

# Lesson

# 6

## Healthy behavior

Preventing sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

## Health terms

chlamydia

condom

discharge

genital warts

gonorrhea

groin

hepatitis

herpes

HPV (human papillomavirus)

NGU (nongonococcal urethritis)

polyurethane

rectum

semen

sexually transmitted infection (STI)

symptom

syphilis

trichomoniasis

vaginal fluid

## Student Journal

# STI Facts

## Journal entry

List as many different diseases as you can think of.

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**A sexually transmitted infection (STI)**  
is an infection that is passed from one person  
to another during sex.

## How does a person get an STI?

- Through infected semen, blood or vaginal fluids

Examples of STIs that are passed in this way:

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- By skin-to-skin contact or genital touching:

Examples of STIs that are passed in this way:

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# STI Facts

**STI stands for sexually transmitted infection. STIs are infections that can be passed from one person to another during sex. STIs are serious. They can cause many health problems.**

## What are some STIs?

Common STIs include:

- chlamydia (kla-MID-ee-uh)
- gonorrhea (gone-uh-REE-ah)
- HPV (human papillomavirus)—a virus that can cause genital warts
- herpes (HER-pees)
- hepatitis B (hep-uh-TIE-tis)
- HIV (human immunodeficiency virus)—the virus that causes AIDS
- NGU (nongonococcal urethritis)
- syphilis (SIF-uh-liss)
- trichomoniasis (TRICK-uh-mo-NIE-uh-sis), or “trich”

## How can people know if they have an STI?

You can't tell by looking if someone has an STI. **Many people can have an STI with no signs or symptoms.** They look and feel fine. But they can still pass the STI to a sexual partner.

People who have symptoms may notice:

- sores, bumps or blisters near the genitals, mouth or rectum
- a burning or painful feeling when they urinate (pee) or a need to urinate often
- itching around their genitals
- swelling or redness in the throat
- flu-like feelings, with fever, chills and aches
- swelling in the groin area
- a drip or discharge from the penis or an unusual discharge from the vagina

People with a vagina often don't have any symptoms. Those who do may also notice:

- pain in the pelvic area—the area between the belly button and genitals
- burning or itching around the vagina
- bleeding from the vagina that is not a regular period

## Which STIs can be cured?

Many STIs can be cured. Some cannot. But all STIs can and must be treated.

Chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis, NGU and trich can be cured with antibiotics. People are given pills or a shot. They have to be sure to take all of their medicine, even if they start to feel better.

Some STIs can't be cured. The person can be treated, but the STI virus may stay in the person's body. Herpes, HIV and sometimes HPV and hepatitis B are STIs that can be treated but not cured. Sometimes the STI symptoms come back. These STIs can also be passed to someone else, even if the person with the STI no longer has symptoms.

*(continued)*

# STI Facts *(continued)*

## What are the health consequences?

If STIs aren't treated, they can lead to many health problems:

- **More serious infections.** If STIs such as chlamydia and gonorrhea aren't treated and cured, they can cause damage to a person's reproductive organs. This can make it hard or even impossible for the person to have children.
- **Damage to other parts of the body.** For example, untreated hepatitis B can lead to lasting liver damage, including cancer. HIV can damage the body's immune system and make the person unable to fight off other diseases or infections. Gonorrhea can cause heart trouble, skin diseases and blindness. Syphilis can cause heart disease, brain damage, blindness and death. Some types of HPV can lead to cancer.
- **Uncomfortable symptoms.** Itching and burning are painful and hard to deal with. Sores and blisters can be messy and hurt.

Having an STI can make a person more likely to get another one. For example, a person who has gonorrhea is more at risk for HIV.

## What are other consequences?

STIs can cause social and emotional consequences too:

- If a person has an STI, they must tell any sexual partners. This can be difficult or embarrassing.
- The person's partner(s) must be checked and treated for the STI too.
- People who have an STI such as herpes or HIV that can't be cured will have to tell anyone they have sex with, for the rest of their lives, about it. Their partners have a right to know about the risk.

- Worrying about STI can take up a lot of time and energy. People may wonder if they have an STI with no symptoms. They may worry about the lasting consequences if they don't get treated.
- STIs affect relationships. If people get an STI from a partner, they may not be able to trust that partner again. If they give an STI to someone, that person may stop trusting them.
- People may have regrets about getting an STI and wish they had been more careful.

## How can people protect themselves from STI?

The surest way to avoid STI is sexual abstinence. If people don't have sex, they can't get an STI.

Experts recommend that all young people get the HPV vaccine to help protect them from the types of HPV that can cause genital warts or cancer. The vaccine works best if it is given before a person becomes sexually active.

People who are sexually active need to:

- Talk to their partners about STI and get tested before having sex.
- Use latex or polyurethane condoms every time they have sex.
- Know the signs of STI.
- Get regular STI checkups.

**If you think you might have an STI, see a health care provider right away.** Don't wait or let embarrassment stop you. Most local health departments have free STI clinics where you can be tested and treated. They will keep your information private and teach you how to avoid STI in the future.

# What I Learned About STIs

**Directions:** Use what you learned today to answer the questions.

① Describe 3 symptoms of STIs.

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② Can you tell by looking whether a person has an STI? Why or why not?

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③ How does a person get an STI?

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④ Describe 4 negative consequences of STIs.

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⑤ List 2 STIs that can be treated and cured:

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List 2 STIs that can be treated but not cured:

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⑥ What is the safest, surest way to avoid STIs and why?

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### Self-Check

- I described 3 signs or symptoms of STIs.
- I explained why you can or cannot tell by looking whether a person has an STI.
- I explained how a person gets an STI.
- I described 4 negative consequences of STIs.
- I listed 2 STIs that can be treated and cured.
- I listed 2 STIs that can be treated but not cured.
- I explained the safest, surest way to avoid STIs and why.

