

STI AWARENESS MONTH SPOTLIGHT

APRIL 2018

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS

What are they and how do you get them?

More than 30 different **bacteria, viruses and parasites** are known to be transmitted through sexual contact. **Eight** of these pathogens are linked to the greatest incidence of sexually transmitted disease. Of these 8 infections, *4 are currently curable: syphilis, gonorrhea, chlamydia and trichomoniasis.*

The other 4 are *viral infections and are incurable: hepatitis B, herpes simplex virus (HSV or herpes), HIV, and human papillomavirus (HPV).* Symptoms or

disease due to the incurable viral infections can be reduced or modified through treatment.

STIs are spread predominantly by sexual contact, including vaginal, anal and oral sex. Some

STIs can also be spread through non-sexual means such as via blood or blood products. **Many STIs—including chlamydia, gonorrhea, primarily hepatitis B, HIV, and syphilis—can also be transmitted from mother to child during pregnancy and childbirth.**

A person can have an STI

THE MAJORITY OF STI
HAVE NO SYMPTOMS
OR ONLY MILD
SYMPTOMS THAT MAY
NOT BE RECOGNIZED AS

without having obvious symptoms of disease. Common symptoms

of STIs include vaginal discharge, urethral discharge or burning in men, genital ulcers, and abdominal pain.

DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT

Accurate diagnostic tests for STIs are especially useful for the diagnosis of asymptomatic infections. The only inexpensive, rapid tests currently available for STIs are for syphilis and HIV. The

syphilis test is already in use in some resource-limited settings. The test is accurate, can provide results in 15 to 20 minutes, and is easy to use with minimal training. Rapid syphilis

CARE MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

- Remember STIs can occur across the lifespan, newborn to elderly and sometimes have no symptoms
- Vaccines are available for hepatitis B and HPV. Encourage members to learn about these.
- Talk to your members about STIs, education can be key to prevention and overcoming the stigma around existing infections
- Education should be tailored to meet the member's age group and/or life stage
- Help link members to free or low cost clinics where they can receive care, testing, vaccines and/or protection against STIs

tests have been shown to increase the number of pregnant women tested for syphilis.

Several rapid tests for other STIs are under development and have the potential to improve STI diagnosis and treatment.

Treatment of STIs

Effective treatment is currently available for several STIs.

- Three bacterial STIs (chlamydia, gonorrhea and syphilis) and one parasitic STI (trichomoniasis) are generally curable with existing, effective single-

dose regimens of antibiotics.

- For herpes and HIV, the most effective medications available are antivirals that can modulate the course of the disease, though they cannot cure the disease.
- For hepatitis B, immune system modulators (interferon) and antiviral medications can help to fight the virus and slow damage to the liver.

Resistance of STIs—in particular gonorrhea—to antibiotics has increased rapidly

in recent years and has reduced treatment options. The emergence of decreased susceptibility of gonorrhea to the “last line” treatment option (oral and injectable cephalosporins) together with antimicrobial resistance already shown to penicillins, sulphonamides, tetracyclines, quinolones and macrolides make gonorrhea a multidrug-resistant organism. Antimicrobial resistance for other STIs, though less common, also exists, making prevention and prompt treatment critical.

Key facts

- More than 1 million sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are acquired every day worldwide.
- Each year, there are an estimated 357 million new infections with 1 of 4 STIs: chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis and trichomoniasis.
- More than 500 million people are estimated to have genital infection with herpes simplex virus (HSV).
- More than 290 million women have a human papillomavirus (HPV) infection¹.
- HPV infection causes 528 000 cases of cervical cancer annually. About a dozen high-risk HPV types have been identified. HPV types 16 and 18, are responsible for most HPV-caused cancers
- Drug resistance, especially for gonorrhea, is a major threat to reducing the impact of STIs worldwide.
- STIs such as gonorrhea and chlamydia are major causes of pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) and infertility in women.
- STIs like herpes and syphilis can increase the risk of HIV acquisition three-fold or more.
- Mother-to-child transmission of STIs can result in stillbirth, neonatal death, low-birth-weight and prematurity, sepsis, pneumonia, neonatal conjunctivitis, and congenital deformities.

YOU CAN GET LOW- TO NO-COST SERVICES FOR SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS (STIs), INCLUDING HIV, AT THE NYC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH'S EIGHT SEXUAL HEALTH CLINICS. ANYONE WHO IS 12 OR OLDER CAN VISIT A CLINIC, REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS. NO PARENTAL CONSENT IS NECESSARY. FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT: [HTTPS://WWW1.NYC.GOV/SITE/DOH/SERVICES/SEXUAL-HEALTH-CLINICS.PAGE](https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/services/sexual-health-clinics.page)