

WHERE TO GO FOR HELP

If you are sexually active and have been taking chances, please see a doctor, or go to a free clinic or your local public health unit to make sure you don't have an STI. You owe it to yourself, your partner and your future.

And remember, all the information you give is always kept private.

To find a clinic, check your telephone book under "Sexual Health" in the white pages or under "Health" in the blue pages.

In your community, contact:

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT



SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS



Our mission is to help the people of Canada maintain and improve their health.
Health Canada

HOW TO FIND WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

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The Division of Sexual Health Promotion and STD Prevention and Control, Health Canada, wishes to acknowledge the expert assistance received from STI professionals across Canada in the development of this booklet.

Aussi disponible en français sous le titre « Ce qu'il faut savoir au sujet des ITS. Les infections transmises sexuellement ».

This document is available on Internet at:
<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/pphb-dgspsp/publicat/std-mts/index.html>
It can also be made available in alternative formats upon request.

Published by authority of the Minister of Health

© Minister of Public Works
and Government Services Canada, 2002
Cat. H39-161/2002E
ISBN 0-662-32721-7

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Sex is a normal and healthy part of our lives.

Today, there are many types of infections that are spread through sex. These infections are called sexually transmitted infections or STI.

Some are easily cured. Some infections have no cure. There are many kinds of sexually transmitted infections, and they can seriously affect your health.

You should know about sexually transmitted infections because they can affect your ability to have children later in life. Some can also cause cancer. AIDS is fatal.



In Canada, the highest rates and increases in STIs are in young people ages 15 to 24.

If you are having sex, or thinking about having sex, you need to know how to avoid sexually transmitted infections (also called sexually transmitted diseases or STD).

This booklet can help you to make safe and healthy choices.

HOW TO KNOW IF YOU HAVE AN INFECTION

Some people with an STI have *few or no symptoms at all*; others have very obvious symptoms. Be aware of any changes in your health, or symptoms such as:

- **different or heavier discharge from the vagina**
- **discharge from the penis**
- **a burning feeling when urinating (peeing)**
- **sores, particularly in the genital or anal areas**
- **itchy feeling around the sex organs or anus**
- **appearance of a rash**
- **swollen glands in the groin.**

These symptoms might appear alone, or in combination.

Having a symptom doesn't mean you do have an STI but if you are having sex and taking chances, you should see a health professional for a check-up.



COULD THIS BE YOU?

"I am a teenager and I am young and healthy. I won't get an STI from sex. It can't happen to me."

DID YOU KNOW

It can happen to you. Teens have the greatest chance of getting an STI or becoming pregnant, especially if they have unprotected, unsafe sex.



WHAT ARE MY CHANCES OF CATCHING AN STI?

You can get an STI from having sex with someone who is infected regardless of age, background, or sexual orientation.

You have a chance of catching a sexually transmitted infection if:

- you have unprotected oral, vaginal or anal sex (without using a condom or if the condom breaks) with a person who may have an infection
- your partner has, or has had, a sexually transmitted infection
- you have a new sex partner
- you or your partner had or is having sex with others
- you have sex under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- you share needles or equipment for drugs, body piercing, tattoos, or sex toys or your partner does.

If you have taken chances such as having sex without using a condom, please see a doctor or visit a public health clinic, and ask for an STI check-up. Your health is important, and so is the health of your partner. Remember that some STIs may not cause symptoms.



COULD THIS BE YOU?

"I'm on the Pill. I can't get an STI."

DID YOU KNOW

The birth control pill protects against pregnancy, not STI. You owe it to yourself to learn about STI and how to lower the chances of becoming infected. Use a condom and the pill together to protect you and your partner against an STI and unintended pregnancy.

Birth control pills may not be as effective if you are taking some antibiotics. Use a second contraceptive method (like a condom).

NO STI FOR ME!

The only sure way to prevent a sexually transmitted infection is to avoid risky behaviour.

Healthy and safer choices:

- **abstinence**
- **consider doing other things with your partner, like kissing, caressing and touching, instead of having intercourse**
- **use a condom every time - it's the most important thing you can do**
- **ask yourself, how many partners have I had this year? Am I taking chances?**
- **IT TAKES TWO!** The birth control pill prevents pregnancy, and the condom helps to prevent STI.
- **the riskiest way of having sex in terms of catching an STI is anal sex (for both males and females) - but you can get an STI from vaginal and oral sex as well**
- **never share needles or equipment for drugs, tattoos or body piercing**

If you think you might have a sexually transmitted infection, please see your doctor or go to a clinic. All the information you give will be kept private.



COULD THIS BE YOU?

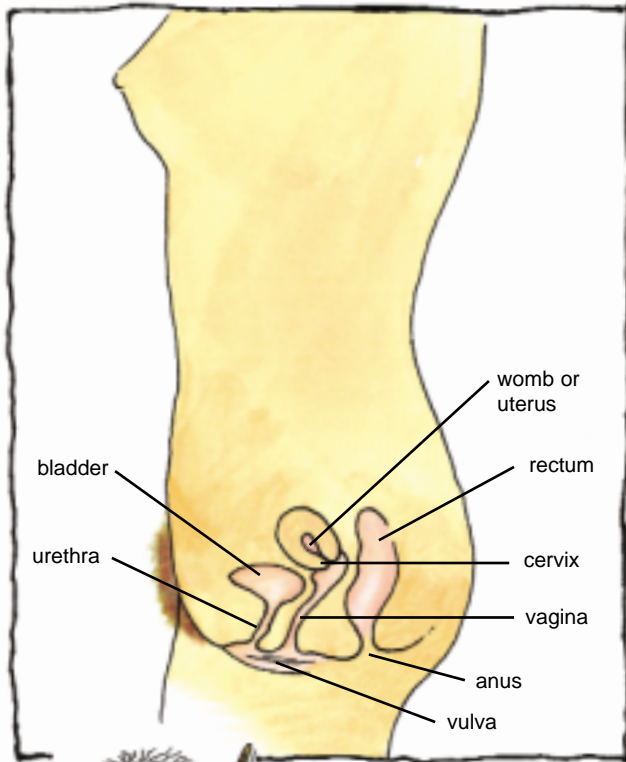
“It always seems like when we start drinking or smoking pot, we end up having sex. But I don’t always want to. And sometimes, I’m so high I forget to use a condom.”

DID YOU KNOW

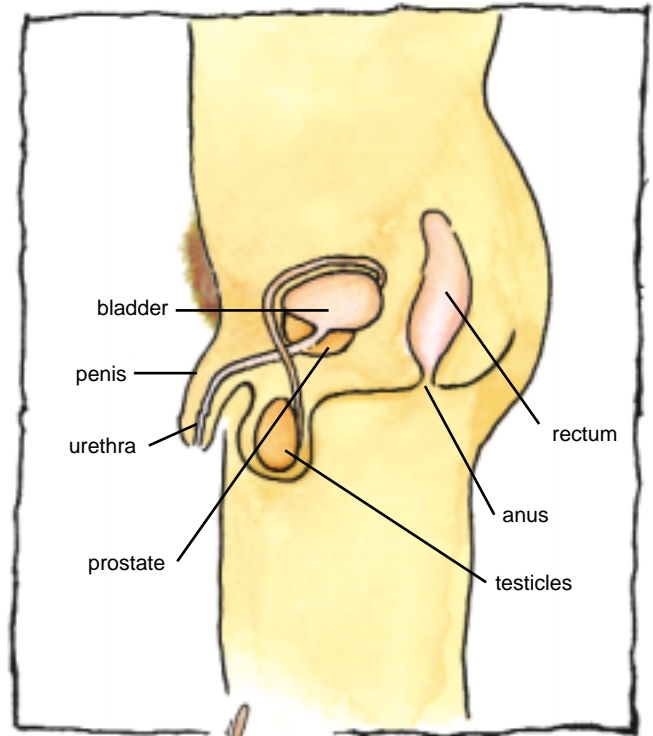
Remember that alcohol and drug use can affect your ability to make the right decisions for yourself. And sometimes, other people expect you to do things, and it may be hard to say no. Just because you drink or get high doesn’t mean you have to have sex. And if you do have sex, you should always be protected.

When in doubt, choose YOU!

FEMALE GENITAL AREA



MALE GENITAL AREA



HOW ARE STIs SPREAD?

STIs or sexually transmitted infections can be spread in several ways.

STIs are usually spread through sex because the bacteria or viruses travel in semen, vaginal fluids, and blood. Saliva (or spit) can spread some STIs if you have a tiny cut in or around your mouth.

STIs can be spread through direct contact with an infected area.

Infected blood on needles and syringes can spread certain STIs.

Infected women can pass some STIs to their babies during pregnancy, at childbirth or during breastfeeding.

You can catch some STIs more than once. And, you can have more than one STI at a time.

If you are HIV positive and have another of the sexually transmitted infections, you increase your chances of GIVING HIV to your partner.

If you don't have HIV but have another sexually transmitted infection, you increase your chances of GETTING HIV from an HIV positive partner.

Many STIs are easily treated, but all can be dangerous if ignored.

To reduce the possibility of spreading STIs or reinfection, sexually activity should be postponed until treatment has been completed.

For some STIs, like HIV, there is no cure to date.



COULD THIS BE YOU?

"I can't get an infection or get pregnant the first time I have sex or if the guy doesn't 'come' inside me."

DID YOU KNOW

Yes, you can. And sex doesn't have to be full intercourse.

You can catch an STI just by having really close genital contact with an infected partner. Infection can be spread by body fluids or by oral sex. Protect yourself and your partner by using a condom for any kind of sexual activity.

TYPES OF STI

There are many kinds of STI. Read the facts about them and know what you can do to lower the chances of getting one.

Remember, if you have taken chances, you should see a doctor or other health professional for a check-up.



chlamydia, gonorrhea, trichomonas, pubic lice and scabies, genital herpes, genital warts (HPV), hepatitis B, syphilis, HIV/AIDS

STI CHLAMYDIA

Chlamydia (pronounced kla-mid-ee-ah) is a very common bacterial sexually transmitted infection - and one of the more serious.

It can spread silently in females and cause a painful, long-term condition called PID (pelvic inflammatory disease) and infertility (the inability to have children). Pregnant women can pass this infection on to their babies at birth, who can then get infections of their eyes or lungs.

You can get chlamydia from oral, vaginal or anal sex.

The symptoms and signs

A woman may never know she is infected with chlamydia until she has a test for it or decides to have a baby and has problems trying to become pregnant.

For those who develop symptoms, they usually appear one to three weeks after sex with an infected person. Sometimes, the symptoms are so mild that a person may not notice them. Men often have no symptoms and can spread the infection without knowing they have it. It is very important that chlamydia be treated right away.

What to look for

Females:

- **a new or different discharge from the vagina**
- **a burning feeling when urinating**
- **pain in the lower abdomen, sometimes with fever and chills**
- **pain during sex**
- **vaginal bleeding between periods**
- **vaginal bleeding after intercourse**

Males:

- **a watery or milky drip from the penis**
- **an itchy feeling inside the penis**
- **a burning feeling when urinating**
- **pain or swelling in the testicles**

A quick and reliable urine test is available for chlamydia in most centres for both men and women.

If you are having sex and have taken chances, see a health professional or go to a clinic and ask to be tested.

How chlamydia is treated

Chlamydia can often be treated with just one dose of antibiotics taken by mouth. But you can get it again right away from your partner if he/she isn't treated as well.

You must get a prescription for the right antibiotic from your doctor. Don't borrow medicine from your friends, and you cannot buy the medicine on the street.

Treatment is important

Your doctor or nurse may ask you for the name of your partner or ask you to tell your partner so that this STI will not be spread further. Make sure you take your medication until it is finished. Ask your doctor or nurse how soon after treatment you can have sexual intercourse.

If you are a female with chlamydia and you don't get treated, this could happen to you:

- **you might develop a pain in your abdomen or belly that never seems to go away**
- **the infection could spread to all your reproductive organs and cause PID**
- **you may have problems later in life getting pregnant or during your pregnancy.**

The long-term effects of chlamydia on males are not well known.



GONORRHEA

You may have heard of this STI by other names such as “the clap” or “a dose.” Gonorrhea is a common STI which, if not treated early, can cause serious health problems, especially for women.

Gonorrhea in women left untreated could lead to a painful, long-term condition called PID (pelvic inflammatory disease) and infertility (the inability to have children).

A pregnant woman can pass gonorrhea to her baby during birth, and cause a serious eye infection or blindness.

You can get gonorrhea from oral, vaginal and anal sex.

The symptoms and signs

If you catch gonorrhea from having sex with an infected partner, you might not notice any symptoms. If you do, they will appear three to five days after sex.

Even if you don't have symptoms, you can have gonorrhea and you can pass it on to others.

What to look for

Females:

- **new or different discharge from the vagina**
- **a burning feeling when urinating**
- **pain in the lower abdomen**
- **fever and chills**
- **pain during sex**
- **vaginal bleeding between periods**
- **vaginal bleeding after intercourse**
- **possible rectal pain**
- **rectal discharge**

Males:

- **discharge from the penis, may be thick and yellow-green in colour**
- **burning feeling when urinating**
- **pain or swelling in the testicles**
- **possible rectal pain**
- **rectal discharge**

To test for gonorrhea, a swab of the area is usually taken or a new urine test may be used at some centres.

How gonorrhea is treated

Gonorrhea can often be treated with just one dose of antibiotics taken by mouth and can be cured. But you can get it again right away from your partner if he/she isn't treated as well. See a doctor or go to a clinic and, if you have gonorrhea, tell your partner.



TRICHOMONAS OR "TRICH"

Trichomonas is a germ that can be spread during sex.

It can cause *vaginitis* in women – an inflamed, sore and itchy vagina, sometimes with an unusual discharge. Very rarely trichomonas can lead to pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) – a serious infection in women.

If a woman who is pregnant has "trich", her baby may be born early or weigh less than normal.

Even if you don't have any symptoms you can still pass on "trich" to your partner if you are infected.

What to look for

Females:

- **frothy, off-white or yellowish-green vaginal discharge**
- **itching and irritation of the genital area**
- **vaginal odour**
- **pain during sex**
- **painful or frequent urination**

Males:

- **Often males don't have any symptoms but they may experience:**
 - **slight discharge from the penis**
 - **burning sensation on urination**
 - **irritation and redness of the head of the penis**

Trichomonas can be diagnosed by a swab of the discharge or infected area.

Trichomonas can be treated with pills, but both you and your partner (or partners) need to be treated to prevent you from getting the infection again.

You can protect yourself against "trich" by using a condom every time you have sex.



PUBIC LICE AND SCABIES

You may have heard of someone getting “crabs” from sex. This happens when tiny insects spread from an infected person to you. This can happen as a result of sex, but not always. You can also get scabies and lice from using bed sheets or towels or wearing the clothes of an infected person.

The symptoms and signs

Symptoms of scabies and lice occur when the insects either bite you or burrow into your skin to lay their eggs. With lice, you may actually see the pearly white eggs on the hair in your pubic area, close to the skin.

What to look for

Scabies:

- **itching, mainly at night**
- **a rash may appear between your fingers, on your wrists, abdomen, ankles, on the bend of your elbows, or around your genitals.**

Pubic lice:

- **perhaps an itch in the pubic area**
- **light brown insects the size of a pinhead may be seen**
- **oval, whitish eggs may be seen on the hair.**

How scabies and lice are treated

Scabies and lice may be treated easily with special creams, lotions or shampoos, which are available at a drugstore. Ask the pharmacist for help, and then follow the directions carefully.

If you don't treat scabies or lice, you may get a skin infection that will require a visit to a doctor.

Avoid close body contact with others if you have scabies or lice. Get treatment to avoid passing them to others.

Wash clothes and bed linen in hot water, or dry-clean and press with a very hot iron. Freezing clothes, fabrics or blankets or storing them in an air-tight plastic bag for two weeks will also destroy the insects and their eggs.

If you have scabies or pubic lice, be sure to tell your sex partners. Anyone with whom you have had close contact or who has shared your bed sheets, clothes or towels should be treated, even if they don't have an itch or rash.



GENITAL HERPES

Genital herpes is an STI that causes painful sores on and around the genitals. The same family of viruses also causes “cold sores” around the mouth.

Genital herpes is most commonly spread by direct contact with open sores, usually during sex. If you touch herpes sores, wash your hands with soap and water to avoid spreading the infection.

Although it is rare, pregnant women can pass this infection to their baby during or after child birth. Herpes infection in infants can be life-threatening.

Herpes is not spread by toilet seats, bathtubs, swimming pools or hot tubs.

It is possible to pass the virus to your sex partners even when you have no sores, so safer sex using a condom is always important. However, remember that the areas of skin not covered by the condom are not protected.

You can get genital herpes through oral sex even from cold sores. To prevent spread during oral sex use

- **a condom on the penis**
- **a condom cut length-wise or a dental dam over the female genital area.**

After the sores from the first attack heal, the herpes sores may appear again from time to time.

There is no cure for genital herpes, but medication may shorten the attacks and make the sores less painful. Once you have herpes, you are infected for life.

The symptoms and signs

Tingling or itching in the genital area may appear within a week of having sex with an infected person. A cluster of tiny blisters will likely appear. These blisters will burst and leave painful sores, which last from two to three weeks. A fever and headache may occur in the first attack.

What to look for

Females:

- **sores inside or near the vagina, on the genitals, near the anus, or on the thighs and buttocks**
- **tender lumps in the groin**

Males:

- **sores on the penis, around the testicles, near the anus, and on thighs and buttocks**
- **tender lumps in the groin.**

Both males and females can get sores in the mouth or in the genital area after oral sex with an infected person.

How genital herpes is treated

If you think you may have genital herpes, see a doctor as soon as possible. The doctor can give you medication to help ease the pain of the attack and control further attacks.

Keep the infected area clean and dry. Wash your towel before re-using.

After bathing, use a hair dryer instead of a towel around the sores, or pat dry gently.

Try to wear loose fitting clothing made of natural materials such as cotton.

If urinating is painful, pouring warm water over the area may help, or urinate in the bathtub just before getting out.

HUMAN PAPILLOMAVIRUS (HPV)

HPV is thought to be one of the most common viral STI. HPV is a virus that is spread through sex or close skin-to-skin, genital area contact with someone who is infected.

There are different types of HPV that can cause different problems. Many people can be infected with HPV and not know it. Some kinds of HPV can cause genital warts. Other types can lead to cancer.

Genital Warts

Genital warts are growths on or around the genitals or anal area in both males and females that are caused by HPV. The warts can be different sizes. They may look like a very small cauliflower or be flat and hard to see. They grow in moist areas such as the penis, the vagina, the cervix, the anus, the scrotum and the thighs. Very rarely warts may appear on the lips or in the mouth after oral sex with an infected person. The warts are not usually painful but can occasionally be itchy and may have a discharge or bleed – especially if they have been irritated.

For a woman who is pregnant, it's not certain what effect genital warts have on her baby. The baby may be at risk of getting an HPV infection in the throat, but experts don't believe that the warts are passed along to the baby very often.

If you think you may have genital warts you should see your doctor. If you do have genital warts, no treatment can guarantee that you will be cured of your HPV infection. However, treating your warts may lower your risk of passing them along to others. Your doctor may apply medication directly onto the warts. He or she may also give you medication that you apply to your warts yourself. Even when they are treated, warts often return. But over time many people eventually clear HPV from their bodies, and don't get any more warts.

The types of HPV that cause genital warts do not cause cancer. But, because you could have more than one type of HPV you could be at risk for both warts and cancer.

Genital Cancers (Cervical Cancer, Cancer of the Penis or Anus)

Some types of HPV can cause cancer, one of the most common being cervical cancer in women. The cervix is deep inside the vagina. It's the opening to the womb or uterus. The cervix is the most common place in females to be infected with HPV.

When the cervix is infected with HPV, changes can occur in the cells of the cervix. These changes can lead to cancer of the cervix if they are not found and treated. Almost all cervical cancers are caused by HPV. A Pap test is the best way to check the cells of the cervix to see if they have any changes. If your cervix has precancerous or cancerous changes you may not have any symptoms – that is why it is so important to have regular Pap tests.

Some types of HPV can also lead to other cancers in the genital area in both males and females – like anal cancer, cancer of the penis and cancer of the vulva.

Using a condom every time you have sex may help to reduce your risk of getting HPV. But the virus can still be spread through skin that is not covered by a condom.

Anyone who has had sex is at risk of having HPV, even if there are no symptoms. If you are concerned that you may be infected with HPV you should see your doctor. And if you are female, it's important that you see your doctor regularly for Pap testing.



COULD THIS BE YOU?

“I’ve had a Pap test and a blood test. Won’t that cover everything?”

DID YOU KNOW

There are special tests for different kinds of sexually transmitted infections. Some are urine tests, some are blood tests, and some need a swab from the female’s vagina or from the male’s penis. If you’re having sex, ask your doctor or ask your clinic for a complete STI check-up.





HEPATITIS B

Hepatitis B is an infection of the liver caused by a virus. It is much easier to get than HIV (AIDS).

Sometimes the infection goes away by itself or sometimes people carry the virus for the rest of their lives and never know, but still give it to other people. A lot of people have hepatitis B without knowing it. It can cause serious problems later in life, including permanent liver disease and cancer of the liver.

The good news is that hepatitis B can be prevented by a vaccine.

The symptoms and signs

Most people who become infected with hepatitis B have no symptoms. Symptoms usually occur within two to six months after contact. They can include:

- **poor appetite, nausea and vomiting**
- **headaches**
- **feeling very tired**
- **a general feeling of being unwell**
- **jaundice (yellow colouring of the eyes and skin).**

How hepatitis B is spread

The hepatitis B virus is spread through infected body fluids such as blood, semen and vaginal fluid. An infant can be vaccinated at birth to protect against infection if the mother carries the hepatitis B virus.

To lower your chances of getting hepatitis B, make sure you:

- **practice safer sex**
- **do not share needles and syringes**
- **do not share instruments used in body-piercing, tattooing or hair removal**
- **do not share toothbrushes or razors**
- **get vaccinated.**

You can find out if you have hepatitis B through a blood test.

If you have been infected, avoid having sex until your doctor says it's okay.

Your sexual partner can be protected against the infection by getting the hepatitis B vaccine.

Remember, hepatitis B is *not always* an STI. You can get it other ways as well.



SYPHILIS

Syphilis is a serious disease that can affect your entire body. If not treated, syphilis may cause serious health problems years later, such as heart or brain damage.

You can have it without knowing and pass it on to others.

Syphilis can be spread during oral, vaginal or anal sex.

Pregnant women with syphilis can give it to their unborn child, sometimes causing birth defects - even death.

The symptoms and signs

Sores often go unnoticed and may disappear on their own if not treated, but the infection is still active. Symptoms may appear from days to months after infection.

- **painless sore around or in the vagina, on the penis, inside the mouth or near the anus**
- **“flu”-like symptoms**
- **rash on the palms of the hands, soles of the feet, or over the whole body.**

A simple blood test can tell whether you have been exposed to syphilis.

Syphilis is cured with antibiotics.

If you have syphilis, your partner(s) will need to know so that they can see their doctor and possibly be treated. Re-infection from an untreated partner can happen.



HIV/AIDS

HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus, which is the virus that causes AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome).

The virus attacks the body’s immune system, which is your defence against infections.

AIDS is the late stage of HIV infection and is life-threatening. People living with HIV may get infections such as an unusual type of pneumonia, or develop skin cancer or other types of cancers.

How HIV/AIDS is spread

The virus is spread through body fluids such as blood, semen, pre-semen, vaginal fluids, and breast milk.

The HIV virus can also be found in saliva (spit), sweat and tears, but only in very low amounts. These body fluids are not known to spread HIV infection.

To become infected with HIV, the virus must have a way into your body. This can occur during unprotected sex (vaginal, anal, oral) or when needles or other injecting (skin-piercing) equipment are shared. Sharing sex toys can also spread the virus from one partner to another.



HIV can be transmitted from an HIV positive mother to her baby during pregnancy, at the time of birth or afterwards during breastfeeding. That is why it is so important for any woman who is pregnant to be tested for HIV. Ask your doctor about HIV testing.

Personal items, such as toothbrushes and razors can have small amounts of blood on them from bleeding gums and shaving cuts. So even though the risk is very low, sharing personal items like toothbrushes and razors with someone who is infected could spread the HIV virus.

HIV is not spread by everyday social contact. Touching, hugging and shaking hands with a person living with HIV/AIDS are all safe. Insects and pets cannot spread HIV.

Some people worry that they can get HIV by donating blood in Canada, but this is not true. A new, sterile needle is used every time for every person who donates blood.

Donated blood in Canada is always checked for HIV so the chances of getting it from a blood transfusion are very, very low.

Having another STI increases your chances of:

- **getting HIV from your HIV positive partner or**
- **giving HIV to your sexual partner if you are HIV positive.**

How to tell if you have HIV

A simple blood test can tell you if you have HIV. It is called the HIV antibody test.

A positive test result means that you have HIV.

A negative result means that no antibodies to HIV were found in your blood at the time of testing. Most positive tests will show up within three months of a person becoming infected with HIV.

Lower your chances of getting HIV by

- **discussing HIV and other STIs with your partner(s)**
- **considering other things like caressing and touching instead of having sex**
- **both of you being tested for HIV before having sex with a new partner**
- **having sex only with a partner who agrees to protect both of you**
- **remembering not to share items that could result in the exchange of blood, semen or vaginal fluids. This includes injection, piercing and tattooing equipment, sex toys, toothbrushes and razors**

If you think you are at risk ...

Please see your doctor or go to your local health clinic for HIV testing if you are worried that you might have HIV. Ask about anonymous HIV testing.

If you have become HIV positive, then your sex partners, or others with whom you have shared needles or other injecting equipment must be told that they also may have been in contact with the virus. They will have to decide if they wish to be tested for HIV.

You might want to tell them yourself, but if you are not comfortable, talk to your doctor or nurse - they can help.

Protect your partners from HIV.

How HIV/AIDS is treated

There is no cure for HIV infection at this time. Once infected, you have HIV for life. Several treatments have been developed that may slow the progress of HIV, but there is no cure.



COULD THIS BE YOU?

**"HIV affects only gay guys.
As long as I have sex with girls,
I'm going to be okay."**

DID YOU KNOW

This is not true. HIV is spread by direct sexual contact with anyone who has HIV. In fact, the number of cases of heterosexual transmission (male-female sex) is increasing in Canada and is the number one mode of HIV transmission in the world.



HOW TO USE A CONDOM



Always use a male or female condom (or other barrier method) for safer sex.

When used correctly, condoms can protect you and your partner against both STI and pregnancy.

Use a condom the first time and every time you have sex. Why? The condom gives protection by providing a physical barrier or shield between partners. Apply the condom before sex.

The male condom covers the penis. A female condom is a liner worn in the vagina. Both are effective but don't use both condoms together.

Use a condom for oral, vaginal, or anal sex, or when sharing sex toys. For oral sex, use a condom, a condom cut length-wise or a dental dam on the contact area.

You will feel more comfortable using a condom if you practise before you need it. This is especially true of the female condom.

Insist on safer sex even if your partner says he or she is "safe". Say no to anyone who is not willing to practise safer sex.

Where and how to get them

You can buy male condoms at many stores and supermarkets. Female condoms and male condoms are also available at drug stores without a prescription. These are usually in boxes with more than one in the box.

You can also purchase individual male condoms from vending machines in many restaurants or bars.

Some STD clinics and public health centres may offer male condoms free. Look in the telephone book under "health", "sexual health" or "sexually transmitted disease".

Store male condoms away from sunlight in a cool, dry place. Female condoms need no special storage.

Always use a new condom each time you have sex.

Check the label

The most common type of condom is the latex condom, but synthetic (polyurethane) condoms also offer protection against unintended pregnancies as well as STI including HIV.

Avoid oil-based products (like petroleum jelly, vaginal cream) when using a latex condom because they can weaken the condom. Then the condom won't provide as much protection - it may even break.

Natural membrane condoms (also called "sheepskin") are not recommended for use in protection against certain viral diseases such as hepatitis and HIV.

Novelty condoms do not offer pregnancy and STI prevention.

Nonoxynol-9 is a chemical that may irritate and increase the risk of HIV transmission. Use condoms without nonoxynol-9 if possible.

Check the "Exp" or expiry date on the condom packaging. If you can't find the expiry date or the date has passed, don't use the condom. Condoms used after the expiry date may not offer protection.

Try several brands and types of condoms until you find those that are best for you. Flavoured condoms are available in some stores or clinics for oral sex.



COULD THIS BE YOU?
"My partner refuses to use a condom. What can I do?"

DID YOU KNOW
Using a condom is Step One in preventing STI, for both of you. You or your partner can use a condom. Either way, you have the right to make choices that are important for your health.



CONDOM CHAT

Condoms are easy to use, especially if you both understand that you need to use them. Sometimes people don't want to use a condom - that puts everyone's health at risk. More and more young Canadians say they are using a condom "most of the time".

Here are some common excuses for not using condoms... and some possible responses.

Excuse: "They don't feel good or fit properly."

Response: Let's try a different kind. If you have an allergy to latex, there are condoms made from polyurethane.

Excuse: "I'm embarrassed to buy them."

Response: I'll buy them or I know a clinic where we can get them for free.

Excuse: "I don't have one with me."

Response: I'll get one for next time, but for now, no sex.

Excuse: "I am not comfortable using a condom."

Response: I understand but they are really important - for both of us. There are directions on the condom box. Let's try them a few times and it can be part of the fun.

Excuse: "They spoil the mood. It interrupts things."

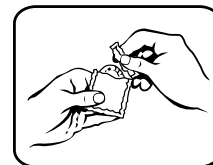
Response: We'll enjoy the mood more because we'll be less worried about pregnancy and infection.

Excuse: "You must think I have an infection or something."

Response: I have heard that some infections don't have any signs. We could ask at a clinic about testing. Let's be safe and use a condom.

USE OF A MALE CONDOM

Apply the condom on an erect penis before sexual contact to assist in the prevention of sexually transmitted infection and pregnancy.



1. Open the package; handle carefully to avoid damaging the condom.



2. A water-based lubricant may be used inside the condom or on the penis, to avoid irritation or to avoid tearing the condom.



3. Press the air out of the tip, leaving enough space to hold the semen (about one centimetre).



4. Pinching the condom tip, unroll the condom over as much of the hard penis as possible.



5. After sex, take the penis out with the condom still on and the penis still hard. Hold the base of the condom firmly so that the semen doesn't spill.



6. After use, tie a knot at the open end and dispose of the condom in the garbage (not in the toilet). Do not reuse.

Using a condom makes sex safer for both you and your partner.

USE OF A FEMALE CONDOM

Insert the condom into the vagina before sexual contact to assist in the prevention of sexually transmitted infection and pregnancy.

Open the package; handling carefully to avoid tearing the condom.

1. Squeeze the flexible inner ring at the closed end of the sheath.
2. Gently insert the inner ring into the vagina.
3. Place the index finger on the inside of the condom, and push the inner ring up as far as it will go.
4. Be sure the sheath is not twisted. The outer ring should remain on the outside of the vagina.

Guide the penis into the sheath's opening - be sure that the penis is not entering on the side, between the vagina wall and the sheath.

If the condom moves out of place during sex, lubrication can be used either on the inside of the condom or on the penis.

5. To remove the condom, twist the outer ring and gently pull the condom out to avoid spilling the semen.
6. Dispose of the condom in the garbage (not in the toilet). Use only once.

Using a condom makes sex safer for both you and your partner.

