

Safe Sex.

No Regrets.



What are Sexually Transmissible

Infections (STIs)?

Sexually Transmissible Infections (STIs) are infections that are transmitted from one person to another during sexual contact. Some STIs are caused by bacteria and some are caused by viruses. Because of the variety of STIs, symptoms and treatment can be very different.

This booklet is about the most common STIs in Australia and how to reduce your risk of getting an STI by practising safe sex.

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What is Safe Sex?

Safe Sex is using condoms (or using dams) and a water-based lubricant when engaging in sexual contact. Practising safe sex will help to prevent you getting an STI and/or experiencing an unplanned pregnancy.

You can also protect yourself from STIs by:

- Not having sex
- Having sex with only one monogamous partner
- Reducing the number of people you have sex with.

You can't tell whether someone has an STI based on how they look. A lot of the time the person themselves aren't even aware that they have an STI. Therefore, it is always important to protect yourself during any sexual activity.

If you want to practise safe sex, there are a number of things you can do to make sure you stick to that decision. Firstly, know how to use a condom and make sure you always have a supply of condoms available, including when you travel overseas.

How to Use a Condom

1. Check the expiry date on the condom packet.
2. Open the packet but be careful not to tear the condom!
3. Squeeze the air out of the tip of the condom.
4. Keep hold of the tip of the condom and roll it all the way down to the base of the penis.
5. Use plenty of water-based lubricant on the outside of the condom. Do not use oil based lubricants such as Vaseline and massage oils as these weaken the condom and increase the risk of breakage.
6. Before withdrawing, hold the base of the condom, so it doesn't slip off.
7. Carefully wrap the used condom in a tissue and throw in the bin. Don't flush it down the toilet!



Other hints and tips:

- You do not need to be 18 years old to purchase condoms.
- You can get condoms and lubricants from chemists, supermarkets, convenience stores and vending machines in the toilets of pubs and clubs – you do not need a prescription!
- Store condoms in a cool place – it is not a good idea to leave condoms in your car or wallet for long periods of time.
- You can only use a condom once so make sure you have more than one available!
- Do not put on two condoms for extra protection – they may tear because of friction. If you want extra safety buy extra strength condoms.
- Condoms come in different widths, lengths, thicknesses and textures – experiment to find the right one for you! Non-latex condoms are available for people with latex allergy.
- Water-based lubes also come in different varieties including sensation lubes (warming, tingle and ice), fragranced, glow in the dark and flavoured. You can use these to spice things up!

- A drop of water-based lubricant in the tip of the condom will promote sensitivity – give it a go!
- If a condom breaks or comes off, visit your GP, nearest sexual health clinic or contact one of the services listed on the back of this booklet.
- Dams are thin rubber latex sheets that are used when performing oral/vaginal or oral/anal sex. When used properly they may help reduce the risk of getting an STI. Your local sexual health clinic can tell you where you can get dams.
- When you drink alcohol or take drugs your decision making can be impaired. What seems like a good idea at the time might look a little differently the next morning. If you are going to have sex, make sure you use protection.

Negotiating Safe Sex

Be clear and firm about the reasons why you want to practise safe sex and arm yourself with responses such as:

'Condoms protect both of us...'

'If it's not on... it's not on.'

'Here, let me put the condom on for you...'

'Don't worry, I have some right here in my drawer...'

'Using a condom will protect us from unplanned pregnancy and STIs...'

Your sexual partner should respect your decision to practise safe sex – if they don't you need to consider how much they value you and your beliefs.

Safe Sex and Contraception

If you are going to have sex and do not want to get pregnant you need to use a contraceptive. Male and female condoms are the only contraceptives that protect you against both pregnancy and against STIs.

The Pill, Spermicide, NuvaRing, Implanon, Depo-Provera injection and IDUs do not protect you from contracting STIs or BBVs (Blood Borne Viruses).

It is recommended that you use a male or female condom **as well as** one of the contraceptive methods mentioned above to provide you with protection against unplanned pregnancy and STIs. You can contact your GP or one of the services listed at the back of this booklet for more information.

Sex & the Law

In Western Australia it is illegal to have sex with anyone under 16 years of age. Generally, sex between people 16 and over is legal when both people have voluntarily agreed to it.

It is illegal to:

- Have sex with someone between the ages of 16 and 18 if you are in a position of authority over them, such as a teacher or an employer
- Have any sexual contact with a person without getting the other person's consent
- To record in any way, including photographing or videotaping, any activity you have engaged in without the other person's consent

If a person is tricked, threatened, drugged or intoxicated, they cannot consent to sex, regardless of their age. Even if consent was given at the time, this consent is not valid. Providing someone with alcohol with the intent of subduing them in order to have sex with them is illegal and punishable by imprisonment. If a person does not physically resist sexual advances, this does not necessarily mean consent. If a person changes their mind about having sex **AT ANY STAGE**, the other person must respect that.

Choice is the important thing!

Are you at risk?

The table below lists some of the many sexual practices people perform according to the risk of getting or passing on an STI.

Safe

- Kissing
- Tickling your partner
- Mutual masturbation
- Kissing your partner's nipples
- Body rubbing
- Oral sex using a condom or dam
- Vaginal or anal intercourse using a condom and water-based lubricant every time

Moderate Risk

- Oral sex without a condom or dam

Unsafe

- Using oil-based lubricants (such as Vaseline or massage oils) with condoms
- Having vaginal or anal intercourse without a condom but pulling out before ejaculation
- Ejaculating into your partner's open eyes
- Having anal or vaginal intercourse without a condom
- Sharing sex toys without using a condom
- Having sex with multiple partners without changing the condom between partners

Chlamydia

Chlamydia, caused by a bacterial infection, is one of the most common STIs in Australia, especially in young people 15-25 years of age. If not treated, chlamydia can cause infertility in both men and women.

Transmission

Chlamydia is easily transmitted by vaginal, anal or oral sex without a condom or dam. Chlamydia can infect the vagina, rectum and throat without any symptoms at all.

Signs and Symptoms

Chlamydia, is often called a 'silent infection' as people may have it and not know. However they are still able to transmit it. Women may notice their vaginal discharge is different or have bleeding in between their periods or pain during sex. Men may have pain when peeing and a discharge from their penis.

Testing

Testing for chlamydia is easy – most of the time you only need to give a urine sample! However, the doctor may request to take a vaginal, anal or throat swab.

Treatment

Chlamydia is easily cured with a single dose of antibiotics. Your sexual partners will also need treatment so they don't give it back to you or transmit it on to someone else. Make an appointment with your local doctor or sexual health clinic to get tested.

Prevention

Chlamydia can be prevented by practising safe sex (*pages 3-10*).

If not treated, chlamydia can lead to pelvic inflammatory disease, which can cause infertility in both men and women.

An infected mother can transmit chlamydia to her baby during birth, causing serious lung and eye infections.

For more information on chlamydia go to;
www.couldihaveit.com.au

Gonorrhoea

Gonorrhoea is caused by a bacteria. If left untreated, gonorrhoea can lead to infertility in both men and women.

Transmission

Gonorrhoea is transmitted through unprotected vaginal, anal or oral sex. It can infect the vagina, rectum and throat without any symptoms at all.

Signs and Symptoms

Often people infected with gonorrhoea experience no symptoms. Some women may experience unusual vaginal discharge, pain when passing urine, lower belly pain or pain during vaginal sex. Men may get a yellow discharge from their penis or a burning sensation when peeing. In rare instances, gonorrhoea can infect eyes.

Testing

Testing for gonorrhoea is easy – it only involves a urine test and/or vaginal, anal or throat swabs.

Treatment

Gonorrhoea is easily cured with a single dose of antibiotics. Your sexual partners will also need treatment so they don't give it back to you or transmit it on to someone else. Make an appointment with your local doctor or sexual health clinic to get tested.

Prevention

Gonorrhoea can be prevented by practising safe sex (see pages 3-10).

If left untreated gonorrhoea can lead to infertility in both men and women.

An infected mother can pass gonorrhoea on to her baby during birth, which can cause blindness.

Genital Herpes

Genital herpes is a very common STI caused by a virus. Genital herpes are like cold sores around the mouth, except the sores are in the genital area.

Transmission

Genital herpes is passed on by skin-to-skin contact with someone who has the infection. This often happens during vaginal, anal or oral sex. However, it can also be transmitted without sexual intercourse because many sexual practices involve genital-to-genital or skin-to-skin contact. Herpes is most easily transmitted when there are visible blisters or sores, but it can also be transmitted when there are no sores or other symptoms.

Both cold sores and genital herpes can be transferred from the mouth to the genital area and visa versa. They can also be transmitted on to other areas of the body such as the buttocks, hands and eyes.

Signs and Symptoms

Herpes affects people in different ways. Some people may get painful blisters or ulcers and have flu-like symptoms when they first get infected. Others may only get a red patch with tiny breaks in the genital skin. Some people carry the virus but don't display any symptoms ever.

Once a person has herpes they may get recurring outbreaks of the symptoms. Some people may get symptoms before the blisters/ulcers appear like tingling, nerve pain, itching or a general feeling of ill health or irritability.

Testing

Swabs from the infected area are taken. It is best if the blister or sore is less than four days old.

Treatment

There are medications that can control herpes but there is no cure. The medication should be taken the first time someone gets herpes to stop the possibility of complications. If a person has many outbreaks they may need to take the medication continuously for a period of time to stop the outbreaks occurring. There are also creams to help soothe the irritation of outbreaks. Make an appointment with your doctor or local sexual health clinic for further information.

Prevention

Even though condoms don't protect you 100%, they certainly help to reduce your chance of contracting genital herpes. Avoid vaginal, oral and anal sex while there are herpes sores or blisters present.

The symptoms of herpes can be controlled but the virus can not be cured – you will have it for the rest of your life.

Condoms don't protect you 100% but they do reduce your chances of contracting genital herpes. If you think you may have genital herpes make an appointment with your local doctor or sexual health clinic for a test.

Genital Warts (HPV)

Genital warts are caused by the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV). This virus can lead to cervical cancer and anal cancer. Genital warts can be present anywhere on or in the genitals or anus and sometimes they can be in the mouth or throat.

Transmission

HPV and genital warts are very common in Australia. HPV is passed on by direct skin-to-skin contact during sexual activity. HPV does not always have visible symptoms. You may be carrying the virus and could pass it on to your partner/s.

Signs and Symptoms

Genital warts are like the warts you get on the rest of the body. They look like lumps, are sometimes itchy but not usually painful. If you find anything unusual, consult your local doctor or sexual health clinic.

Treatment

There are many treatments available that will get rid of the warts. They are available through prescription from your local doctor or sexual health clinic. Do not use lotions made for other types of warts.

Prevention

Even though condoms don't protect you 100%, they certainly help to reduce your chances of catching genital warts. Women should also have regular pap smears (every two years) unless advised otherwise by a doctor.

A vaccination called Gardasil is now readily available to prevent certain strains of HPV linked to the development of some cancers including cervical, anal and penile cancer lesions. For more information about the vaccination or to discuss your eligibility, contact your local health care professional or GP.

Condoms reduce the chance of infection, but only from/ to the area of skin protected by the condom.

Treatments are available from your local doctor or sexual health clinic.

Do not treat genital warts yourself with body wart paint from the chemist.

Hepatitis B

Hepatitis B is a virus that affects the liver. It is different to hepatitis A and hepatitis C in terms of how it is transmitted and treated.

Transmission

The virus can be found in semen, vaginal fluids, saliva and especially blood. It can be transmitted through unprotected vaginal, anal or oral sex; sharing injecting drug equipment or any blood-contaminated sharps equipment; by sharing toothbrushes, razors, tattooing or piercing equipment; or from a mother to her baby at childbirth.

Signs and Symptoms

Some people have no symptoms. Others develop symptoms within three months including mild flu or nausea, vomiting, stomach pains, fever, loss of appetite, tiredness, joint pain and yellowing of the skin and whites of the eyes.

Testing

Hepatitis B can be detected by a blood test. The test usually gives a negative results for up to 3 months after the initial infection, so even if your result is negative, you will need to be retested in 3 months time.

Treatment

With treatment, most adults recover completely from hepatitis B. There is also a vaccine that can protect you from contracting hepatitis B - see your local doctor or sexual health clinic to get this.

Prevention

Hepatitis B is one of the few STIs that can be prevented by a vaccine. Ask your local doctor or sexual health clinic about the vaccine.

If you are concerned you have come into contact with someone who has hepatitis B in the last two weeks, you may be able to have a special treatment that may stop you getting the disease. See your local doctor or sexual health clinic.

*The best ways to avoid catching hepatitis B is to get vaccinated, use condoms and to never share injecting drug equipment. Ask your local doctor or sexual health clinic for more information or contact Hepatitis WA;
www.hepatitiswa.com.au*

HIV

HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) is a virus that causes damage to the body's immune system. Over time HIV can develop into AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome).

Transmission

HIV is only infectious in blood, semen (including pre-cum), vaginal fluids, menstrual fluid and breast milk. A person can become infected with HIV if one of these body fluids contain HIV gets into their body and passes into their bloodstream. HIV is usually transmitted through unprotected vaginal, anal or oral sex, by sharing injecting drug equipment and through the use of non-sterile tattooing and body piercing equipment. Mothers with HIV can also pass the virus to their baby during pregnancy, at childbirth or by breast feeding.

Signs and Symptoms

Most people with HIV look and feel perfectly healthy. Some people experience flu-like symptoms in the weeks following infection, however many people have no symptoms at all. People with HIV can feel and look healthy for many years, however as the virus continues to attack the immune system people develop various signs of the infection. These include: constant tiredness, swollen glands, rapid weight loss, night sweats, memory loss and diarrhoea.

When the immune system is badly depleted conditions including certain pneumonias, brain infections, skin cancers, parasites, severe fungal infections and others can occur – this stage of the infection is called AIDS.

Testing

HIV is detected by a blood test. The test usually gives a negative result for up to 3 months after the initial infection, so even if your result is negative, you will need to be tested again in 3 months time.

Treatment

There is no cure or vaccine for HIV. Someone with HIV remains infected for life. However treatments for HIV have improved dramatically and as a result many people with HIV are able to remain well and live healthy lives for many years.

Prevention

HIV can be prevented by practising safe sex (pages 3-10). Do not share injecting drug equipment, piercing or tattooing equipment with anyone.

If you are exposed to HIV there is a special treatment that can help prevent infection if it is accessed within 72 hours. Call the PEP line on 1300 767 161 or see a doctor immediately.

HIV is infectious in blood, semen, pre-cum, vaginal fluids, menstrual fluid and breast milk.

Using condoms reduces your risk of getting HIV. Do not share any injecting drug equipment, piercing or tattooing equipment.

For more information about HIV contact the WA AIDS Council www.waids.com AIDSline 9482 0044

Pubic Lice and Scabies

Both pubic lice (crabs) and scabies are tiny mites. The scabies mites burrow into the skin whereas pubic lice hang on to the hair.

Transmission

You can contract these mites by close physical contact including sexual contact and contact with underclothing, towels or bedding of an infected person. There does not need to be sexual penetration for these to be passed on.

Signs and Symptoms

The most common sign of infection is intense itching and a rash in the genital area. You may also be able to see eggs or lice. Scabies can also occur on other parts of the body such as between the fingers and toes and you can often see trails where the mites are burrowing under the skin.

Testing

Scabies and pubic lice can be detected just by looking at the area.

Treatment

Scabies and pubic lice can be effectively treated with special creams and shampoos. See your local chemist, doctor or sexual health clinic. At the time of treatment you will also need to wash all bed linen, towels and clothing in hot water and dry them well. Sexual partners will need to be treated and household contacts will need to check themselves and get treated if necessary.

Prevention

Condoms do not provide protection from pubic lice and scabies. However avoiding sexual activity with casual partners and/or reducing your number of sexual partners will reduce your risk of coming into contact with them.

You can effectively get rid of scabies and pubic lice by using special creams and shampoos.

Make sure your sexual partners, and possibly your household contacts, are treated too.

Syphilis

Syphilis is a bacterial infection that can infect the penis, vagina, throat and anus. It can then spread to different parts of the body through the blood stream. If left untreated syphilis can cause damage to the nerves, bones, skin, eyes and brain.

Transmission

You can get syphilis by having unprotected vaginal, anal or oral sex or by having direct contact with open sores. It can also be passed from a mother to her unborn baby whilst in the womb.

Signs and Symptoms

The symptoms of syphilis may be so mild that you don't notice them or you may not have any symptoms at all. For some people a painless sore may appear on the mouth and/or around the genital area. In later stages a person may have a rash on their upper body, soles of their feet and hands.

Testing

Syphilis is detected by a blood test, and swabs if there are sores present.

Treatment

Syphilis is treated with antibiotics, normally injected.

Prevention

Syphilis can be prevented by practising safe sex (pages 3-10). Avoid contact with any sores and rashes, especially if having oral sex.

If left untreated syphilis can cause damage to the nerves, bones, skin, eyes and brain.

If left untreated during pregnancy, the baby can die or be born deformed and unwell.

Trichomoniasis (Trich)

Trichomoniasis is a genital infection caused by a parasite. It prefers to live in the vagina, but can also live in the urethra (inside the penis) in men.

Transmission

Trich is passed on through unprotected sex. As it is contained in vaginal fluids, it can be transmitted via fingers, hands or shared sex toys.

Signs and Symptoms

Many women don't know they have it. The most common symptom is a light yellow-green vaginal discharge which may cause irritation. Most men don't have any symptoms but some notice a slight discharge from the urethra and/or a burning pain when peeing.

Testing

Swabs.

Treatment

Trich is easily cured with a single dose of antibiotics. Your sexual partners will also need treatment so they don't give it back to you or transmit it on to someone else. Make an appointment with your local doctor or sexual health clinic to get tested.

Prevention

Trich can be prevented by practising safe sex (*see pages 3-10*)

What do I do if I have had unsafe sex?

If you have had sex without a condom or dam, or the condom has broken, or think you could have an STI:

- See a doctor immediately. If you have symptoms don't just wait and hope they'll go away. Even if they do, the infection could still be there. You can contact any of the services on the back of this booklet for confidential STI testing.
- Don't have vaginal, oral or anal sex without a condom until you have seen a doctor and have been told you don't have an STI.
- If you know the person from whom you caught the STI, or think you may have passed an STI to someone else, discuss this with your doctor. You may need to name these people so they can also be tested and treated for STIs. This is called contact tracing and it helps to stop the spread of infection in the community. Contact tracing is confidential and, if done with the help of a health professional, your identity is protected.

Many STIs don't have symptoms. If you have had unsafe sex, see a doctor and get tested!

Contacts

For more information visit www.safesexnoregrets.com.au or contact one of the following.

Metro

WA AIDS Council

www.waids.com

AIDSLine: (08) 9482 0044

FPWA Sexual Health Services

www.fpwa.org.au

Sexual Health Helpline:

9227 6178 (metro)

1800 198 205 (regional)

Quarry Health Centre

(for under 25s)

7 Quarry Street, Fremantle

(08) 9430 4544

Royal Perth Hospital Sexual

Health Clinic

Ainslie House, Murray St, Perth

(08) 9224 2178

Fremantle Hospital Sexual

Health Clinic

B2 Clinic – Alma Street,

Fremantle

(08) 9431 2149

Perth Medical Centre

713 Hay Street, Perth

(08) 9481 4342

Derbarl Yerrigan

(Aboriginal Health Service)

156 Wittnoom Street,

East Perth

(08) 9421 3888

Regional

Carnarvon

(08) 9941 0560

Geraldton

(08) 9956 1950

Kalgoorlie/Boulder

(08) 9080 8200

South Hedland

(08) 9140 2377

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WA AIDS Council

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www.safesexnoregrets.com.au