia (bacteria)
- Gonorrhoea (bacteria)
- Syphilis (bacteria)
- HIV (virus)
- Genital warts/HPV (virus)
- Herpes (virus)
- Hepatitis (virus)

Bacteria and viruses that cause gonorrhoea, herpes, Chlamydia, genital warts (HPV) and syphilis are often found on the body's mucous membranes when there is an infection. Mucous membranes are the thin skin in the urethra, mouth, throat, vagina and rectum. The viruses that cause genital warts, herpes and syphilis can also be found on the skin around the genitals. Bacteria and viruses can also be found in sperm, vaginal secretions, pus, saliva and blood. HIV and hepatitis viruses are examples of this.

An infection caused by bacteria can be cured. An infection caused by a virus cannot usually be cured by treatment with drugs. However, the symptoms can be relieved and the progress of the infection can be slowed down. If you don't get treatment for an ongoing infection, there may be complications that will affect your health in various ways.

A condom is a good form of protection

You yourself can reduce the risk of you or your sexual partner getting a sexually transmitted infection by using a condom. You should use a condom in all types of sex where the penis is inserted into the vagina, rectum or mouth. The condom has to stay in place throughout intercourse without sliding off or tearing. In oral sex you can also use a dental dam as protection. The correct and consistent use of protection considerably reduces the risk of bacteria and viruses being passed on.

Get tested!

Several infections we describe here are listed in the Swedish Communicable Diseases and Prevention Act. This means that testing and treatment is usually free. You can also get advice special support if you need it. By getting yourself tested you can find out whether you have an infection. In most cases you can receive treatment and get rid of the infection or the symptoms.

More information:

Student Health Care, Jönköping University

www.hj.se/studenthealthcare

The National Board of Health and Welfare

www.socialstyrelsen.se/english

Chlamydia

Chlamydia is caused by a bacteria that generally attaches itself to the mucous membrane of the urethra. It can also occur in the rectum or throat in both men and women. In women, the bacteria is also found in the vagina or the cervix.

Chlamydia is usually spread through unprotected vaginal intercourse and through unprotected anal sex. The bacteria can also be passed on through oral sex without a condom. Although this is not common, Chlamydia can also be transmitted through mutual masturbation as a result of direct contact with an infected mucous membrane. Your fingers only have to come into contact with the infected mucous membrane for them to then infect a healthy mucous membrane. You can also get Chlamydia by sharing sex toys with someone.

Symptoms of Chlamydia

It's very common for Chlamydia to not show any symptoms. This means you can infect your sexual partner or be infected by your sexual partner without either of you being aware of it. If you do get symptoms, you won't notice any problems until a few days to some weeks after getting the infection. Chlamydia mainly results in itching in the urethra and pain when urinating. There may be a discharge from the urethra due to inflammation. You may also experience pains in your joints. Women can also suffer bleeding between menstrual cycles and bleeding during intercourse. Vaginal discharge may also occur. In men, the scrotum may swell and become painful. Chlamydia may also infect the eyes and cause symptoms there.

Important points about Chlamydia

You can get Chlamydia several times. To be sure that you are healthy after completing your treatment and that you haven't become infected again, you can get tested again after a month. If you have several partners, it's a good idea to get tested again after another six months. Untreated or repeated Chlamydia infections can cause complications. The risk of complications decreases if you are treated quickly after being infected. In women the bacteria can spread to the womb and the fallopian tubes. Men can have problems with the epididymis or prostate. You can also get inflammation of the joints. Untreated Chlamydia can affect your ability to have children as it can make you sterile. Another sexually transmitted infection, *Mycoplasma genitalium*, can cause symptoms similar to those of Chlamydia.

HIV

HIV is caused by a virus and is an abbreviation of Human Immunodeficiency Virus. HIV is transmitted through unprotected vaginal intercourse and anal sex. The virus can also be passed on through unprotected oral sex, especially if sperm gets into your mouth and the mucous membrane in the mouth is damaged. The risk of getting HIV is greater if you have unprotected anal intercourse, irrespective of whether you are hetero-, homo- or bisexual. You can also get HIV via blood if you use drugs and share syringes and needles with someone who is living with the virus.

Symptoms of HIV

You will not necessarily notice any signs that you have contracted HIV. Some people get a sore throat, a temperature or swollen lymph glands and sometimes have rashes on their body. These symptoms appear about one to four weeks after being infected. This is called the primary infection. The symptoms can be similar to those of flu and usually disappear after about a week. However, the infection continues to silently weaken the body's immune defenses.

Getting tested for HIV

Testing for HIV is free of charge. You get tested for HIV by giving a blood sample and you have the option of getting tested anonymously. If you suspect that you have HIV, you must get tested. This is the only way of finding out your HIV status. The earliest that the test can detect the infection in the blood is four to eight weeks after infection. To obtain a reliable result you should get tested three months after the suspected transmission of the virus. All your sexual partners must be tested if your test is positive.

Treatment

There is no cure for HIV, but you can be treated with antiretroviral drugs. These drugs slow down the progress of the infection and enable your immune defenses to keep other diseases at bay. Moreover, effective medical treatment generally makes you less infectious. If you are HIV-positive you can infect others for the rest of your life.

Get tested if

- You have had unprotected sex.
- You suspect that you may be infected.
- You have symptoms that suggest you are carrying an infection.
- Your sexual partner has an infection.
- The condom you used split and you suspect that you are infected.

If you find out that you have a sexually transmitted infection, your partner will also have to be tested.

If you have had an infection, you can get tested again six months after completion of the treatment. This enables you to be more certain that you are healthy and haven't become infected again.

Test for Chlamydia

Student Health Care, Jönköping University

Drop in Monday-Thursday at 10:00 am -12:00 pm

Or make an appointment at phone number 036-10 10 67

www.hj.se/studenthealthcare

Tests for Chlamydia and HIV

If you are 25 years old or younger:

The Youth Clinic

Visiting address: S. Strandgatan 9, Jönköping

Please make an appointment at phone number 036-32 98 80

If you are older than 25 years old

The STI (Sexually Transmitted Infections) practice at the county Hospital Ryhov

Drop in Monday 4:30 pm – 5:00 pm

Or make an appointment at phone number 036-32 21 35