

Older Adults and STIs



Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) can be passed from one person to another during any type of sex. This includes oral, vaginal, and anal sex. Anyone who is sexually active could be at risk for STIs. If both you and your partner have had sex only with each other for many years, you're not likely to be at risk. But if you have sex with more than one person, or recently had a new sex partner, this sheet is for you. STIs include chlamydia, syphilis, gonorrhea, genital herpes, genital warts, trichomonas, and HIV. You can also get HIV by sharing syringe needles.

Age is no protection

STIs may seem like a young person's problem. Not true. Anyone who has sex could catch an STI. And never assume that the person you're having sex with can't have an STI just because they're an older adult.

What puts you at risk?

Most STIs are passed through contact with the body fluids, genital sores, or blood of an infected person. You're at risk if you:

- Have had sex with even 1 person who has an STI
- Have multiple sex partners
- Have had sex with a new or casual partner without using a latex condom
- Think that any of the above could be true for a past or present sex partner

Get tested

If you think you're at risk for an STI, get tested. The sooner you know about an STI, the sooner it can be treated. Getting early treatment reduces the damage an STI does to your body. It also makes it less likely you'll pass the infection to someone else. When you're tested, you'll get a chance to talk with a healthcare provider about your risks. You can also talk about how to keep from getting other STIs and spreading the disease to others.

Getting test results

For some STIs, results are ready right away. For others, results can take up to 1 week. Talking with a provider about the results can help you understand exactly what they mean. If your risk continues after you've been tested, you may be advised to repeat the test from time to time. If you find that you do have an STI, your provider can help you tell your partners. Then they can get tested and treated, too.

How to protect yourself

If you have sex, there are a few simple rules for protecting yourself:

1. Limit the number of sex partners you have.
2. Use a latex condom and water-based lubricant each time you have sex.
3. Before you have sex, talk with your partners about your sexual history, getting tested for HIV and other STIs, and whether either of you have ever injected illegal drugs.

You can find more information on STIs at the CDC's sexually transmitted diseases website at www.cdc.gov/std/default.htm.

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