



### **What are STIs?**

Sexually Transmissible Infections are infections and diseases which can be passed on from one person to another during sexual contact. They are caused by bacteria, viruses and other microscopic organisms which are present in the blood, semen, body fluids or the pubic area of an infected person. Most STIs, (with the exception of AIDS) once diagnosed, can be cured with treatment. It is important to get treatment early as STIs can cause serious and permanent damage. Conditions such as chronic pelvic infection, malignant conditions, infertility, ectopic pregnancy, and infections in new-born babies can arise as a result of untreated STI infection.

### **What are the symptoms of sexually transmitted infections?**

Many Sexually Transmissible Infections have no signs or symptoms. People who are infected may look perfectly healthy. However, if you are sexually active and notice any of the following conditions you should contact your doctor or STI Clinic immediately.

- Unusual discharge from penis or vagina
- Pain when passing urine
- Unusual sores or blisters in the genital area
- Itching or irritation in the genital area
- Pain during intercourse

Remember - the sooner a STI is diagnosed and treated the greater the chance of it being completely cured without any complications.

### **Who can get infected?**

Anyone who is sexually active and not in a "one faithful partner" relationship is at risk of being infected with an STI. Some infections lie dormant in the body for months without any visible signs. There is no natural immunity to STIs. So, anyone can be infected from a single sexual contact with an infected person.

### **How can you avoid infections with STIs?**

Abstinence

STIs are transmitted by sexual contact with an infected person. Therefore, abstaining from sex altogether is a certain way of avoiding infection.

### **Limit partners**

Nobody has a natural immunity to STIs and a once only contact can be the source of infection. Also, the more partners you have the greater the risk of catching an infection.

### **Condom use**

For sexually active people who are not in a “one faithful partner” relationship, the proper use of a good quality, new condom will significantly reduce the risk of infection. However, condoms do not offer total protection as they may fail during use. Oil based lubricants should not be used as they weaken the condom and make it useless as protection.

### **Hygiene**

Pass urine and wash your genital area as soon as possible after sexual contact. This may not be convenient but it may help you to avoid cystitis and urethritis.

### **Alcohol and other drugs**

Alcohol and other drugs impair judgment and reduce the ability to make “safe” decisions. Because certain diseases such as HIV/AIDS are incurable, unprotected sex, or sex while intoxicated, with a partner whose sexual history is unknown to you, could have devastating lifelong consequences.

Sharing needles during intravenous drug taking, tattooing and earpiercing with unsterilised equipment, are also high risk activities. Diseases such as Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and HIV/AIDS are easily transmitted in this way. Vaccination against Hepatitis B is recommended for people engaging in high risk behaviours.

### **Myths about infection**

STIs are not transmitted by sharing cutlery and crockery, in swimming pools, or by non-sexual social contact with infected people, so there is no need to ostracise or shun people who may be infected.

If you think you have become infected...

Most STIs (with the exception of HIV/AIDS) are easily treated and cured.

It is important to receive treatment early.

When you visit your GP or STI clinic, consultation is strictly confidential. Various tests will determine whether infection is present, and the course of action to be taken. Treatment varies from injections and tablets to lotions and creams, depending on the condition diagnosed. Sexual contact should be avoided while on medication.

It is vital that you contact sexual partners and advise them that they should have themselves medically investigated and treated.

### **Where you can get help**

Sexually Transmitted Infection Clinics:

#### **DUBLIN**

St James's Hospital,  
James's St., Dublin 8.

Tel: 01- 453 7941, ext. 2315/2316

01 – 453 5245 (by appointment only).

Monday & Friday: 9.30am – 11.00pm

Tuesday and Thursday: 1.30pm – 3.00pm

#### **HIV Out-patient Clinic**

Monday: 1.30pm – 3.00pm

Wednesday: 9.30am – 11.00am

Mater Misericordiae Hospital,  
Eccles Street,  
Dublin 7

Tel: 01 – 830 1122, ext.2063.

Monday-Thursday: 2.00pm – 4.00pm

Baggot Street Clinic,  
19 Haddington Road,  
Dublin 2  
Tel: 01 – 660 2149

City Clinic,  
Amiens Street,  
Dublin 3  
Tel: 01 – 855 5310 (by appointment only)

HIV testing – Monday: 2.30pm – 4.30pm

CLARE  
Ennis General Hospital Limerick  
Tel: 061 – 482 382  
Monday: 10.00 am – 12.00 noon (by appointment only)

CORK  
Victoria Hospital  
Old Blackrock Road,  
Cork  
Tel: 021 – 966 844  
Monday/Tuesday/Thursday: 9.30am – 11.45am  
Wednesday: 2.30pm – 4.30pm (by appointment only)  
Helpline number: 021 – 966 844 available on Tuesdays between 1.00pm – 2.00pm

Alliance for Aids and Sexual Health  
16 Peter Street,  
Cork  
tel: 021 – 275 837 (office)  
tel: 021 –276 676 (helpline)  
Monday-Friday: 10.00 am – 5.00pm

DONEGAL  
Aids Helpline North West  
Tel: 074 – 25 500  
Monday-Thursday: 10.30am – 12.00 noon

GALWAY  
University College Hospital  
Tel: 091 – 525 200 (by appointment only)  
Monday: 2.00pm – 6.00pm  
Friday: 10.00am – 12.30pm  
First Thursday of the month: 2.00pm – 5.00pm

LIMERICK  
Regional Hospital,  
Dooradoyle,  
Limerick  
Tel: 061 – 482 382 (by appointment only)  
Tuesday & Friday : 10.00am – 4.00pm

The Red Ribbon Project  
(Counselling and Support Services)  
9 Cecil Street,  
Limerick

Tel: 061 – 314 354 (office)  
Fax: 061 – 315 024  
Confidential Helpline 061 – 316 661  
Monday-Friday: 9.30am – 5.30pm

SLIGO  
Regional Hospital,  
The Mall,  
Sligo  
Tel: 071 – 70 473  
Tuesday & Thursday: 6.00pm – 7.00pm  
Helpline: Monday-Thursday 9.00am – 5.00pm

TIPPERARY  
Neneagh General Hospital  
Tel: 061 – 482 382  
Wednesday: 2.00pm – 4.00pm (by appointment only)

WATERFORD  
Waterford General Hospital  
Waterford  
Tel: 051 – 845 149  
Monday: 2.00pm – 4.00pm  
Thursday: 9.30am – 11.30am

NORTHERN IRELAND – BELFAST  
Royal Victoria Hospital,  
Belfast  
Tel: 080 1232 – 894777  
Monday, Wednesday and Friday: 8.30am – 11.30am  
1.30pm – 3.00pm  
Tuesday & Thursday: 8.30 am – 11.00am

COLERAINE  
Coleraine Hospital,  
Out-patients Department  
Tel: 080 1265 – 44177, ext 2080.  
Tuesday: 5.00pm – 6.30pm  
Friday: 2.00pm – 3.00pm

DERRY  
Altnegelvin Hospital,  
Glenshane Rd,  
Derry  
Tel: 080 1504 – 611269

GUM drop-in Clinic  
Monday, Wednesday and Friday: 9.30am – 11.00am

NEWRY  
Daisy hill Hospital,  
Newry  
Tel: 080 1693 – 65511  
Wednesday: 9.00am – 11.00am

**WHAT ARE THE COMMON STIs?**

STIs can be transmitted through sexual intercourse and oral-genital contact.

Name	Cause	Symptoms	Treatment
AIDS/HIV	Human Immuno Deficiency Virus	People with HIV may have no visible symptoms	HIV remains an infectious disease, although new treatments are available which help control and suppress the virus
Genital Warts	A virus which is spread by skin to skin contact	Painless fleshy grows or lumps around the genital area	A liquid treatment may be applied over a period of weeks or months or the warts may be removed by freezing. There may be a link between genital warts and cancer of the neck of the womb. It is advisable to have an annual smear test following infection.
Gnorrhoea	Bacteria	<i>In women:</i> 80% have no symptoms, however some may experience vaginal discharge, abdominal pain and burning when passing urine. <i>In Men:</i> symptoms include severe pain when passing urine and a discharge from the penis. Only 5-10% of men have no symptoms.	Antibiotics clear the infection. Early detection and treatment is necessary.
Herpes	Herpes simplex (similar to common cold sore)	Small painful sores and blisters or itching in the genital area. Flu-like symptoms. Pain or burning sensation when passing urine.	No specific cure. Antiviral tablets ease symptoms and promote healing.
Non Specific Urethritis	Various micro-organisms	May vary. A few days to six weeks after infection – abnormal discharge from the vagina, penis or back passage. Inflammation of	Antibiotics taken early to avoid complications

		the genital area, pain or burning sensation when passing urine.	
Chlamydia (known as the silent infection)	Bacteria	80% of women and 50% of men have no symptoms. In women, symptoms can include vaginal discharge, abdominal pain, bleeding between periods or after sexual intercourse, and a burning sensation when passing urine. In men, symptoms include discharge from the penis and a burning sensation when passing urine.	Antibiotics treat this infection. Early treatment is essential to prevent complications, e.g. infertility
Pubic Lice	Lice living in pubic hair	Severe itching. Eggs (nits) on the pubic hair or underwear.	Special lotions
Syphilis	Bacteria	Three stages: Sores appear in genital area within 1 to 12 weeks after infection, 2 to 6 months later - a rash may develop with flu-like symptoms. Damage to heart, brains and vital organs occur if left untreated.	Antibiotics – early treatment is necessary to prevent serious complication
Trichomonas	A small parasite	Often no symptoms in men. Frothy vaginal discharge, itching in the vaginal area and burning feeling during urination.	Special tablets