

Sexually Transmitted Diseases: An Overview

STDs are on the rise, especially among young people. Each year there are 15 million new cases of STDs in the US, with two-thirds of these cases among 15-24 year olds. This fact sheet provides basic information about common STDs, including symptoms, available treatments, possible side effects, and current trends.

There are several limitations to the data that should be noted. Only three STDs (chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis) are nationally reportable. Estimates are used for the five STDs that do not have national reporting requirements. Many STDs remain undiagnosed due to a lack of public awareness, social stigma, and the lack of symptoms among many people with STDs. Despite these limitations, the available data highlight the high rates of STDs and the need for prevention efforts.

STD	Symptoms*	Treatment	Possible Side Effects	Population Trends
<p>Chlamydia (bacterial)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible symptoms include unusual discharge, burning urination, pelvic/lower abdominal pain, bleeding in between periods • 75% of women and 50% of men have no symptoms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chlamydia is curable with antibiotics • Several kinds of antibiotics are available, with treatment dosages ranging from one pill to seven or more over a specified period of time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women may develop pelvic inflammatory disease (infection of the reproductive organs that can cause infertility) • May cause lasting pain and scarring in the fallopian tubes, ovaries, and urethra and can lead to infertility or tubal pregnancy • Men may develop urethral infection or epididymis (inflammation of testicular tubes) • Increases the risk of acquiring and transmitting HIV infection when sexually exposed • Increases the chance of chlamydia transmission to the baby if a woman contracts it while pregnant and does not obtain treatment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most commonly reported infectious disease in the US with 3 million new cases of chlamydia each year • Chlamydia is five times more common among women than men • Chlamydia infects 5-10% of women ages 15-24, with teenage girls having the highest rates of infection • Up to 30% of sexually active teenage women and 10% of sexually active teenage men are infected with chlamydia • Up to 40% of women with untreated chlamydia will develop pelvic inflammatory disease

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<p>Gonorrhea (bacterial)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possible symptoms include unusual discharge, burning urination, pelvic/lower abdominal pain, bleeding in between periods 80% of women and 10% of men have no symptoms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gonorrhea is curable with oral antibiotics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May cause sterility, arthritis, or heart problems if untreated Women may develop pelvic inflammatory disease (infection of the reproductive organs that can cause infertility) and men may develop epididymis (inflammation of testicular tubes) Increases the risk of acquiring and transmitting HIV infection when sexually exposed Increases the chance of gonorrhea transmission to the baby if a woman contracts it while pregnant and does not obtain treatment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are 650,000 new cases of gonorrhea each year New cases have declined over the last two decades, following the introduction of a national control program, but declines may be slowing African Americans account for 77% of reported gonorrhea cases Rates of infection are highest among adolescents and young adults (women ages 15-19 and men ages 20 and 24) A woman's risk of acquiring gonorrhea from a single act of intercourse may be as high as 60-90%, while transmission of gonorrhea from a woman to a man is about 20-30%
<p>Syphilis (bacterial)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possible symptoms include painless sores or open ulcers on the genitals, vagina, cervix, lips, mouth, or anus, body rashes on hands and feet Although most people do not experience symptoms, when they do occur, they can be present in several phases that may overlap 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Antibiotics can be taken during the initial stages to cure the infection If untreated, damage caused during later stages cannot be undone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Untreated syphilis may damage the nervous system, heart, brain, or other organs, and in some cases cause death Increases the risk of acquiring and transmitting HIV infection when sexually exposed Increases the chance of syphilis transmission to the baby if a woman contracts it while pregnant and does not obtain treatment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rates are at lowest levels in two decades, at 70,000 new cases annually In 1998, African Americans accounted for 80% of reported cases of syphilis, Whites accounted for 13%, and Latinos for 6% Syphilis is more prevalent in males than females Males ages 30-39 and females ages 20-24 have the highest rates of infection Half of the new syphilis cases are concentrated in 31 US counties (1% of all counties) with the majority of cases in the South

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Hepatitis B (HBV) (viral)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possible symptoms include fatigue, nausea, fever, loss of appetite, abdominal pain, diarrhea, jaundice 50% of those infected experience no symptoms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hepatitis B vaccine is considered highly effective There is no cure for hepatitis B but in most cases the infection clears within 8 weeks to 6 months 5-10% of people infected will develop chronic hepatitis and carry the virus for the rest of their lives For chronic hepatitis B, alpha-interferon injections are standard treatment, typically given 3 times a week for 4 months 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The virus attacks the liver and may lead to chronic liver disease and liver cancer Increases the risk of acquiring and transmitting HIV infection when sexually exposed Increases the chance of hepatitis B transmission to the baby if a woman contracts it while pregnant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Estimated 200,000 new cases of hepatitis B each year, more than half of which are acquired by sexual transmission 90-95 percent of adults with hepatitis B recover completely One out of 20 people in the US will contract hepatitis B sometime in their life The chances of a person developing liver cancer are up to 300 times greater if that person is a hepatitis B carrier
Genital Herpes (HSV-2) (viral)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possible symptoms include recurrent rashes, burning urination, recurrent and painful ulcers, itchy/painful blistery sores on genitals, thighs, buttocks, mouth Recurrences may be related to physical and emotional stress Nearly 2/3 of people infected with herpes do not know it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no cure for herpes but there are three prescription medicines available that can relieve the symptoms and reduce recurrences Symptoms and recurrences decrease with the passage of time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increases the risk of acquiring and transmitting HIV infection when sexually exposed Increases the chance of genital herpes transmission to the baby if a woman contracts it while pregnant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One million new cases occur each year, with an estimated total of 45 million people in the US already infected with genital herpes One in four adults has genital herpes Infection rates have increased 30% in the last two decades 45% of African Americans are infected with herpes, compared to 17% percent of Whites 12% of people under age 25 have herpes Herpes is more common in women (one out of four are infected) than men (one out of five infected)

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Human Papillomavirus (HPV) (viral 60 different strains)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possible symptoms include itchiness, warts on genitals, anus, or urethra Warts may appear singularly or in clusters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Symptoms are treatable but the virus is not curable Genital warts grow back again in at least 30% of cases treated Treatments vary from topical creams and gels to freezing techniques and laser therapy techniques 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can lead to cancer of the cervix, vulva, penis, or anus when left untreated Responsible for 98% of all cases of cervical cancer Increases the risk of acquiring and transmitting HIV infection when sexually exposed Increases the chance of HPV transmission to the baby if a woman contracts it while pregnant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Estimated 5.5 million new infections occur each year, and at least 20 million people already infected 74% of the US population between the ages of 15 and 49 have been infected HPV is the most common STD among young, sexually active populations HPV has been shown to infect more than 40% of sexually active college students Paired with Trich, these two STDs make up 2/3rds of all new cases of STDs Cervical cancer deaths occur almost exclusively in African American women due to lack of access to health care for early treatment
Trichomoniasis (bacterial) Bacterial Vaginosis (bacterial)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possible symptoms include frothy discharge, itching, burning urination, pain and swelling in groin Often there are no symptoms of Trich, especially in men 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Antibiotics successfully remove the bacteria from the body 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Untreated bacterial vaginosis may lead to pelvic inflammatory disease (infection of reproductive organs that can cause infertility) Increases the risk of acquiring and transmitting HIV infection when sexually exposed Increases the chance of Trich or vaginosis transmission to the baby if a woman contracts it while pregnant and does not obtain treatment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Estimated 6 million new cases of Trich each year Trich is the most common curable STD among young, sexually active women Paired with HPV, these two STDs make up 2/3rds of all new cases of STDs

*Common symptoms of most STDs include fever, headache, fatigue, nausea, body aches and other common flu-like symptoms.

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