Sexually Transmitted Infections or Diseases (STIs or STDs)

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Together, we can change the course of the HIV epidemic…one woman at a time.

#onewomanatatime

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Sexually transmitted infections: Infections passed from person to person through sexual contact

- HIV is an STI
- More than 25 STIs mainly spread by vaginal, anal, and oral sex
The Basics

- World Health Organization (WHO): more than 1 million people get an STI every day worldwide
- STIs are similar to, but not the same as, STDs
  - Most people with STIs do not have any symptoms
    - Often don’t know they can pass infection on
  - Left untreated, STIs can cause serious problems:
    - Cervical cancer
    - Liver disease
    - Pelvic inflammatory disease (PID)
    - Infertility
    - Pregnancy problems
The Basics

• Having some STIs can increase risk of acquiring HIV if you are HIV-negative and get exposed to HIV:
  – Chancroid
  – Herpes
  – Syphilis
  – Trichomoniasis

• People living with HIV may also be at greater risk of getting or passing on other STIs

• People living with HIV often experience more serious problems if/when they get STIs
US has highest rate of STIs in resource-rich world

• About 20 million new infections each year

• Over half among young people (15-24 years old) – more at risk for STIs than older adults because:
  – Young people’s cervical cells more vulnerable to STIs
  – Teenagers, young adults may have problems getting information, services, supplies they need to avoid STIs
    • May have trouble getting STI prevention services
    • May not feel comfortable in places designed for adults
    • May have concerns about confidentiality

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Teenage girls and women of color have some of the highest rates of STIs – especially chlamydia, gonorrhea

• Several factors:
  – Higher rates of poverty
  – Less access to health care
  – Already high rate of STIs in communities of color

  • Increases risk of getting an STI each time a woman has sex
  • Sexual partner in community is more likely to have an STI
The Basics

• Regardless of race or age, **less than half of those who should be tested for STIs** receive screening
  – Especially important for women
  – More frequent/serious complications from STIs than men

• STIs without symptoms can still be transmitted
  – Many people who have an STI do not know it
  – Only way to know for sure is regular STI screenings

• STIs can be **prevented by practicing safer sex**

• STIs can be **cured or managed with treatment**
The Basics

• Many people with STIs **have no or symptoms**
  – When there are signs of STIs, likely to be in genital area
  – For cisgender women, this includes:
    • Vulva (area around vagina including lips)
    • Vagina (opening where menstrual blood comes out)
    • Buttocks
    • Urethra (opening above vagina where urine comes out)
    • Anus (opening where bowel movement – “poop” – comes out)
  – For cisgender men, this includes:
    • Penis
    • Scrotum (“balls”)
    • Urethra
    • Anus

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Chlamydia

• Among *most common STIs*
• Caused by bacterium in vaginal secretions, semen
• Can be spread by:
  – Vaginal, oral, or anal sex without a condom or other latex or polyurethane barrier
  – Pregnant people can pass it on to babies during delivery
• If there are symptoms, they may include:
  – Vaginal discharge
  – Burning during urination
Chlamydia

- Can be successfully treated with antibiotics
  - Left untreated, can spread to ovaries and fallopian tubes, cause pelvic inflammatory disease (PID)
  - PID can lead to infertility, make it difficult to become pregnant

- Yearly screening recommended by CDC for:
  - All sexually active women under 25
  - Older women with new or multiple sex partners
  - Recent reports show less than half of sexually active women under 25 are screened

- If treated, partner must be treated, too
Genital Warts

• Caused by viruses
  – **HPV** (Human Papillomavirus) is large group of viruses
  – Certain types of HPV cause infections in genital area
    • Genital warts, cancer of cervix, vulva, vagina, anus, penis

• Genital HPV is spread easily:
  – Skin-to-skin contact during vaginal, oral, or anal sex
    • Condoms do not entirely prevent transmission
  – People living with HIV *more likely to have HPV, develop genital warts, cervical or anal cancer*
Genital Warts

- Important to find HPV early and get treatment to prevent health problems
- Also **three effective HPV vaccines**
  - Since HPV vaccine introduction several years ago, # of 14- to 19-year-old girls with HPV in US has dropped by more than half
- Young people should get vaccinated before they have sex (before they have been exposed to HPV)
  - People who are already infected with HPV may not be protected by vaccines

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Gonorrhea ("The Clap")

- Caused by bacterium in vaginal secretions, semen
- Can be spread by:
  - Vaginal, anal, oral sex without condom or latex/polyurethane barrier
- If there are symptoms, they may include:
  - Yellowish or greenish vaginal discharge
  - Burning feeling when urinating
  - Can also affect anus and throat
- Can be treated with antibiotics
  - Left untreated, can cause PID, infertility
  - All sexually active women should be screened
- If treated, partner must be treated, too

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Herpes

- Caused by a virus in nerves; two common types
  - Herpes simplex type 1 causes cold sores around mouth
  - Herpes simplex type 2 causes sores in genital area
  - Possible to get HSV-2 in mouth, HSV-1 in genital area

- Symptoms include itchy or painful blisters

- Spread through skin-to-skin contact with sores
  - May also spread even before sores can be seen
  - In most people, sores come and go; virus stays in body for life
Herpes

- Sometimes no symptoms; virus "hiding" in nerves
  - Some women living with HIV never had blisters or sores before acquiring HIV; surprised by "outbreak" of sores
  - Women living with HIV may have more frequent difficult to treat outbreaks

- No cure; antiviral drugs can:
  - Reduce # of outbreaks if taken daily
  - Shorten and ease outbreaks if taken when symptoms begin
  - Valtrex also shown to lower transmission risk

- Pregnant people can transmit herpes to babies
  - Tell your provider if you have genital herpes and are pregnant or planning pregnancy
HIV stands for **Human Immunodeficiency Virus**

- Virus that causes AIDS

Is in blood, vaginal secretions, semen, breast milk

Can be spread through vaginal, oral, or anal sex without condom or latex/polyurethane barrier

- 13% of people living with HIV in US do not know it

Getting tested for HIV is part of routine, regular health care in many countries

Different testing recommendations for different areas of the world
HIV

• Important that you get tested if you:
  – Have ever had vaginal, anal, or oral sex without a condom
  – Have shared needles, syringes to inject drugs, other substances
  – Are uncertain of partner’s HIV status; have a partner living with HIV
  – Are pregnant or are considering becoming pregnant
  – Have ever been diagnosed with an STI or STD
  – Have hepatitis C
  – Begin treatment for tuberculosis (TB)

• HIV drugs
  – Help people living with HIV stay well
  – Can prevent people from acquiring HIV (PrEP)

• Cannot transmit if undetectable viral load (U=U)

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Syphilis

• Caused by bacterium
• Can be spread by:
  – Vaginal, anal, or oral sex without condom or other barrier
• Has several phases:
  – **Primary syphilis** (early disease): pain-free open sores (*chancre*) in genital or anal area or around mouth
    • Usually heal on their own in 3-6 weeks
  – **Secondary syphilis** (later stage): rash and/or hair loss
  – Left untreated, can proceed to **latent stage**
    • Can damage heart, brain, eyes, ears, other organs even without symptoms

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Syphilis

- Can be successfully treated with antibiotics
- Pregnant people can pass syphilis to their babies during pregnancy and childbirth
  - Important that pregnant people get tested for syphilis
- If treated, partner must be treated, too

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Other STIs to Know About

- Chancroid
- Hepatitis
- Pubic Lice ("Crabs")
- Trichomoniasis
Chancroid

• Caused by bacterium
• Symptoms may include:
  – Genital sores
  – Vaginal discharge
  – Burning feeling when urinating
  – Swollen lymph nodes in groin
• Can be spread by:
  – Vaginal or anal sex
  – Skin-to-skin contact with sores
• Can be treated with antibiotics

Credit: Medicinenet.com
Hepatitis

- Inflammation (irritation) of liver
- Some types of hepatitis caused by viruses in blood, vaginal secretions, semen, breast milk
  - Hepatitis B (HBV), C (HCV) can be sexually transmitted
  - Can become chronic (long-term), very serious
  - May have no symptoms
- Vaccine to prevent HBV
- Cure for HCV
- People living with HIV should be tested and treated for HBV, HCV

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Pubic Lice ("Crabs")

- Live in pubic hair (hair around genitals)
- Can be transmitted by:
  - Skin-to-skin contact
  - Infected clothes and bedding
- Symptoms may include:
  - Intense itching
  - Seeing lice or eggs in hair
- Can be treated with over-the-counter medications
  - Pregnant people must use products designed just for them
  - Wash contaminated clothes, linen in hot water, laundry soap

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Credit: Jennifer2016 on Glogster
Trichomoniasis

- Caused by **protozoa** (single-celled germ)
- Can be spread during vaginal, oral, or anal sex without a condom or latex/polyurethane barrier
  - Common cause of vaginal infections
- Symptoms may include:
  - Foamy, foul-smelling vaginal discharge
  - Itching
  - Sometimes there are no symptoms at all
- Can be successfully treated with antibiotics
  - Sexual partner must also be treated
Protecting Yourself and Others

You can **greatly reduce risk** of getting many STIs:

- Use a latex or plastic condom for vaginal and anal sex
  - Female condom can also prevent many STIs
  - Use condoms without lubricant for oral sex on a man

- Use latex or plastic barriers (dental dams, plastic wrap) for oral sex on a woman or for oral-anal sex; use latex or plastic gloves if you have cuts or sores on your hands

- Use water-based lubricants with latex barriers
- DO NOT use oil-based products
- Do not use lubricants or condoms that contain nonoxynol-9 (N-9)
Protecting Yourself and Others

- Wash shared sex toys or use fresh condom between users
- Use a latex condom with methods of birth control that do not protect you from STIs
- Talk with your sex partner(s) about STIs and condoms
- Talk honestly with your provider, sex partner(s), about any STIs you or your partner has or has had
- Have regular pelvic exams, cervical cancer screenings
- Talk to your provider about having a routine STI screening
- Do not share needles or syringes for injecting drugs or other substances
  - If you do share drug equipment, clean your works

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• There are many STIs, including HIV
• Some can be cured; many can be managed
  – Many can cause serious health and fertility problems or even death if untreated
    • If needed, get treatment your provider recommends
    • Even if symptoms go away, still need to finish treatment
  – Make sure your partner(s) gets treated, so that you do not pass an infection back and forth
To learn more about this topic, and for links to articles featuring more details, please read the full fact sheet on this topic:

- Fact sheet: Sexually Transmitted Infections or Diseases (STIs or STDs)

For more fact sheets and to connect to our community of women living with HIV, visit:

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- www.facebook.com/thewellproject
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