

Your Guide to  
**Sexually  
Transmitted  
Infections**  
(STIs)



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive



[sexualwellbeing.ie](http://sexualwellbeing.ie)

This document provides information on sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Some conditions that are not sexually transmitted are also included because they can cause symptoms (signs of a sickness) in the genital area.

# What is an STI?

**An STI is a sexually transmitted infection.**

**STIs are passed on through sexual contact with someone who is infected.**

## What if I think I have an STI?

If you think you may have an STI, visit your GP, pharmacist or an STI clinic for professional advice. You will find a list of free STI testing services at the end of this guide.

## How would I know if I had an STI?

You may not know if you have an STI, so it is important to be tested. Your partner should also be tested.

## When should I have a test?

You should be tested if:

- > You have any symptoms which suggest an STI (see symptoms below).
- > Your partner has an STI.
- > You change your sexual partner.
- > You have multiple sexual partners.

## What does the test involve?

The type of test will depend on your symptoms.

For **men**, you will be asked to give a urine sample into a small bottle. Men should not urinate (pass urine) for 2 hours before giving a urine sample. Sometimes a sample called a swab is taken from inside the top of the penis – this will depend on what your symptoms are and will be explained to you by the doctor or nurse seeing you.

Sometimes swabs will also be taken from the throat, the anus or rectum (back passage).

A swab is like a cotton bud.

For **women** a swab is taken from the vagina, this can be done by the doctor or nurse and sometimes by yourself.

Men and women will also have blood tests to check for HIV, hepatitis and syphilis.

## Do I have to tell my partner if I have an STI?

You should tell your partner if you have an STI so they can be tested and treated. Your doctor or nurse can give you advice and help on how to do this.

# STI facts:

- > You can get an STI the first time you have sex.
- > You can get an STI even if you know your partner.
- > You can't tell if someone has an STI by looking at them.
- > You can get STIs from oral sex.
- > You can be infected with more than one STI at a time.
- > You can get an STI more than once.

## Common STIs and genital conditions

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# Bacterial Vaginosis (BV)

## What is BV?

BV is the most common cause of abnormal discharge from the vagina. Any woman can get BV, not just women who are sexually active. The normal vagina contains a mixture of bacteria which help to keep the vagina healthy. BV is an overgrowth of some of the bacteria (called anaerobes) resulting in an overall imbalance of the bacteria. It is not sexually transmitted.

## How do I get BV?

Any woman can get BV. You may be more likely to if you:

- > have a new partner
- > smoke
- > have oral sex
- > douche
- > have sex with multiple partners

## What symptoms would I have with BV?

Common symptoms include an abnormal smell from the vagina, like a 'fishy' smell, or a discharge from the vagina which can be grey, pale and thin. Sometimes the 'fishy' smell is worse after sex. BV does not cause itch, soreness or irritation.

## How can I be tested?

BV can be diagnosed based on the symptoms you describe and some simple tests on your vaginal discharge. This can be explained to you by the doctor or nurse who sees you when you attend the clinic.

## Can BV be treated?

BV is treated with antibiotics. It sometimes comes back and needs to be treated again. Your male partner does not need to be tested or treated.

## How can I avoid getting BV again?

The best ways of preventing BV are not known but avoiding anything that upsets the natural balance of bacteria in the vagina may help. This includes avoiding:

- > douching (rinsing inside your vagina)
- > frequent washing
- > bubble baths, scented soaps, antiseptics such as dettol and feminine washes

# Chlamydia

## What is chlamydia?

Chlamydia is a bacterial infection. It is one of the most common STIs. If it is not treated, it can cause infertility in women.

## How do I get chlamydia?

Chlamydia is passed from one person to another from:

- > unprotected sex (oral, vaginal, anal)
- > using unwashed sex toys
- > mother-to-baby during delivery

Chlamydia can infect the cervix (neck of the womb), urethra (the tube through which you pass urine), rectum (back passage), pharynx (throat) and sometimes the eyes.

## You cannot catch chlamydia by:

- > hugging
- > kissing
- > swimming
- > sitting on toilet seats
- > sharing cutlery or towels

## What symptoms would I have with chlamydia?

Half the men with chlamydia and 7 out of 10 women with chlamydia don't experience any symptoms.

If you do have symptoms, they include:

### Men

- > discharge from the tip of the penis
- > pain or discomfort passing urine
- > bowel symptoms such as diarrhoea, pain, mucus discharge or bleeding from the back passage
- > pain and swelling in one or both testicles

### Women

- > bleeding after sex
- > bleeding between periods
- > change in your normal vaginal discharge
- > pain passing urine
- > pain in your abdomen (tummy)

## **How can I find out if I have chlamydia?**

Chlamydia is diagnosed by taking a urine sample in men and a vaginal swab in women. Sometimes a swab is taken from the rectum (back passage) or throat.

## **Can chlamydia be treated?**

Yes. Chlamydia is treated with antibiotics.

## **When can I have sex again?**

You shouldn't have sex (even oral sex or sex with a condom) until you have finished treatment. If you had the 1-day course of treatment, you should avoid having sex for a week afterwards. Your partner should be tested too and may need to be treated. If you have sex with your partner before they are tested and treated you may become infected again.

## **Will I need a repeat test to make sure the infection has cleared?**

In most cases, no, but your doctor or nurse will tell you if you need to come back for a repeat test.

## **How can I prevent myself from getting chlamydia again?**

Using condoms correctly and every time you have sex will reduce your risk of getting chlamydia. If you have a new partner it is a good idea for both of you to have a sexual health check-up before any unprotected sex.

## **What is LGV?**

LGV stands for Lymphogranuloma Venereum. It is a type of chlamydia which is most commonly seen in men who have sex with men.

LGV can cause rectal pain, bleeding or pus from the back passage, bowel symptoms, genital ulcers (sores), and swollen lymph glands. It is usually treated with a longer course of antibiotics than simple chlamydia infection.

# Genital Herpes (HSV)

## What is genital herpes?

Genital herpes is a viral infection caused by the herpes simplex virus (HSV). There are two types: HSV 1 and HSV 2.

HSV 1 is more commonly associated with 'cold sores' around the mouth. HSV 2 is most commonly associated with genital infection.

## How do I get genital herpes?

The herpes virus is transmitted by skin-to-skin contact, kissing, vaginal and anal sex, oral sex (mouth to genital contact) and from mother-to-baby during delivery.

## What symptoms would I have?

Many people with the herpes virus do not experience any symptoms when they are first infected and, as a result, do not know that they have it.

If you get symptoms, your first episode (sometimes referred to as an attack or an outbreak) will usually be the most severe.

Symptoms are multiple spots or red bumps around the genital area. These can be very painful. In time, these swellings can break open and form sores or ulcers which gradually crust over and heal. You may also have swollen glands in the groin, flu-like symptoms, a feeling of being unwell and pain when passing urine.

## Can genital herpes be treated?

If you have symptoms of genital herpes for the first time, the treatment usually involves antiviral tablets, to help speed up the healing process. Usually the pain can be managed with simple painkillers and a local anaesthetic (numbing) cream.

Once you have HSV, the virus stays in your body. It can become active again if you are ill or under stress. These later 'outbreaks' or 'episodes' are usually less severe than the first one and tend to become less frequent over time.



## **What if I get a lot of outbreaks or episodes?**

Some people are put on daily antiviral medication if they get a lot of outbreaks. Other people who occasionally get recurrent episodes just take the antiviral medication when they get symptoms. Your doctor or nurse will explain what may be the best option for you.

## **How can I avoid passing genital herpes to a partner?**

Using condoms and taking antiviral medication can reduce the risk of passing on genital herpes. It is best to avoid sex during an outbreak.

In some cases your partner will be offered a blood test to see if they also have been exposed to herpes before. You can discuss this further with your doctor or nurse.

## **What if my partner tells me they had genital herpes in the past?**

If your partner tells you they have had genital herpes in the past it is a good idea to visit your doctor to discuss things. You should avoid having sex with your partner if they have an outbreak. A blood test can be done to see if you have been exposed to herpes in the past.

## **Is it ok to have sex again after an outbreak?**

Yes. Talk with your doctor or nurse about what you can do to reduce the risk of passing genital herpes on to someone else. It is important to avoid sexual contact with someone when you have an outbreak.

## **If I had genital herpes in the past and get pregnant, what should I do?**

In most cases, there will be no problem with the pregnancy. If you are pregnant or planning a pregnancy, tell your doctor of your history of herpes. Sometimes you might be advised to take antiviral medication towards the end of the pregnancy. In most cases a history of herpes will have no impact on how your baby will be delivered.

# Genital Warts (HPV)

## What are genital warts?

Genital warts are 'warts' in the genital area caused by a virus called the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV). There are many different types of HPV. Types 6 and 11 are the types that commonly cause genital warts.

There are some types of HPV that can lead to cancer, including anal cancer, throat cancer, penile cancer in men and cervical cancer in women. The types of HPV that cause genital warts do not cause cancer.

## How do I get HPV?

HPV is passed by skin-to-skin contact, usually genital skin-to-skin contact. It is common for sexually active people to come in contact with HPV. Most of them don't develop warts or cancer.

### You cannot catch HPV by:

- > hugging
- > kissing
- > sharing towels
- > using swimming pools
- > sharing cutlery, cups or other utensils

## What symptoms would I have?

Most people with HPV do not have any symptoms and they don't know that they have the infection. If you do get genital warts, they are often flesh-coloured lumps or bumps on the skin, anywhere in the genital or anal area.

They may appear weeks to months after you come into contact with the virus.

## Can I be tested for genital warts?

Genital warts are diagnosed by the doctor or nurse examining the genitals.

## **Can genital warts be treated?**

Sometimes genital warts go away on their own without treatment, but most people prefer to get them treated. Treatments may take a few weeks or months to work.

Sometimes the warts come back after treatment.

### **Treatments include:**

- > cryotherapy (freezing)
- > creams
- > surgery – if there are lots of warts or if they do not respond to other treatments

## **Is it ok to have sex again?**

Yes. Most sexually active people have been exposed to HPV at some time but have not had any symptoms, so they may be immune. You can talk with your doctor or nurse about this.

## **Is there a vaccine?**

There is now a vaccine which protects against the main types of HPV, including types 6 and 11 which cause genital warts, and types 16 and 18 which cause the majority of HPV related cancers.

The HPV vaccine is offered to all girls in 1st year through the schools immunisation programme to prevent cervical cancer.

This HPV vaccine is currently available to some men who have sex with men through public STI clinics, and to some people living with HIV who attend HIV clinics. Ask your doctor or nurse for more information about HPV vaccine and find out if it is suitable for you.

# Gonorrhoea

## What is gonorrhoea?

Gonorrhoea is a curable bacterial infection. If it is not treated, it can cause infertility in women.

Gonorrhoea can infect the cervix (neck of the womb), urethra (the tube through which you pass urine), the rectum (back passage), pharynx (throat) and sometimes the eyes.

## How do I get gonorrhoea?

Gonorrhoea is passed from one person to another through:

- > unprotected sex (oral, vaginal, anal)
- > rimming (mouth to anus contact)
- > using unwashed sex toys
- > mother-to-baby during delivery

### You cannot catch gonorrhoea by:

- > hugging
- > kissing
- > swimming pools or saunas
- > toilet seats
- > sharing cutlery or towels

## What symptoms would I have?

### Men

- > discharge from the tip of the penis
- > burning pain when passing urine
- > 1 in 10 men have no symptoms
- > bowel symptoms such as diarrhoea, pain, mucus discharge or bleeding from the back passage
- > pain and swelling in one or both testicles

### Women

- > 7 in 10 women have no symptoms

## **How can I be tested?**

The type of test will depend on your symptoms and where the infection may be present.

For men, a urine sample and sometimes a swab from the penis is taken.

For women a swab is taken from the vagina.

Sometimes a swab will be taken from the throat or rectum (back passage).

## **Can gonorrhoea be treated?**

Yes. Gonorrhoea is treated with antibiotics. Your partner should also be tested and treated.

## **When can I have sex again?**

We recommend that you don't have sex (even oral sex or sex with a condom) until 2 weeks after you have finished the treatment and you have repeated the test to confirm that you have cleared the infection.

Your partner should be tested and treated too. If you have sex with your partner before they are tested and treated, you may become infected again.

## **How can I prevent myself from getting gonorrhoea again?**

Use condoms every time you have sex. If you have a new partner, it is a good idea for both of you to have a sexual health check-up before any unprotected sex.

# Hepatitis B

## What is hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is a viral infection that infects the liver. In most people a full course of vaccination prevents infection.

## How do I get hepatitis B?

### Hepatitis B can be passed on through:

- > unprotected sexual contact, including vaginal, anal or oral contact and rimming (mouth to anus contact)
- > sharing needles
- > mother-to-baby during pregnancy or delivery
- > sharing toothbrushes, razors or towels contaminated with infected blood

### You cannot catch hepatitis B from:

- > sneezing or coughing
- > kissing or hugging
- > sharing dishes or glasses
- > breastfeeding
- > food or water

## What symptoms would I have?

Many people have no symptoms. Others have symptoms when they first become infected. These can last for several weeks and may include flu-like symptoms, yellow skin, nausea, vomiting or diarrhoea.

## How is hepatitis B detected?

Hepatitis B is detected by a blood test.

## Can hepatitis B be prevented?

There are vaccines that prevent infection with hepatitis B. It can also be prevented by using condoms and not sharing needles.

## Who should be vaccinated?

The following people should consider vaccination:

- > men who have sex with men
- > people who inject drugs
- > partners and everyone who lives with someone who has hepatitis B
- > anyone diagnosed with an STI
- > sex workers
- > anyone who has paid for sex
- > anyone who has been sexually assaulted

## Can hepatitis B be treated?

Yes, hepatitis B can be treated. If you are diagnosed with hepatitis B, you will need to see a doctor who specialises in the treatment and management of the infection.

There are different stages of hepatitis B infection. Some stages need treatment and some do not need treatment but need to be checked regularly (monitored).

If you have hepatitis B, the stages of infection, treatments and check-ups will all be explained to you by the doctor or nurse who sees you.

## When can I have sex again?

This will depend on the stage of your hepatitis B infection and will be explained by the doctor or nurse who sees you.

The people you have sex with and the people who live with you may be at risk of getting the infection from you and will need to be tested and offered vaccination.

# HIV

## What is HIV?

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is a virus that attacks the human immune system and weakens its ability to fight infection and disease.

## How do I get HIV?

- > having sex without a condom (vaginal or anal) with someone who is HIV positive and not on effective HIV treatment
- > very rarely through oral sex without a condom with someone who is HIV positive and not on effective HIV treatment (this risk is extremely low)
- > sharing needles or works (injecting equipment) with someone who is HIV positive and not on effective HIV treatment
- > during pregnancy, delivery or breastfeeding from mother-to-baby where the mother is not on effective HIV treatment
- > contaminated blood products (very unlikely in Ireland as all donors are tested)

## You cannot get HIV from:

- > touching, hugging or kissing
- > coughing or sneezing
- > sharing a glass, cup, cutlery or other utensils
- > saliva, sweat or urine
- > sharing a public toilet

## Treatment as prevention (TasP)

When a person living with HIV is on treatment, there is effectively no risk that they can pass on HIV to another person, once they achieve and maintain an undetectable viral load (when HIV treatment has brought the level of virus in the body to such low levels that blood tests cannot detect it).



## **What symptoms would I have?**

Some people get a flu-like illness when they first become infected with HIV. If you have these symptoms after a potential exposure to HIV, you should go for a HIV test.

Many people are often unaware that they're infected because they may not feel sick right away or for many years after being infected with HIV.

If you have been at risk of getting HIV, it is important to get tested.

## **How can I be tested for HIV?**

A blood test is used to diagnose whether you have HIV. All STI clinics offer HIV testing. Some GPs provide HIV testing or can arrange for you to have a test.

## **How can I protect myself from getting HIV?**

You can reduce your risk of getting HIV by:

- > using condoms every time you have vaginal or anal sex
- > not sharing sex toys, or using condoms if you do
- > not sharing needles or other injecting equipment, including spoons, filters and water
- > taking post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) if you have been exposed to HIV
- > taking pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) if you are at substantial risk
- > getting tested and knowing your HIV status

## **What is post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP)?**

PEP is a course of medication that you need to start up to 72 hours (3 days and nights) after you have been exposed to HIV. PEP reduces the chance of you becoming HIV positive.

If you think you have been put at risk of getting HIV you should go to your nearest STI clinic as soon as possible (or to a hospital emergency department out of clinic hours) to see if you need to go on PEP.

For more information on PEP:

HIV Ireland: <http://www.hivireland.ie/hiv/prevention/pep/>

Man2Man: <http://man2man.ie/prevention/pep/>

## **What is pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP)?**

PrEP is medication which you can take before exposure to HIV (including before sex) to prevent HIV infection. PrEP is used by HIV negative people to prevent them from becoming HIV positive.

PrEP is not currently available in Ireland through the HSE but people can get it themselves with a private prescription through community pharmacies and some people might source it themselves (for example over the internet).

If you are taking PrEP, it is important that you are monitored for HIV, other STIs and side effects from the medications. Discuss this with your doctor or nurse.

For further information on PrEP, see the patient information leaflet: HIV PrEP in Ireland on [www.sexualwellbeing.ie](http://www.sexualwellbeing.ie).

For advice and further information on sourcing medicines over the internet, see

<http://www.hpra.ie/homepage/aboutus/stakeholders/patients-and-public>

## **Can HIV be treated?**

HIV can be treated effectively with medications. HIV treatment stops HIV reproducing in the body. When taken properly, HIV treatment enables most people with HIV to live a long and healthy life.

When taken properly, HIV treatment also reduces the chance of a person living with HIV passing HIV on to someone else. When a person living with HIV takes their treatment properly, so that they achieve and maintain an undetectable viral load, there is effectively no risk that HIV can be passed on to their sexual partners.

The earlier you are diagnosed and can start treatment, the better. At the moment there is no cure for HIV, which means that treatment is lifelong.

# Molluscum Contagiosum (MC)

## What is MC?

Molluscum contagiosum is a viral skin infection.

## How do I get MC?

MC is transmitted through skin-to-skin contact, including genital contact during sex.

It is not considered an STI.

## What symptoms would I have?

You would have small lumps or bumps on the skin of your genitals which may spread to your abdomen (belly area) or thighs. They are usually not painful or itchy.

## How can I be tested for MC?

MC is usually diagnosed by physical examination.

## How is MC treated?

Most people don't need treatment as the spots usually go away by themselves. Sometimes they are frozen off by a doctor or nurse or treated with a cream or lotion.

## How can I reduce the risk of passing MC to my partner?

- > Avoid squeezing or scratching the spots because doing so will make them more likely to spread.
- > Avoid sharing towels and clothing.
- > Avoid sharing baths.

# Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID)

## What is PID?

PID is an infection of the uterus (womb), ovaries and tubes. It is usually caused by a bacterial infection.

About one in four cases are caused by STIs, such as chlamydia, gonorrhoea or *Mycoplasma genitalium*.

If PID is not treated, it can lead to infertility (not being able to have children), ectopic pregnancy (where the baby starts to grow in the tubes instead of the womb) or chronic (long lasting) pelvic pain.

## How do I get PID?

PID can develop after:

- > an untreated STI (such as chlamydia, gonorrhoea or *Mycoplasma genitalium*)
- > an infection in the abdomen, which may not be sexually transmitted
- > surgery to the womb (such as a pregnancy termination or other surgery)
- > having a coil inserted

## What symptoms would I have?

- > pain passing urine
- > pain in the abdomen (tummy or belly area)
- > pain during or after sex
- > raised temperature
- > nausea or vomiting
- > bleeding after sex
- > bleeding between periods
- > a change in your normal vaginal discharge

## How is PID diagnosed?

There is not a single test that can diagnose PID. PID is diagnosed based on your symptoms and what the doctor or nurse finds when they examine you.

You will need to have swabs taken to check for STIs. Sometimes these tests will be negative and it isn't possible to find out exactly what infection caused the PID.

## **How is PID treated?**

PID is treated with antibiotics. These may be given as tablets, an injection or through a drip in hospital. The type of antibiotics you need will depend on the severity of the infection. Occasionally, PID needs to be treated with surgery.

## **Will my partner need treatment?**

As PID can be caused by an STI, your partner should be tested and may need treatment with antibiotics.

## **When can I have sex again?**

You will have to wait until you have finished the antibiotics and have had a check-up by your doctor before having sex again.

If you were diagnosed with an STI, it is really important that you don't have sex with your partner before they are tested and treated as you could become infected again.

# Pubic lice (crabs)

## What are pubic lice?

Pubic lice are small insects that live in the kind of coarse hair you might have on your chest, abdomen, underarms and pubic areas. They do not live in head hair.

Their eggs are called 'nits'.

## How do I catch pubic lice?

Pubic lice are passed from person to person by:

- > skin-to-skin contact
- > sexual contact
- > sharing clothing, towels or bedding

## What symptoms would I have?

You may have one or more of the following symptoms:

- > itching
- > black spots (from the lice droppings) on your underwear
- > brown lice eggs in your pubic hair
- > small blood spots on your skin or underwear

## How are pubic lice diagnosed?

Pubic lice are diagnosed by a careful clinical examination.

## How are pubic lice treated?

Pubic lice are treated with a cream, shampoo or lotion that you can get over the counter in your local pharmacy. This treatment is repeated after 3 to 7 days.

Your sexual partner will also need to be treated, even if they don't have any signs or symptoms.

You do not need to shave off your body hair. You can remove nits (eggs) with a special comb available in pharmacies.

You will need to wash all your clothing in a hot (50 degree or higher) wash to kill the lice and avoid re-infection.

# Scabies

## What is scabies?

Scabies is caused by small insects (called mites) which burrow under the skin and lay eggs.

## How do I get scabies?

Scabies is usually passed from one person to another by skin-to-skin contact or sexual contact.

However, scabies can live outside the body for 72 hours (3 days and nights) so you can also get them from clothing, bed sheets and towels.

## What symptoms would I have?

You may not develop symptoms for up to 6 weeks after being infected.

Scabies cause an intense itch which is often worse at night or after a warm shower.

You may also have a red, itchy rash or tiny red spots.

## How is scabies diagnosed?

Scabies is diagnosed by careful examination of the skin.

## How is scabies treated?

Scabies is treated with a cream, lotion or shampoo which is left on overnight.

Your partner and anyone else living in your home should also be treated, even if they have no symptoms.

The itch can be treated with antihistamine tablets or cream.

You should wash all clothing in a 50 degree wash. Anything that cannot be washed (such as duvets, leather jackets and so on,) should be put in tied black plastic bags and left for 3 days and nights until the mites die.

# Syphilis

## What is syphilis?

Syphilis is caused by a bacteria called *Treponema pallidum*.

## How do I get syphilis?

You can get syphilis from:

- > skin-to-skin contact or coming into direct contact with a syphilis sore
- > unprotected oral, vaginal and anal sex
- > mother-to-baby during pregnancy (congenital syphilis)
- > a blood transfusion (although this is very unlikely in Ireland as all blood donors are tested)

## Can I get syphilis from oral sex?

Yes.

## How would I know if I have syphilis?

There are different stages of infection. Some people have no symptoms. This is why it is important to get tested if you are at risk (especially if you are a man who has sex with other men). Symptoms can vary from a painless sore (ulcer) to a rash all over the body. The symptoms often depend on how long you have had the syphilis infection.

If syphilis is not treated, it can cause problems with your heart, brain, eyes and nervous system.

## How can I be tested for syphilis?

Syphilis is usually diagnosed by a blood test. Sometimes a swab is taken from a sore (ulcer). This is generally done in an STI clinic.

## How is syphilis treated?

Syphilis can be treated and cured with antibiotics. Treatment depends on your symptoms and how long you have had the infection. You will be followed up after treatment to make sure the infection has cleared.



## **When can I have sex again?**

You can have sex again when you are treated and get a clear test result. Your doctor or nurse will discuss this with you. Your partner (or partners) should be tested too and may need to be treated.

If you have sex (even oral sex or sex with a condom) with your partner before they are tested and treated, you may become infected again.

## **How can I prevent myself from getting syphilis again?**

Having syphilis once does not protect you from getting it again.

Use condoms every time you have sex. If you have a new partner, it is a good idea for both of you to have a sexual health check-up before any unprotected sex (sex without a condom).

# Thrush

## What is thrush?

Thrush is a very common cause of itch and discomfort in the genital area. It is caused by an overgrowth of yeast (candida). It is not considered an STI.

## How common is thrush?

Thrush is a very common condition and anyone can get thrush. It is more common in women than men and is also more common during pregnancy and in people who have diabetes or HIV.

## What symptoms would I have with thrush?

### Men

- > irritation under the foreskin or tip of the penis (balanitis)
- > spotty, red rash at the tip of the penis
- > white discharge under the foreskin

### Women

- > vaginal itch, soreness or redness
- > vaginal discharge which is usually white and thick
- > discomfort during sex or when urinating

## How is thrush diagnosed?

The diagnosis is usually made based on your description of your symptoms and an examination by a doctor or nurse.

## How is thrush treated?

Thrush can be treated with creams, pessaries (vaginal tablets) or oral tablets.

Some treatments are available from a pharmacy without a prescription. If your symptoms do not improve, you should see your doctor or nurse.

## How can I prevent thrush from coming back?

- > Wear cotton underwear.
- > Avoid tight clothing.
- > Avoid too much washing of your genitals.
- > Do not use soaps, perfumed products or vaginal deodorant products.

# Trichomonas Vaginalis (TV)

## What is TV?

TV is a sexually transmitted infection caused by a germ called a protozoan.

TV can infect the vagina in women and the urethra (the tube through which you pass urine) and underneath the foreskin in men.

## How do I get TV?

TV is passed from one person to another in three ways:

- > unprotected sex (oral, vaginal, anal)
- > using unwashed sex toys
- > from mother-to-baby during delivery

## You cannot catch TV by:

- > hugging
- > kissing
- > swimming
- > sitting on toilet seats
- > sharing cutlery or towels

## What symptoms would I have?

Symptoms will depend on where the infection is.

### Men

Most men will not have any symptoms but they can still pass TV on to their sexual partner.

Symptoms may include:

- > discharge from the penis
- > pain passing urine
- > soreness around the foreskin
- > passing urine more frequently

### Women

Women may not have any symptoms but they can still pass on TV to their sexual partner.

Symptoms may include:

- > discharge from the vagina
- > smelly vaginal discharge
- > itching or soreness
- > pain during or after sex

## **How can I be tested for TV?**

A swab will be taken and tested.

## **How is TV treated?**

TV is treated with antibiotics.

## **When can I have sex again?**

You will have to wait until 1 week after you (and your partner) have finished your treatment before having sex again (even oral sex or sex with a condom).

## **How can I prevent myself from getting TV again?**

Using condoms correctly and every time you have sex will reduce your risk of getting TV or other STIs.

# Services and supports

## **Free STI Testing Services**

**Carlow**

**STI Clinic**

051 842 646

**Clare**

**STI Clinic, Ennis**

061 482 382

**Cork**

**STI Clinic**

021 496 6844

**Donegal**

**Letterkenny Sexual Health  
Clinic (GUM)**

074 912 3715

**Dublin**

**GUIDE Clinic, St. James's  
Hospital**

01 416 2315/6

**STI Clinic, Mater Hospital**

01 803 2063

**Gay Men's Health Service**

01 669 9553

**Women's Health Project**

076 6958280

**HIV Ireland**

01 873 3799

**Galway**

**STI Clinic, Ballinasloe**

090 964 8372

(extension 676)

**University College**

**Hospital STI Clinic**

091 525 200

**Kerry**

**STI Clinic, Tralee**

021 496 6844

**Laois**

**STI Clinic, Portlaoise**

086 859 1273

**Limerick**

**STI Clinic**

061 482 382

**Louth**

**Louth County Hospital**

**GUM Clinic, Dundalk**

086 824 1847

**Our Lady's Hospital,**

**Drogheda**

086 824 1847

**Mayo**

**STI Clinic, Castlebar**

**094 902 1733**

(extension 3501)

**Monaghan**

**General Hospital GUM**

**Clinic**

086 824 1847

**Sligo**

**GUM Clinic**

071 917 0473

**Tipperary**

**STI Clinic, Clonmel**

051 842 646

**STI Clinic, Nenagh**

061 482 382

**Waterford**

**STI Clinic**

051 842 646

**Westmeath**

**Midland Regional Hospital,**

**Mullingar**

086 416 9830

**Free STI Testing Locator:**

<http://www.hivireland.ie/hiv/testing/free-hiv-sti-testing-centre-locator/>

**Sexualwellbeing.ie** provides more information on sexual health, including more detailed information on STIs and genital conditions.

**Man2Man.ie** gives HIV and sexual health information for gay and bisexual men, and other men who have sex with men in Ireland.

**Healthpromotion.ie** provides sexual health information leaflets that you can download or order free of charge.

**HIV & Sexual Health Helpline**

1800 459 459

[helpline@hse.ie](mailto:helpline@hse.ie)

**About the HSE Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme**

We are responsible for implementing national strategies that promote sexual health and address STIs and crisis pregnancy in Ireland.

**Disclaimer**

This booklet gives you basic information about STIs. It does not replace the advice of a doctor. If you have questions or concerns about STIs, or need more information, visit your GP, pharmacist or an STI clinic for professional advice.

You can order more copies of  
this booklet free of charge from  
[www.healthpromotion.ie](http://www.healthpromotion.ie).



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive



Plain  
English  
Approved by NALA

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[sexualwellbeing.ie](http://sexualwellbeing.ie)