

STI Awareness Month

April is STI Awareness Month (sometimes called sexually transmitted diseases, or STDs).

There is alarming news that STIs are on the rise. Recent data from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) show cases of chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis increasing for the first time since 2006.

Untreated STIs can lead to reproductive complications such as infertility (inability to get pregnant) and ectopic pregnancy (pregnancy outside the womb). They can also increase a person's risk for getting and giving HIV.

Who is at risk?

Young people ages 15–24, and gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men continue to be at greatest risk for infection. Regardless of your age or gender, unprotected sex increases your chances of contracting a virus or bacteria that cause STIs.

What increases my chances of getting an STI?

- Having more than one sexual partner.
- A partner who has or has had more than one sexual partner.
- Sexual contact with someone who has an STI.
- A person with a history of STIs.
- Having unprotected sex.

How can I prevent getting an STI?

There are many ways to reduce the risk of getting an STI.

- Protection – have protected sex; use a condom.
- Know your partner - your partner's sexual history is as important as your own. The more partners you and your partner have, the higher the chance of getting an infection.
- Immunization - vaccinations are available to immunize you from some diseases.

Can I be treated?

There are three different types of STIs: bacterial, viral, and parasitic. Bacterial and parasitic infections can be cured but viral infections cannot completely be cured. For the STIs that cannot be cured, there are medications to help manage the symptoms.

Talk to your doctor on how to prevent STIs, because *an educated patient is the best patient.*