



*the*

**BLACK & WHITE**

**GUIDE**

*to*

**SEXUALLY**

**TRANSMITTED**

**INFECTIONS**



*Funded by the  
Health Service  
Executive –  
Eastern Region*



*Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive*

*Health Service Executive – Eastern Region*

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*Further copies of this book are available from the Women's Health Unit, Health Service Executive – Eastern Region, 3rd Floor, Park House, North Circular Road, Dublin 7. Tel: 01-882 3420.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Sex is a very normal and healthy part of our lives. This booklet is not meant to stop you enjoying sex, but to help you avoid the kinds of infections that can make sex unhealthy.

Sexually transmitted infections are common.

Remember any sexually active person may be exposed to a sexually transmitted infection.

If you suspect you have an infection get it checked out as soon as possible.

Most treatments are simple and painless and you do not have to be admitted to hospital.

Treatment in a sexually transmitted infection (STI) Clinic is **confidential, non judgmental and free.**

The staff in the clinic are trained to treat sexually transmitted infections in an understanding and helpful way so there is no need for you to feel embarrassed.

If you are pregnant and think you may have picked up a sexually transmitted infection it is particularly important to get it checked out and treated as soon as possible.



### Where can I get help?

- St. James's Hospital. Tel: 01-4162315.
- Mater Hospital. Tel: 01-8032063.



### What happens at an STI Clinic?

- Treatment is **non judgmental**.
- **Medicines** are supplied **directly** by the clinic **free** of charge.
- **Confidential** - your notes do not form part of the general hospital records.
- Referral - if you wish you can attend the clinic without a referral letter from your doctor. **Phone for an appointment.**



### Other Useful Telephone Numbers:

- Dublin AIDS Alliance. Tel: 01-8733799.
- Irish Family Planning Association. Tel: 01-8069444.
- Irish College of General Practitioners. Tel: 01-6763705.
- The Well Woman Centre. Tel: 01-8749243.
- Drugs/HIV Helpline. Tel: 1800 459 459.

### Question:

Which of these people is most likely to have an STI?



**Answer:** All of them . . . (or none!)

## CHLAMYDIA

**How Do I Get It** ● From sexual contact with an infected partner.

### Symptoms

Women:

- Most women have no symptoms.
- There may be a vaginal discharge.
- It may cause recurrent cystitis.
- It can cause irregular bleeding on the pill or unusual bleeding between periods.
- Can cause abdominal pain.
- The infection may spread through the vagina and womb into the pelvis causing inflammatory disease which can lead to problems with future fertility.

Men:

- May have no symptoms or have a discharge from the penis or pain passing urine.

### Diagnosis

- Examination of vagina or penis.
- Vaginal swab.
- Urine tests for men.

### Treatment

- Antibiotics.
- The infection must be treated as if it is left untreated it can lead to problems with future fertility.

### STI Clinic

- Referral to an STI Clinic necessary.
- Full screening for other sexually transmitted infections needed.
- Partners must be treated.

## GENITAL HERPES

**How Do I Get It** ● From sexual contact including oral sex with an infected partner.

### Symptoms

Women:

- Painful sores in the genital area.
- May recur but first attack usually the most painful.

Men:

- May have no symptoms or may have sores on penis.

### Diagnosis

- Examination of the vulva or penis.
- Swabs of the area.

### Treatment

- Tablets for pain.
- Local anaesthetic cream.
- Anti viral treatment can sometimes be used.

### STI Clinic

- **Urgent** referral is necessary for immediate treatment and to identify the exact type of virus present.
- Full screening for other sexually transmitted infections needed.
- Partners should also be screened.

## GENITAL WARTS

**How Do I Get It** ● Sexual contact with an infected partner.

### Symptoms

- Women:
- Painless lumps in the genital area.
  - May not appear for some time.
  - They increase in number if untreated.
- Men:
- May have flat warts on the penis.

**Diagnosis** ● Examination of the genital area.

**Treatment**

- Application of a cream or lotion.
- By freezing.

**STI Clinic**

- Referral is necessary for treatment and full screening for other sexually transmitted infections.
- It is recommended that all women have regular cervical smear tests. The virus that causes genital warts can affect the cells at the neck of the womb. Therefore it is important to discuss with your Doctor how often you need to have a smear test done.
- Partners need to be screened and treated if necessary.

## GONORRHOEA

**How Do I Get It** ● From sexual contact or oral sex with an infected partner.

### Symptoms

- Women:
- May have no symptoms.
  - It can cause pelvic inflammatory disease which can affect future fertility.
- Men:
- A discharge from the penis.
  - Pain passing urine.

**Diagnosis**

- Examination of the vagina or the penis.
- Swabs of the vagina, penis, anus or throat.

**Treatment** ● Antibiotics.

**STI Clinic**

- Referral to an STI Clinic necessary. Ring for **urgent** appointment.
- Full screening for other sexually transmitted infections needed.
- Partners must be treated.

## HEPATITIS B

- How Do I Get It**
- It can be spread through sexual contact or an exchange of body fluids such as blood, saliva or urine with an infected person.
  - Sharing needles.

### Symptoms

- Men & Women:
- There may be no symptoms.
  - There may be flu like symptoms, tiredness and pain in the joints.
  - Jaundice with yellowing of the skin and darkening of the urine may occur.

### Diagnosis

- By blood tests.

### Treatment

- There is no specific medical treatment.
- A healthy diet and rest may help recovery.
- A vaccine to prevent Hepatitis B is available.

### STI Clinic

- Referral to an STI Clinic is needed for diagnosis and screening for other sexually transmitted infections.
- Partners should also be screened.

## HIV and AIDS

- How Do I Get It**
- From vaginal or anal sexual intercourse or any exchange of body fluids with an infected partner.
  - Untreated blood products from an infected source.
  - Sharing needles.
  - Mothers may pass the infection to their babies.

### Symptoms

- Men & Women:
- There may be no symptoms.
  - There may be a flu like illness some weeks after the initial infection.
  - If untreated HIV progresses to AIDS. There may then be a variety of symptoms including pneumonia, skin lesions, night sweats and severe weight loss.

### Diagnosis

- By blood tests.

### Treatment

- There is no cure for HIV at present but a cocktail of drugs may keep the virus under control.

### STI Clinic

- Referral to an STI Clinic is essential for diagnosis and treatment.
- Full screening for other sexually transmitted infections needed.
- Partners should also be screened.



## **NON-SPECIFIC URETHRITIS (N.S.U.)**

**How Do I Get It** ● It is an inflammation of the urethra (the tube from the bladder to the outside through which urine flows). It occurs in men and is caused by sexual contact with an infected person.

**Symptoms**

- May have no symptoms.
- Burning or discomfort passing urine.
- Redness or swelling at the opening at the tip of the penis.
- If not treated the infection can spread to the testicles and prostate gland causing pain or swelling.
- If left untreated may affect male fertility.

**Diagnosis**

- Urine test.
- Swabs from the penis.

**Treatment**

- Antibiotics.

**STI Clinic**

- Referral to an STI Clinic needed for diagnosis and treatment.
- Full screening for other sexually transmitted infections needed.
- Partners should also be screened.

## **PUBIC LICE (CRABS)**

**How Do I Get It** ● By body contact with a person who has pubic lice.

### **Symptoms**

**Men & Women:**

- Severe itch in the pubic area.
- The eggs of the lice may be seen as black specks on the pubic hair.
- Lice may be seen crawling around on the pubic area.

**Diagnosis**

- By examination of the pubic hair and skin.

**Treatment**

- A specific type of lotion or cream.

**STI Clinic**

- Referral to an STI Clinic is advised.
- Full screening for other sexually transmitted infections needed.
- Partners should be treated.

## SYPHILIS

- How Do I Get It**
- From contact with an infected partner. Can be spread by kissing, oral, vaginal and anal sex.
  - May be passed from an infected mother to her baby.

- Symptoms**
- Men & Women:
- 50% of infected people show no symptoms.
  - **First Stage** - A sore on the penis, genitals, vulva, mouth or anal region which can be painless. Usually heals by itself in about a month.
  - **Second Stage** - A few weeks later a general rash which may involve the palms of the hands and the soles of the feet.
  - **Third Stage** - After this Syphilis may cause no symptoms for many years but if left untreated it can still damage your health.

- Diagnosis**
- Examining material from the infected sores.
  - A blood test.

- Treatment**
- Antibiotics.

- STI Clinic**
- Referral to an STI Clinic is essential.
  - Full screening for other sexually transmitted infections needed.
  - Partners must be screened and treated if necessary.

## TRICHOMONAS

- How Do I Get It**
- From sexual contact with an infected partner.

### Symptoms

- Women:
- Itchy discharge which may be smelly.
  - Discharge may be greenish colour.
- Men:
- May have no symptoms at all.
  - May have soreness or itch on penis.

### Diagnosis

- Examination of vagina or penis.
- Swabs of the area.
- Sometimes found on a smear test.

### Treatment

- Tablets by mouth.

### STI Clinic

- Referral to an STI Clinic necessary.
- Full screening for other sexually transmitted infections needed.
- Partners must be treated.

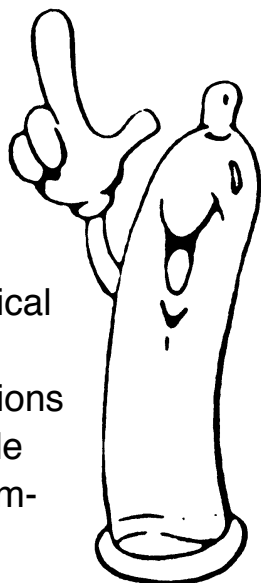
## SAFER SEX

- Not all vaginal discharges are caused by a sexually transmitted infection.
- Not all sexually transmitted infections cause symptoms.
- Alcohol or drugs may lower your ability to make responsible decisions about your sexual behaviour and the correct use of condoms.
- Remember condoms, when used properly, provide the most reliable means of protection against sexually transmitted infections.
- Always use a good quality condom when having sex.
- Do not share sex toys or vibrators.
- Do not share needles if you are injecting drugs. Remember any exchange of body fluids can be dangerous.
- Be careful with whom you have sex. Unsafe sex can endanger your health.

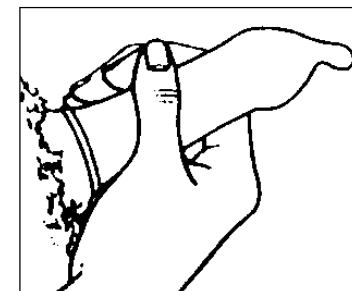
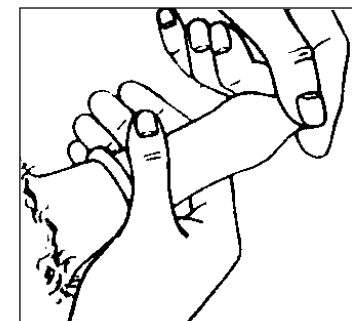
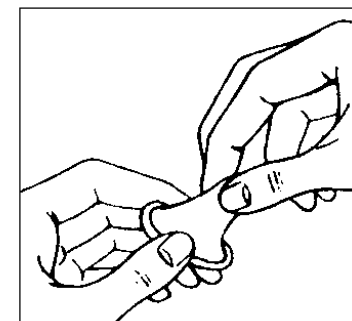


## HOW DO YOU USE A MALE CONDOM?

If you get your male condoms from your medical centre or a family planning clinic, you may be told how to use them or you can ask. Instructions are also given on the pack or in a leaflet inside the pack. The man can put the condom on himself, or his partner can do it.

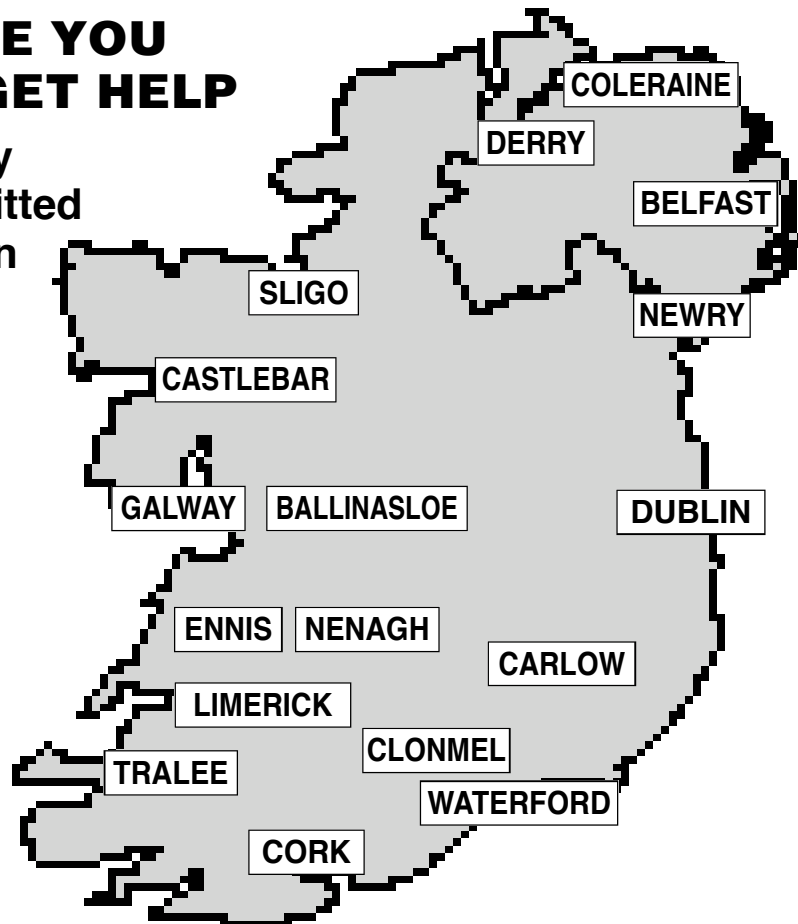


- 1** Use a new condom each time you have sex. Always check the expiry date on the packet and that there is a quality mark.
- 2** Always put the male condom on as soon as the penis is erect but before there is any contact with the woman's genital area. This is important because fluid, which may contain sperm, can seep from the penis early during sex.
- 3** Take your condom out of the packet carefully, making sure that you don't damage it with your fingernails or jewellery.
- 4** Gently squeeze the last centimetre of the closed end between your finger and thumb, to expel any trapped air and make space for the man's semen.
- 5** Keeping the end of the condom 'air free', hold the condom at the tip of the erect penis.
- 6** With the flat part of your fingers, roll the condom carefully over the penis. It is now safe for the penis to enter the woman's vagina or touch her genital area.
- 7** After the man has ejaculated but before his erection is completely lost, hold the condom rim firmly around the penis while the penis is withdrawn. This makes sure that the condom doesn't slip, accidentally spilling semen in or around the woman's vagina.



## WHERE YOU CAN GET HELP

### Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) Clinics



#### DUBLIN

- **St. James's Hospital.** G.U.I.D.E. Clinic, Hospital 5, James's Street, Dublin 8. Tel: 01-4162315 / 4162316.
- **Mater Misericordiae Hospital.** Infectious Disease Clinic, Outpatients Dept., North Circular Road, Dublin 7. Tel: 01-8032063.
- The **Gay Men's Health Project Clinic**, the **Women's Health Project** (for women working in prostitution only) and the **HIV Testing Centre** (open to all) can all be contacted through the **Baggot Street Clinic**, 19 Haddington Road, Dublin 4. Tel: 1800 201187.

#### CARLOW

Carlow District Hospital. Tel: 051-842646.

#### CASTLEBAR

Mayo General Hospital. Tel: 094-9021733 Ext. 3501.

#### CLARE

Ennis General Hospital. Tel: 061-482382.

#### CORK

Victoria Hospital, Old Blackrock Road. Tel: 021-4966844.

#### GALWAY

University College Hospital. Tel: 091-525200.

Portiuncula Hospital, Ballinasloe. Tel: 090-9648200.

#### LIMERICK

Regional Hospital, Dooradoyle. Tel: 061-482382.

#### SLIGO

Sligo Regional Hospital, The Mall. Tel: 071-9170473.

#### TIPPERARY

Nenagh General Hospital. Tel: 061-482382.

South Tipperary Hospital, Clonmel (formerly St. Josephs). Tel: 051-842646.

#### TRALEE

Tralee General Hospital. Tel: 021-4966844.

#### WATERFORD

Waterford Regional Hospital. Tel: 051-842646.

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**Private services are also available.**

**Ask your clinic or doctor for advice.**

*The IFPA (01-8727088 / 4597685) and the Well Woman Centre (01-8749243) offer private STI services.*

## **WHERE YOU CAN GET HELP - NORTHERN IRELAND**

### **BELFAST**

Royal Victoria Hospital. Tel: 048-90634705.

### **COLERAINE**

Causeway Hospital. Tel: 048-70346028.

### **DERRY**

Altnegelvin Hospital, Glenshane Road. Tel: 048-71611269.

### **NEWRY**

Daisy Hill Hospital. Tel: 048-30835000 Ext. 5050.

## **A GUIDE TO SOME OF THE WORDS USED IN THIS BOOKLET**

### **ACQUIRED IMMUNE DEFICIENCY SYNDROME (AIDS)**

AIDS is a disease in which the body's immune system breaks down and is unable to fight off certain infections.

### **HUMAN IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS (HIV)**

HIV is the virus that causes AIDS.

### **WOMB**

The hollow organ in a woman's body where a baby grows.

### **VAGINA**

The tube leading from the outside of the woman's body to the womb, where the penis goes during sexual intercourse.

### **CERVIX**

The neck of the womb situated inside at the top of the vagina.

### **PENIS**

The male sex organ.

### **GENITAL AREA**

The area around the penis or the vagina.

### **VULVA**

The area around the vagina.

### **RECURRENT CYSTITIS**

Pain or stinging when passing water. Having to pass water more frequently. Getting these symptoms (cystitis) repeatedly.

### **PELVIC INFLAMMATORY DISEASE (PID)**

An infection which can be spread through the vagina and womb into the pelvis. It can cause inflammation and pain and can lead to problems with future fertility.

### **SWAB**

Examining material from a discharge or an infected area.

### **URETHRA**

The tube from the bladder to the outside through which urine flows.

*Thanks to Carla Daly for illustration on page 5.  
[www.carladaly.com](http://www.carladaly.com)*

## A FINAL WORD

This booklet can only give basic information about sexually transmitted infections. The information is based on evidence and medical opinion available at the time of publication. You may come across conflicting advice on certain points. If you are unsure about anything ask your doctor. **DON'T FORGET** - ring or visit the clinic or your doctor if you are worried or unsure about anything.

*This booklet has been jointly published by:*



www.ifpa.ie

Irish  
Family  
Planning  
Association



Irish College of General Practitioners



www.icgp.ie

*Funded by the Health Service Executive – Eastern Region:*



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive


*This booklet developed  
in conjunction with:*



G.U.I.D.E. Clinic  
St. James's Hospital  
Dublin 8

*The 'Black & White Guide' series  
developed in conjunction with:*

- National Council for the Blind of Ireland
- Irish Wheelchair Association
- National Association for Deaf People

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