

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS ... STIs

The best ways to prevent any STI...

Use condoms, know your partner's sexual history, get tested before having sex, or abstain from sex altogether.

What is a “window period”?

WINDOW PERIOD means that you may be infected with something, but the test may be negative because you were tested too early.

CHLAMYDIA AND GONORRHEA

(Most reported STIs in Windsor-Essex County)

How does it spread?

The bacteria are spread through unprotected oral, anal, and vaginal sex.

What are the symptoms?

Many people *do NOT show any symptoms* but can still spread the bacteria to others.

If you do have symptoms, you might notice:

- Discharge from the penis or vagina (white, green, yellow, or has an odour).
- Burning during urination.
- Itching or pain around the top of the penis or rectum.
- Pain during sex.
- Spotting or bleeding between periods; or after sex for females.
- Lower abdominal, genital, or pelvic pain.
- Redness or swelling of the conjunctiva (part of the eye) if exposed.

If left untreated, you can develop complications.

How do I get tested?

- A urine test can be done.
- Chlamydia and gonorrhoea can also be found in the throat (oral sex) and rectum (anal sex), and swabs of these areas may need to be collected.

How is it treated?

Antibiotic pills or an antibiotic shot.

What is the window period?

Testing is most accurate *at least TWO WEEKS* after the last time you had sex.

Over 85% of people with chlamydia and gonorrhoea do not have symptoms.

SYPHILIS

How does it spread?

The bacteria are spread through unprotected oral, anal, vaginal sex, and from an infected mother to their unborn child.

What are the symptoms?

Some people do not have any symptoms. Others may have painless sores, body rash, flu-like symptoms, or if left untreated, damage to their heart or nervous system may occur.

Syphilis goes through various stages, if left untreated.

Each stage may have different symptoms.

Primary Stage – Usually appears 3 to 90 days after the bacteria enter your body.

- Painless sore(s) around exposed area (in and around the mouth, genitals, and/or rectum).
- Swelling of lymph nodes.

Secondary Stage – Usually appears 2 to 12 weeks after the bacteria enter your body.

- Rash on the palms of the hands, soles of the feet, or other parts of the body.
- Flu-like symptoms (e.g., fever, sore throat, feeling unwell, headaches).
- Sores in the mouth or genital areas.
- Patches of hair loss.

Latent Stage – There are no symptoms in this stage, but if left untreated, the infection can cause serious illness, affecting your heart, skin, brain, bones, and other organs.

How do I get tested?

Blood testing can be done.

How is it treated?

Antibiotic pills or an antibiotic shot.

What is the window period?

Testing is most accurate *THREE MONTHS* after the last time you had sex.

HUMAN IMMUNO-DEFICIENCY VIRUS (HIV)

How does it spread?

The virus is spread through unprotected oral, anal, and vaginal sex. It is also spread through contact with blood from someone who has the virus, such as sharing needles, personal items, and accidents like needle-stick injuries, or piercings and tattoos done with dirty equipment.

The virus can destroy the immune system and leave the person prone to many infections.

What are the symptoms?

Some people do not have any symptoms. Others may have flu-like symptoms, weight loss, or night sweats. If left untreated, the infection may progress to a severe illness: *Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS)*.

How do I get tested?

Blood testing can be done.

How is it treated?

Treatment is available, but there is no known cure.

What is the window period?

Testing is most accurate at least **SIX WEEKS** after the last risk.

HEPATITIS B AND C

How does it spread?

The virus is spread through unprotected oral, anal, and vaginal sex. It is also spread through contact with blood from someone who has the virus (e.g., sharing needles, personal items, and accidents like needle-stick injuries, or piercings and tattoos done with dirty equipment).

What are the symptoms?

Some people do not have any symptoms. Others may have flu-like symptoms, or yellow skin or eyes. Some people will carry the virus forever and develop liver damage or liver cancer.

How do I get tested?

Blood testing can be done.

How is it treated?

Currently there is no cure for Hepatitis B; however, there is medication to help prevent the infection from getting worse and reduce the risk of serious liver problems.

There is treatment for *Hepatitis C* and most people can be cured.

What is the window period?

Testing is most accurate **SIX MONTHS** after last risk (if high risk).

GENITAL HERPES

How does it spread?

The virus is spread through any skin-to-skin contact of the genitals. Condoms may not fully protect you.

What are the symptoms?

Herpes are usually painful genital blisters or bumps. You might feel an itch, burn, or tingle before you see them.

How do I get tested?

A swab of the sore(s) can be done.

How is it treated?

Antiviral medications are available to help with the frequency, severity, or length of genital herpes.

There is no known cure and outbreaks may recur during your lifetime.

GENITAL WARTS/HUMAN PAPILLOMA VIRUS (HPV)

How does it spread?

The virus is spread through any skin-to-skin contact of the genitals. Condoms may not fully protect you.

What are the symptoms?

- It can cause genital warts, head, neck, throat, and anal cancers in both males and females.
- It can cause abnormal pap tests and vaginal or cervical cancers in females.

GENITAL WARTS

Warts are painless genital bumps.

How do I get tested?

Health care providers can examine/test genital warts.

How is it treated?

Freezing can remove the genital warts but they may grow back.

HPV

How do I get tested?

A variety of tests are available, including pap smears.

How is it treated?

The HPV (Gardasil) vaccine is highly recommended to prevent infection or re-infection of this virus, but there is no known cure.

Over 80% of sexually active people carry the HPV virus.