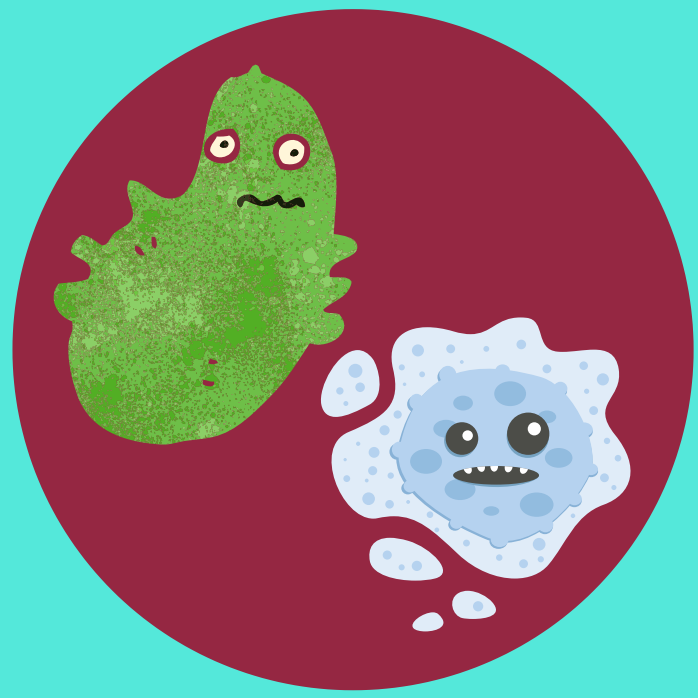




Safer Sex Practices

What are Sexually Transmitted Infections?



Sexually transmitted infections (STI) and sexually transmitted blood borne infections (STBBI) are caused by bacteria or a virus and are transmitted through sexual contact.



Transmission of STI's/STBBI's

- Fluid exchange from genitals (semen and/or vaginal fluids)
- Fluid exchange from saliva
- Skin to skin contact
- Contact with blood

Risk of Transmission of STIs/STBBIs

The level of risk involved depends on which sexual activities a person participates in.

Lower risk sexual activities

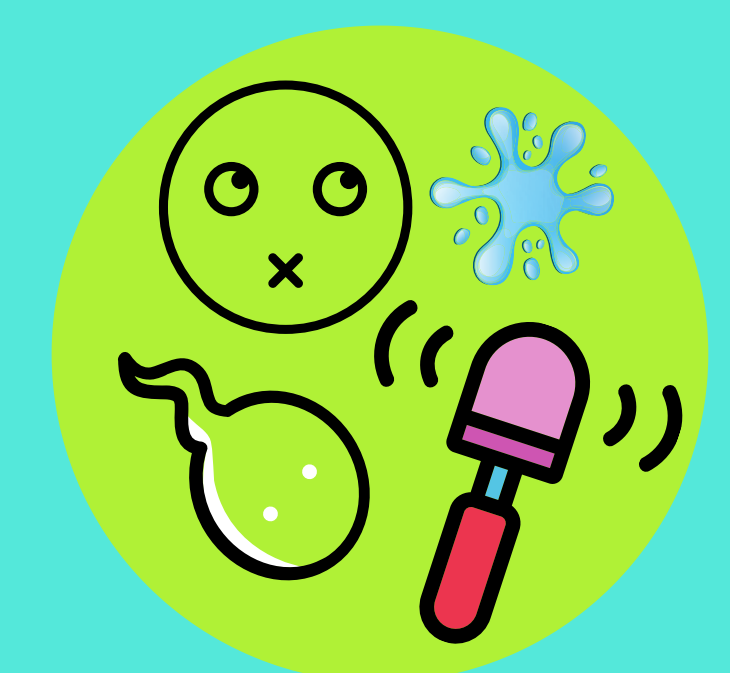
- Are commonly sexual activities where protection is used
- Oral sex (mouth on penis or vulva, mouth on anus) using a dental dam or external condom
- Penetrative sex (penis in vagina, penis in anus) with an internal or external condom



Higher risk sexual activities

- Are commonly sexual activities where no protection is used
- Oral sex (mouth on penis or vulva, mouth on anus) without a dental dam or external condom
- Penetrative sex (penis in vagina, penis in anus) without an internal or external condom

The penis and vulva/vagina are not the only body parts that can transmit and be infected by an STI/STBBI. People can transmit or have an infection in their mouth, throat, lips and anus. STI's/STBBI's may also be transmitted by sharing sex toys that have come in contact with another person's bodily fluids.





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STI/STBBI Prevention

When used correctly, barrier methods are an effective way to protect against the transmission of STI's/STBBI's. Barriers should be used every time a person engages in sexual activity.



- Condoms (internal and external)

- Dental Dams



- Gloves



These are safer sex practices, but there is no 100% "safe" barrier method. The only way to guarantee a person will not be infected with an STI/STBBI is abstinence, meaning the person does not participate in any sexual acts with another person.

Prevalence of STI's/STBBI's

Sexually transmitted infections are common, especially among young people who are sexually active. Most people who are infected are asymptomatic, meaning they have no symptoms or signs that there is an infection.

STI's/STBBI's do not mean a person is "dirty" or "unclean." They do not happen because a person "sleeps with too many people."

The only way to know whether or not someone has an STI/STBBI is for them to get an STI/STBBI test done by a medical doctor.





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Treatment of STI's

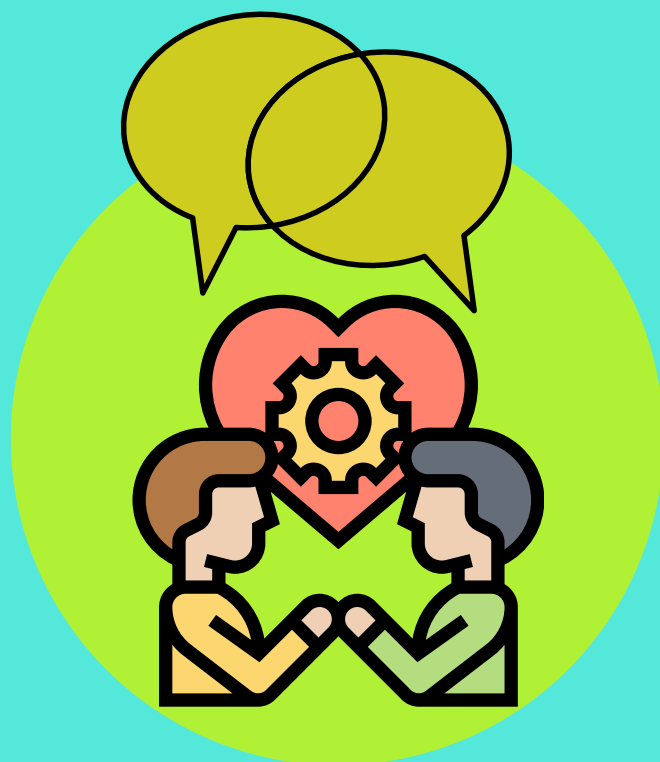


Many STI's that are caused by bacteria can be treated and cured by taking medication that a doctor prescribes.

STI's that are caused by a viral infection can be treated, but they cannot be cured. Once a person becomes infected with a virus they will be infected for the rest of their life. There are preventative vaccines that can protect people against becoming infected with a virus. People can receive a vaccine from a healthcare professional.



If left untreated, sexually transmitted infections can cause damage to the reproductive organs and cause long-term health problems.



Personal Boundaries

Safer Sex is not just about using barriers, such as condoms, to protect yourself physically, it's also about keeping yourself safe emotionally.

Healthy boundaries, communication, consent, and respect for yourself and your partner(s) are an important part of safer sex practices. Get tested for sexually transmitted infections regularly if you are sexually active. Get to know your sexual partner(s) and communicate with them about sexual health, the use of contraception and barriers, and what your sexual boundaries are.



Worried about your sexual health or have questions?

Visit your local health care provider to speak to a professional and get tested for sexually transmitted infections.



References

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