



Be Safe: Prevent Sexually Transmitted Infections

Healthy Living Message

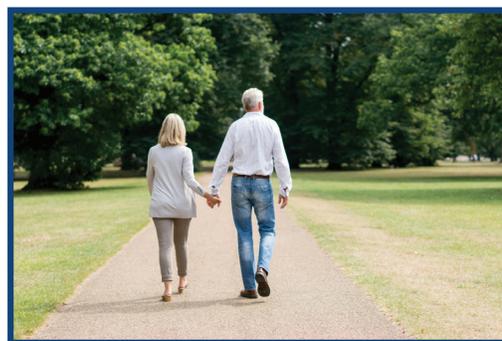
What's Important to Know?

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) are infections you can get by having sex with someone who has an STI. STIs are the same thing as sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Many STIs do not have symptoms, and you can have an STI and pass it on without knowing it. Some STIs can cause organ damage and infertility. Having one STI may raise your risk for getting other STIs. Some examples of STIs are chlamydia, gonorrhea, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), and human papillomavirus (HPV).

You can get STIs from any sexual activity, whether it involves the mouth, anus, vagina, or penis. Some STIs can pass from a pregnant woman to her baby before or during the baby's birth. Most STIs can be treated and cured. Some cannot be cured but can be managed by taking medicines. If you are treated for an STI, your sex partner(s) should also be treated to prevent you from being re-infected.

The spread of some STIs can be reduced by using latex condoms every time you have sex

and by having only one sex partner. Lambskin condoms and birth control pills can help prevent pregnancy but they will not protect you from STIs. A vaccine is available for young women and men against HPV, the virus that causes cervical cancer. The best way to fully protect yourself from STIs is to not have sex.



Want to Know More?

If you want to learn more about STIs or think you may have one, talk with your VA health care team. They can help if you have questions about testing or treatment. To learn more, go to the VHA National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Healthy Living topic at: www.prevention.va.gov/Healthy_Living/Be_Safe_Prevent_Sexually_Transmitted_Infections.asp

Resources

- Veterans Health Library: www.veteranshealthlibrary.va.gov, search "Infectious Diseases"
- VA Specialty Care: HIV/AIDS: www.hiv.va.gov/index.asp