GREATER SEACOAST HEALTH

STRAFFORD COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH NETWORK

INFO & RESOURCES FOR SEXUAL & REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

ARS AIDS Response Seacoast

LOVERING HEALTH CENTER
Sexual Health, Choice & You

WHAT IS AN STI/STD? A Sexually Transmitted Infection or Disease is a bacteria, virus, or parasite that is most commonly spread through sex or other sexual contact.[1]

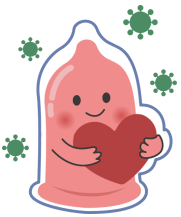
DID YOU KNOW: STI and STD are often used interchangeably. Many people prefer to say "STI" as it's less stigmatizing!

WHY SHOULD I BE CONCERNED ABOUT STIs?

Every year, approx. 3 million teens will contract an STI. Women aged 15-19 are at the highest risk compared to other age groups and genders. [4]

Untreated, an STI can [5]:

- Increase your chances of contracting HIV and transmitting HIV to your partner
- Cause infertility
- Cause Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID)
- Cause certain cancers



TOPICS COVERED IN THIS RESOURCE

- What are STIs?
- Why STIs matter
- How STIs spread
- Preventing STIs
- Common STIs and treatment
- Testing & treatment
- Questions to ask partner & provider
- More information & resources

HOW DO STIs SPREAD?

STIs can be spread through sexual activity involving the vagina, penis, rectum, hands or fingers, and sex toys. They can also spread through shared needles. [6]

LOW-RISK BEHAVIORS LIKE THOSE LISTED BELOW CAN HELP PREVENT STIs [7]

LOW RISK (AND PREVENTATIVE STEPS)

- Kissing/making out
- Masturbation or mutual masturbation
- Massaging
- Clean sex toys and used with a condom
- Phone sex, dirty talk
- Not sharing needles for drug use, tattoos, etc.
- Getting tested regularly
- Limiting sexual partners

MODERATE RISK

- Manual stimulation of each other with fingers or hands
- Anal sex with internal (female) or external (male) condoms
- Oral sex on vulva or anus with dental dam
- Oral sex on penis with condom

HIGH RISK

- Vaginal sex without condom
- Anal sex without condom
- Oral sex without condom or dental dam
- Sharing needles

For more information on how specific STIs spread, check out the 'Healthy Sexuals' site: healthysexuals.com/stis

WHAT HAPPENS IF I CONTRACT AN STI?

- Seek treatment and inform current and past partners who may be at-risk
- Most STIs are easily treated through medication

STIs ARE PREVENTABLE!

HERE ARE SOME WAYS TO PROTECT YOURSELF:

Wear a Condom: Available for people with any type of genitalia. Check expiration dates. Read directions for proper storage. Use every time you have vaginal, oral, or anal sex (and learn how to use correctly). Both external and internal condoms are available, as well as other barriers like dental dams, for oral sex. [1]

Use personal lubricant: Use water or silicone-based lubricant, instead of oil-based. [8]

Silicone-based lube cannot be used with silicone sex toys, as they are made of similar chemicals and cause the toys to break down.

Take PrEP: Pre-exposure medication that protects an HIV negative individual from contracting HIV. [8] **Ask your doctor if you're a good candidate for this medication.**

Take PEP: Post-exposure medication that protects an HIV negative individual from contracting HIV ***if taken within 72 hours of exposure to HIV. [8]***

Get vaccinated: for STIs such as Hepatitis B and HPV. [1]

Ask Your Partner: Talk with your partner about sexual health and STIs regularly.

Ask Your Provider: Talk with your provider about your concerns, questions, and anything else related to sexual health.

GETTING TESTED REGULARLY IS AN IMPORTANT STEP IN PREVENTING STIs

FOR INFO ON HOW TO USE CONDOMS CORRECTLY, SCAN QR CODE BELOW!
or visit: cdc.gov/condom-use/resources/internal.html

Male (external) Condoms

Female (internal) Condoms

COMMON STIs AND SYMPTOMS [2]

- It is also common for someone with an STI to experience no symptoms or be 'asymptomatic'
- **STIs can spread even when the individual is asymptomatic**
- This is why it's important to get tested regularly

CHLAMYDIA

COMMON SYMPTOMS:

- *One of the most common STIs for one to be asymptomatic*
- Pain in abdomen
- Vaginal discharge
- Pain or swelling in testicles
- Bleeding between periods
- Painful/burning feeling when urinating
- Pain, discharge, or bleeding of the rectum

HUMAN IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS (HIV)

COMMON EARLY SYMPTOMS:

- Fever
- Chills
- Rash
- Mouth ulcers
- Fatigue
- Headaches/muscle aches

If left untreated, develops to late-stage HIV (also known as AIDS)

GONORRHEA

COMMON SYMPTOMS:

- *One of the most common STIs for one to be asymptomatic*
- Anal itching
- Thick, bloody, or cloudy discharge from penis or vagina
- Pain/burning when urinating

HEPATITIS C

COMMON SYMPTOMS:

- Bleeding easily
- Bruising easily
- Spiderlike blood vessels on the skin

COMMON STIs AND SYMPTOMS (cont'd)

HPV (Human Papillomavirus)
COMMON SYMPTOMS:

- Warts (genital, common warts, plantar warts, flat warts)
- Certain cancers: cervical, genital, mouth, upper respiratory tract, anal
- Lesions on tongue, tonsils, soft palate, or in the larynx or nose

GENITAL HERPES (SYMPTOMS START 2-12 DAYS AFTER EXPOSURE)
COMMON SYMPTOMS:

- Pain or itching around genitals
- Small bumps or blisters around anus, mouth, or genitals
- Painful ulcers that form when blisters burst and ooze or bleed
- Scabs that form as ulcers heal
- Painful urination
- Discharge from urethra (where urine comes out)

SYPHILIS
COMMON SYMPTOMS (DEVELOP IN STAGES)

- Starts as a sore "chancre"-often painless, and can be found on genitals, rectum, or mouth
- Rash: red, rough, reddish-brown
- Hair loss
- Wartlike sores in mouth or genital area
- Fever
- Muscle aches
- Sore throat
- Weight loss
- Swollen lymph nodes

If not treated, 30-40% of cases develop "tertiary syphilis," which occurs after the latent stage. Tertiary syphilis may damage:

- Brain, heart, eyes, bones & joints, nerves, blood vessels, liver

TRICHOMONIASIS (Caused by a parasite)
COMMON SYMPTOMS:
For people with a vagina:

- Pain in lower stomach area
- Pain with sex or urinating
- Genital burning, soreness, itching, or change in skin color

For people with a penis:

- Often show no symptoms
- Itching or irritation inside the penis
- Burning with urination or after ejaculation
- Clear or pus-like discharge from the penis

TESTING

STI TESTING SITES IN STRAFFORD & ROCKINGHAM COUNTIES:

- **Joan G. Lovering Center** (Greenland): joangloveringhealthcenter.org
- **Lamprey Healthcare** (Newmarket): lampreyhealth.org
- **Planned Parenthood** (Exeter): plannedparenthood.org
- **Clear Choice, MD** (Rochester): ccmdcenters.com
- **Convenient MD** (Dover): convenientmd.com
- **Wentworth Douglass Express Care** (Dover & Lee): massgeneralbrigham.org

Ask if your PCP and/or gynecologist offer STI testing

FAQs ABOUT TESTING

Q: Why should I get tested?
A: Many people won't have symptoms, and untreated, STIs can cause serious health problems.[1]

Q: What if I don't want to talk to my provider about getting tested because I don't want my parents to find out/I'm embarrassed?
A: Find a clinic near you that provides confidential and low cost/free testing! [1]

Q: Will I need an exam?
A: Typically, when being screened for STIs, an exam is not needed, but if you are experiencing symptoms, your provider may recommend it or you may request it. You are entitled to opt out of an exam if you are not comfortable getting one.

Q: Do I still need to get tested if I don't have any symptoms?
A: Yes. You cannot know if you have an STI without getting tested. Often, people with an STI are asymptomatic. You risk passing an STI to your partner or developing serious health issues if you do not seek treatment. [3]

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR PARTNER [1,8]

"When was the last time you got tested for STIs? Want to get tested together?"

"Have you ever shared needles with someone for tattoos, piercings, or to use drugs?"

"Do you usually use condoms and/or dental dams?"

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR PROVIDER [1,8]

"What are the best ways to protect myself from STIs?"

"How do I ask my partner if they have an STI?"
"How do I tell my partner I have an STI?"

"Which STIs should I be tested for, and how often should I get tested?"

PLACES TO FIND MORE INFORMATION

Planned Parenthood: talking to partner about safer sex

Mayo Clinic: facts about specific STIs

County Health Rankings & Roadmaps: data on STIs in your area

CDC Get Yourself Tested (GYT): about STIs, testing, and prevention

Healthy Sexuals: STIs, testing, prevention, and HIV-specific info.

SOURCES

1. **CDC**: cdc.gov/sti

2. **Mayo Clinic:** mayoclinic.org

3. **Planned Parenthood:** plannedparenthood.org

4. **County Health Rankings & Roadmaps:** countyhealthrankings.org

5. **World Health Organization (WHO):** who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/sexually-transmitted-infections-(stis)?/

6. **SOS Recovery:** SOS, “Safer Sex Tips,” brochure

7. **West Virginia University:** well.wvu.edu/educational-resources/sexual-health/spectrum-of-risk

8. **Healthysexual 101:** healthysexuals.com/stis#prevention

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Visit SCPHN.org for more resources & information about our program

THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS

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