

STIS & SEXUAL SAFETY



MYTH BUSTING

- MYTH: "You'd know if you had an STI."
- FACT: Most STIs have NO symptoms. The only way to know is to get tested.





WHY THIS MATTERS

1 in 5 people in the U.S. has an STI. Half of all new STI cases occur in people aged 15–24. Most are curable — and the ones that aren't are very manageable with treatment. Stigma is the biggest barrier to testing and treatment.

BACTERIAL STIS (CURABLE)

- **Chlamydia:**

- Most reported STI in the U.S.; often zero symptoms
- Treated easily with antibiotics
- Untreated → can cause infertility

- **Gonorrhea:**

- Increasingly antibiotic-resistant – early treatment matters
- Can infect genitals, throat, and rectum

- **Syphilis:**

- Stages: sore → rash → no symptoms → serious organ damage
 - Curable with penicillin; untreated for years → severe complications
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VIRAL STIS (MANAGEABLE)

- **Herpes (HSV-1/2):**

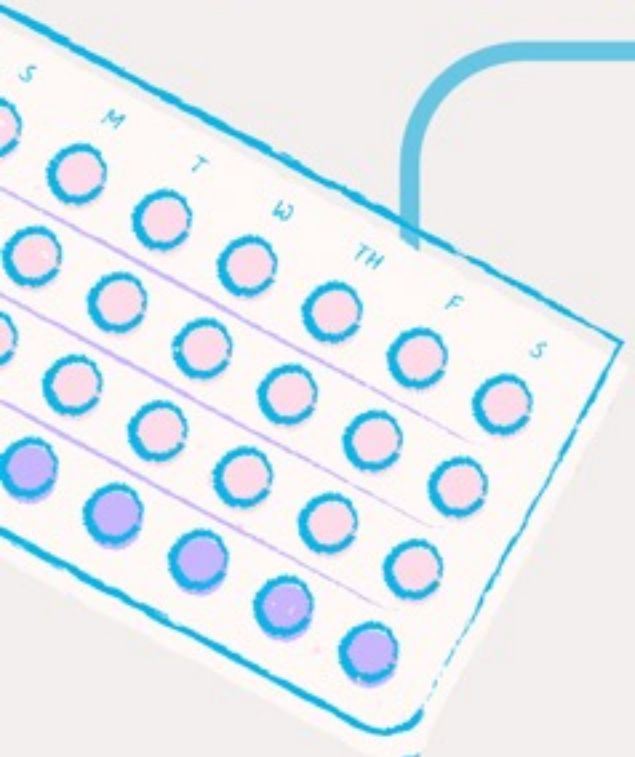
- Extremely common; spread by skin contact (not just intercourse)
- Many people never have noticeable outbreaks
- Managed with antiviral medication

- **HPV:**

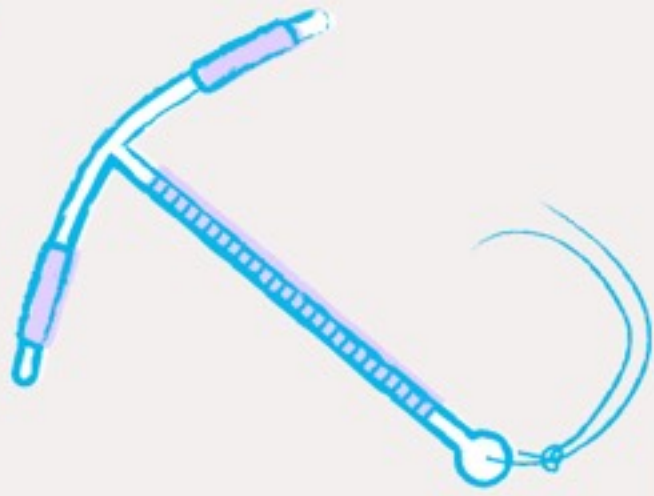
- Most sexually active people will get HPV at some point
- Most cases clear on their own; some strains → genital warts or cervical cancer
- Vaccine is highly effective – recommended through age 26

- **HIV:**

- Attacks the immune system; transmitted through blood, semen, vaginal fluid, breast milk
- With treatment (ART), people with HIV live full, healthy lives
- PrEP: daily pill that is ~99% effective at preventing HIV



TESTING



Who should get tested? Anyone who is sexually active — regardless of how many partners you've had.

How often?

- Once a year at minimum
- Every 3–6 months if you have multiple partners or don't consistently use condoms

What does testing involve?

- Urine sample, blood draw, or swab — usually quick and painless
- Home testing kits available (NURX, Let'sGetChecked)

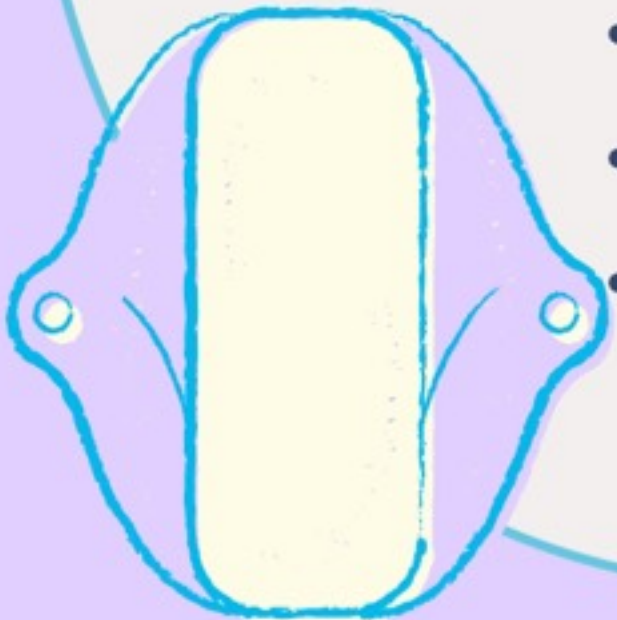


PROTECTION



Best protection strategies:

- External or internal condoms (only method protecting against most STIs)
- Dental dams for oral-vaginal or oral-anal contact
- PrEP for HIV prevention
- Vaccination: HPV vaccine, Hepatitis B vaccine
- Regular testing for you and partners



STIGMA

STI stigma causes real harm:

- It stops people from getting tested
- It stops people from disclosing to partners
- It causes shame that has nothing to do with the actual health reality

- **Getting an STI doesn't say anything about your worth, your choices, or your character. It means you're a human who had sex.**

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Most STIs have no symptoms – testing is the only way to know.
- Bacterial STIs (chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis) are curable.
- Viral STIs (herpes, HPV, HIV) are manageable – stigma is worse than the reality.
- Get tested once a year minimum if you're sexually active.
- Condoms + vaccination + testing = best protection strategy.

