

Frequently Asked Questions

- ? [I've just been diagnosed with an STD. Does this mean my partner has lied or cheated on me?](#)
- ? [If I get a pap smear regularly, wouldn't the doctor tell me if I had an STD?](#)
- ? [What are sexually transmitted diseases \(STDs\)?](#)
- ? [How common are STDs?](#)
- ? [What are the typical symptoms of STDs?](#)
- ? [How can I tell if my partner has an STD?](#)
- ? [How are STDs transmitted?](#)
- ? [Can herpes be passed when there are no symptoms?](#)
- ? [Can I get STDs from a towel or a toilet seat?](#)
- ? [What should I do if I think I have an STD?](#)
- ? [Can I get an STD more than once?](#)
- ? [Can all STDs be cured?](#)
- ? [Is it true that if I get tested for HIV, I get tested for all STDs?](#)
- ? [Can I test myself for STDs?](#)
- ? [How serious are the complications of STDs?](#)
- ? [Are women at greater risk for STDs?](#)
- ? [What is the best protection against STDs?](#)
- ? [What is the link between HIV and other STDs?](#)

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- ? **I've just been diagnosed with an STD. Does this mean my partner has lied or cheated on me?** - [top](#)

Answer: No, not necessarily. Not everyone will have symptoms of an STD even though they are infected. A partner can pass a disease to another without ever knowing s/he has had something. You, the unfortunate current partner, may be the one that actually ends up with symptoms. You may also

have received your STD from a previous partner years ago and are just now seeing the signs of the disease.

? **If I get a pap smear regularly, wouldn't the doctor tell me if I had an STD?** - [top](#)

Answer: No, not necessarily. A pap smear is looking for cancerous or pre-cancerous cells. STD exams are unique tests that look for specific STDs. They may take the form of a blood, culture, or urine test. Be sure and ask your doctor for the name of the test you want done (for instance, chlamydia, syphilis, or HIV).

? **What are sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)?** - [top](#)

Answer: The term "sexually transmitted diseases" or "STDs" represents a group of more than 25 different diseases that can be passed from one person to another through sexual contact.

? **How common are STDs?** - [top](#)

Answer: STDs are very common in the United States. With more than 12 million people in U.S. infected each year, at least 1 person in 4 will be infected with a STD at some point in his or her life. In the United States, there are approximately 4 million new chlamydia infections a year. Over 40 million people have herpes and 30 million have genital warts (HPV). These numbers surpass the 1 million cases of HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus).

? **What are the typical symptoms of STDs?** - [top](#)

Answer: Many STDs have no noticeable symptoms. When they occur, typical STD symptoms for women may include unusual vaginal discharge (flow), sores, bumps, burning when urinating, and redness or itching around the vaginal area. Typical symptoms for men may include discharge from the penis, burning when urinating, and sores, bumps, or redness on or around the penis.

? **How can I tell if my partner has an STD?** - [top](#)

Answer: In most cases, you cannot tell by looking if someone has an STD. STDs often do not have visible symptoms.

? **How are STDs transmitted?** - [top](#)

Answer: STDs can be transmitted through oral, anal, or vaginal sex. They can be transmitted from partner to partner with or without visible signs or symptoms. Many people can pass an STD to a sex partner without knowing it. Some STDs can be passed without having intercourse; they can be passed through skin-to-skin contact.

? **Can herpes be passed when there are no symptoms?** - [top](#)

Answer: Yes, it is possible to infect someone with herpes, even when you don't have any symptoms. Once thought to be transmitted only when sores were present, recent research has shown that herpes simplex virus (HSV) can be passed even when no visible signs are present.

? **Can I get STDs from a towel or a toilet seat?** - [top](#)

Answer: Most STDs, such as chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis, herpes, and genital warts, are spread only through direct sexual contact with an infected person. Crabs (pubic lice) or scabies, which are often sexually transmitted, can be passed through contact with infested items like clothes, sheets, or towels.

? **What should I do if I think I have an STD?** - [top](#)

Answer: If you think you have an STD, see a health care provider immediately. Seeking treatment early will help to minimize the long-term effects of most STDs. Avoid sexual contact until you are cured. Make sure your partner(s) get tested and treated too. For STD clinic locations in Los Angeles County call the Los Angeles STD Hotline (800) 758-0880. For all other areas, contact your local or state health department for a clinic near you.

? **Can I get an STD more than once?** - [top](#)

Answer: You are not "immune" to an STD if you have had it before. STDs caused by bacteria (chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis) can be treated and cured, but you can get them again if exposed. Viral STDs cannot be cured and may remain in your body forever.

? **Can all STDs be cured?** - [top](#)

Answer: Bacterial STDs like chlamydia, gonorrhea and syphilis, can be easily treated and cured. Viral STDs like herpes, genital warts, and HIV are incurable, but there are treatments available to lessen the severity of the disease.

? **Is it true that if I get tested for HIV, I get tested for all STDs?** - [top](#)

Answer: No. Each STD, including HIV, has its own test. Talk to your provider to make sure you're getting the test you need.

? **Can I test myself for STDs?** - [top](#)

Answer: Currently, there are no home tests for STDs. The only way to know if you have an STD is to see a healthcare provider and get tested.

? **How serious are the complications of STDs?** - [top](#)

Answer: If left untreated, STDs can lead to major health problems. HIV can lead to AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome). Other STDs can cause infertility, tubal pregnancy, reproductive cancers, pelvic inflammatory disease, and serious complications in newborns. Complications from STDs often occur years after infection.

? **Are women at greater risk for STDs?** - [top](#)

Answer: Yes, women are at greater risk for many STDs, including HIV. Women are biologically more susceptible than men to becoming infected if exposed to an STD. STDs are also less likely to produce symptoms in women, and therefore are more difficult to diagnose until serious problems develop, such as PID (Pelvic Inflammatory Disease).

? **What is the best protection against STDs?** - [top](#)

Answer: All STDs are preventable. Abstinence (not having sex) is the only sure way to prevent an STD. If you are having sex, using condoms (latex or polyurethane) can significantly reduce the risk of getting an STD, when used correctly. Limiting your number of sex partners also reduces your risk of getting an STD.

Links: See [Prevention](#)

? **What is the link between HIV and other STDs?** - [top](#)

Answer: Many STDs increase the risk of HIV transmission. Ulcerations or sores caused by some STDs can provide HIV with easy access into the bloodstream. People with an STD such as syphilis, genital herpes, chlamydia, or gonorrhea are 3 to 5 times more likely to contract HIV, if exposed, than people who are not infected with an STD.