

Sexually Transmitted Diseases

HIV INFECTION / AIDS HIV infects the body and weakens the immune system by destroying certain immune system cells. When the immune system becomes damaged beyond repair, infections and cancers overwhelm the body. This is the final stage of HIV infections called AIDS.

Females and Males:

- HIV is transmitted by sexual contact with an infected person (blood, semen, vaginal secretions, and breast milk), sharing drug use equipment, tattoos and body piercings, and from infected mother to unborn or breastfed baby.
- An infected person may experience the following:
 - Initial Infection – flu-like symptoms may occur two to four weeks after infection
 - Infected and Well – no symptoms or signs are present but the blood test is positive
 - Infected and ill – weight loss, fatigue, fever, night sweats, dry cough, confusion, memory loss, diarrhea, swollen lymph glands, and depression
 - Infected and diagnosed with certain infections or cancers (AIDS)
- HIV is detected by a blood test for HIV antibodies. It may take up to 6 months for the blood test to become positive. The test is available from your doctor or at the Sexually Transmitted Disease Clinic and is free and confidential
- There is no cure for HIV infections or vaccine to prevent HIV infections, but there are drugs to improve health and life expectancy.
- To protect yourself from HIV, never share needles, syringes, other injection drug equipment, razors, or toothbrushes. Avoid unsterile equipment used for tattooing, body piercing and acupuncture. Never intentionally exchange blood with anyone.

CHLAMYDIA is the most common bacterial STD.

Females:

- Found in cervix, rectum, and eyes
- Might notice unusual vaginal discharge, irregular menstrual bleeding or discomfort during intercourse
- Up to 80% of females might not develop any symptoms
- Can infect the fallopian tubes and ovaries causing pelvic inflammatory disease
- Requires immediate medical attention and is diagnosed with special tests
- Disease is curable and is treated with antibiotics

Males:

- Found in urethra, rectum, and eyes
- Clear mucous discharge from the penis as well as discomfort or burning sensation during urination
- Up to 50% of males might not develop any symptoms
- Can develop infections in the prostate gland and testicles
- Requires immediate medical attention and is diagnosed with special tests
- Disease is curable and is treated with antibiotics

CRABS are tiny insects that live on or around body hair, usually in the pubic area.

Females and Males:

- Commonly spread from one person to another through intimate sexual contact

- Also possible to get them by sharing unlaundered bedding, towels or clothing of and infected person.
- Area becomes very itchy resulting from the bites on the skin by adult crabs.
- Person can have crabs for two or three weeks before noticing them
- Can be treated with medicated lotions or shampoos, wash all bedding and laundry, and use a fine toothed comb to remove the adult crab eggs.

HERPES is responsible for both the common “cold” sore on the mouth and for genital herpes infections involving the sex organs.

Females and Males:

- Symptoms occur one to three weeks following sexual contact and begin with a tingling or burning sensation in the genital area. Fluid filled blisters appear and soon break to form shallow, painful ulcers on the skin.
- The first outbreak may include headache, fever, swollen glands or flu like feeling.
- Females have outbreaks on the vulva, near the anal opening or internally on the vaginal walls or cervix. Males will have blisters or sores appear on the penis, scrotum, or near the anus.
- The sores will heal on their own within 2 to 4 weeks. The frequency of repeat outbreaks varies from person to person.
- There is no cure for genital herpes but medication can be prescribed to relieve discomfort and speed up the healing process.

SCABIES is a very contagious skin condition caused by invisible insect or mites that burrows under the skin.

Females and Males:

- Can be passed easily from person to person by direct skin contact by sharing clothing, bedding or towels with an infected person.
- Diagnosed by a health care worker
- Treated by using specific medicated lotions. All clothing, bedding, towels should be washed.

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GENITAL WARTS are flesh covered growths which may appear on or around the genital and anal areas. They are caused by human papilloma virus (HPV).

Females:

- Consequences of HPV infection can include cancer of the cervix and vulva.
- Usually appear on the external genitals and anal areas as well as internally on the vaginal walls and cervix.
- Warts may appear for the first time during pregnancy.
- A PAP test is a screening test used to detect precancerous cell changes on the cervix.
- To treat genital warts you can freeze the wart with liquid nitrogen called “cryotherapy”, apply creams or chemicals to the surface, and destroy the wart with an electric current called “electrocautery”, laser therapy or surgery.

Males:

- Genital warts will appear on the head and shaft of the penis or in the anal area. May affect the scrotum.
- To treat genital warts you can freeze the wart with liquid nitrogen called “cryotherapy”, apply creams or chemicals to the surface, and destroy the wart with an electric current called “electrocautery”, laser therapy or surgery.

GONORRHEA is caused by bacterial and sometimes referred to as the “dose” or “clap”

Females:

- Commonly found in the cervix, throat, and sometimes anal infections may cause a discharge of pus or blood from the rectum.
- Pain on urination may occur, as well as unusual vaginal discharge
- Untreated gonorrhea can lead to infection of the fallopian tubes and ovaries which is called pelvic inflammatory disease (PID). PID can cause lower abdominal pain, vaginal discharge, fever and painful intercourse.
- Pregnant females can pass gonorrhea to her baby’s eyes during childbirth and may cause blindness.
- Can be treated with antibiotics. Sexual partners should be treated at the same time.

Males:

- Commonly found in the urethra which will discharge pus as well as mild to severe burning pain when urinating.
- Can also be found in the throat and sometimes anal infections may cause a discharge of pus or blood from the rectum.
- Can cause pain and swelling in the testicles which may result in sterility.
- Can be treated with antibiotics. Sexual partners should be treated at the same time.

HEPATITIS “B” means “an inflammation of the liver”. Different types of hepatitis. They include hepatitis A, B, C, D, and E.

The hepatitis B virus is found in the body fluids of and infected person.

Females and Males:

- It is spread by sexual intercourse, exposure to infected blood, and from an infected mother to a baby at birth or breastfeeding
- The time from exposure to the virus until symptoms appear ranges from 45 to 160 days. Some symptoms are loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, mild abdominal pain, and occasional skin rashes and pains in the joints.
- There is no cure for Hepatitis B. 90% will develop lifelong immunity without medication. The other 10% are chronic carriers and may develop cancer of the liver over a period of years.
- Can be prevented by using safer sexual practices, not sharing injection drug equipment, and vaccinations.

SYPHILIS is a germ that cannot survive outside the body. It is passed on during direct contact with a syphilis sore or rash during sexual activity

Females and Males:

- 3 stages of Syphilis:
 - Primary Syphilis – 9 to 90 days after sexual contact, a sore called a chancre will develop around the sex organs. It can be easily transmitted because the chancre contains the syphilis germ on its surface.
 - Secondary Syphilis – 2 to 6 weeks after initial contact with the infected person. A rash breaks out anywhere on the body. May cause loss of appetite, tiredness, fever, hair loss and swollen glands. It is very contagious during this stage.
 - Tertiary Syphilis – 2 to 40 years after the symptoms of the second stage have disappeared. It may be invading and damaging vital organs. It can cause blindness, paralysis, deafness, and brain or heart disease.
- Pregnant women with untreated syphilis may pass the disease to her unborn child and causing complications such as premature birth, miscarriage, stillbirth and birth defects.
- Requires immediate medical attention and is diagnosed with special tests.

- Syphilis is treated with antibiotics and can be cured regardless of the stage. Sexual partners need to be told so they can receive the same treatment.
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Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Where should you go if you need information or help?

For STD/HIV information call: 1-800-772-2437

- Toll free
- 24 hour
- Confidential
- You can speak directly to a registered nurse during regular business hours (Monday to Friday)

For STD Clinics in your area call:

Edmonton STD Clinic Phone #: (780)413-5156

STD Centre
General Hospital Site
3B20 - 11111 Jasper Ave

Calgary STD Clinic Phone #: (403)297-6562

#404 – 906 8th Ave SW

Fort MacMurray STD Clinic Phone #: (780)791-6263

Main Floor
Northern Lights Regional Health Centre
7 Hospital Street

Other Resources:

Capital Health Link Telephone: **(780)408-5465**

Websites:

www.goaskalice.com

www.health.gov.ab.ca

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