

- It is harder for a woman to protect herself from STIs, because she is often unable to negotiate with the male partner to use a condom.

### What are the consequences of STIs?

STIs can cause:

- infertility in men and women;
- babies to be born too early, too small or blind; and
- long lasting pain in lower abdomen, or even cancer.
- Death from severe infection or AIDS

### What are the signs of RTIs?

Signs of RTIs include:

- Abnormal discharge
- Lower abdominal pain
- Rash, Swelling in the groin or sore in genital area.

However, these signs manifest very late. It is best to be aware that a woman can be at risk for an STI if:

- Husband has signs of an STI.
- Either the man or woman has more than one sexual partner.
- In some occupations which require long period of travel and where the men engage in casual sex.

### Tasks for ASHA to be involved in are:

- Counsel women at risk on preventive measures.
- Counsel women with symptoms of RTI/STI to go to the health facility for treatment. All 24X7 PHCs or higher facilities are equipped and skilled to provide necessary care.
- Take the course of medicine fully (all courses are for a week or ten days). You should motivate the woman to complete the course of medicines. Not completing the course of medicines makes the bacteria resistant and can cause a worse infection that does not respond to drugs the next time.
- Ensure that the husband also gets treated.
- Counsel a women to abstain from sexual activity during the period of treatment.
- If the husband is known to indulge in extra-marital relationships, counsel the woman to avoid having unprotected sex.

### Where to get treatment for RTI/STI

- All drugs for STI treatment are available free of cost from PHC upwards.
- ANM and the PHC doctor can provide treatment.