

What are STIs?

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) are infections that are spread from one person to another during sex.

How many types of STIs are there?

There are about twenty types of STIs; some of the most common STIs are syphilis, gonorrhea and chlamydia. HIV is also an STI.

Could I have an STI and not know it?

Yes, some STIs have no symptoms in the initial stages but may cause problems later on if untreated. Many people with STIs do not have any symptoms. Most of the time the symptoms are easily seen in men but they go unnoticed in women until later in the disease. Even if you feel fine, but suspect you might have an STI, go to the clinic and see a trained health care provider.

If I have no symptoms, can I pass an STI on?

Yes. Even though you have no symptoms the infection is still present in your body and can be passed on to another person through sex.

Are STIs curable?

Most STIs can be cured fairly easily. Some, like herpes, are not curable but can be treated, and others, like HIV, can be treated with ARV drugs but, if left untreated, can cost you your life.

How do you get infected with an STI?

You can get infected with an STI by having unprotected sex (sex without a condom) with a person that is infected.

Can you treat an STI with herbs or traditional medicine?

Herbs and traditional medicines can't cure STIs. When diagnosed with an STI the doctor prescribes medicine that will treat your STI. Your STI can only be cured if you finish your prescribed medicine. If you stop taking the medicines as soon as you feel better, the STI may not be fully gone and can come back.

Should I tell my partner I have an STI?

It is very important for you to tell your partner as soon as you see symptoms of an STI, so that both of you can get tested and treated if found with an STI. Otherwise you can keep infecting each other.

Can you still get an STI if you use a condom?

You can still get an STI if you don't use a condom correctly. If the condom is not worn correctly and there is an exchange of body fluids, an infection can occur. You have to be very careful and make sure the condom has not expired and is in good condition.

If you use a condom, which is in good condition correctly and every time you have sex, then you will be much less likely to get an STI.

Why do people make such a big deal about STIs, are they really serious?

Several STIs are quite serious. STIs can be painful even deadly. Diseases like syphilis, gonorrhea and chlamydia have long-term consequences, including sterility, blindness, and liver damage. STIs during pregnancy can cause complications and illness in newborn babies as well.

Can anyone get an STI?

Anyone who is sexually active can get an STI. It does not depend on your social class, race or religion. As long as you are having unprotected sex, you can get one. However, the more sexual partners you have, the more you are at risk. For teenage girls the cervix is more delicate and more sensitive to infections like chlamydia and gonorrhea.

If I have an STI will I become deformed?

If left untreated, it is possible. In some STIs such as chlamydia and gonorrhea, for example, it is quite common for genitals and other parts of the body to be disfigured. It is best to seek treatment early before such complications arise.

Will an STI make me impotent (unable to have babies)?

If left untreated, STIs like gonorrhea can reach a serious stage when your reproductive system may be destroyed, increasing the chance of impotence.

What are some of the symptoms of an STI?

Some of the signs are: bumps, sores, warts or blisters near the private parts; itching or pain near the private parts; pain on urination; the need to urinate more often; fever chills, aches and pains; strange discharge or smell from the vagina or penis; vaginal bleeding other than a period; and deep vaginal pain when you have sex.

What should I do if I think I have an STI?

You should go to the clinic immediately. The earlier you begin treatment the better you can minimize the long-term effects of most STIs. You must also stop having sex immediately and take your partner(s) for treatment.

If you get treatment and your partner does not, they might re-infect you with the same STI. Make sure that you do not have sex with anyone until you are absolutely sure that you and they are no longer infected. If you do have sex, you MUST use a condom.

How do I know that my STI is really serious?

From the moment you get an STI, consider it serious. If you wait to get treatment you'll be setting yourself up for a lot of pain and misery. Perhaps it will be difficult to treat and you may have disfigured genitals or become sterile.

If I don't get treatment can an STI go away on its own?

Definitely not. Some people wait to see if the STI will go away on its own before they seek medical attention but this is extremely dangerous. Having an STI is nothing to be ashamed of. An STI does not cure itself, you need to get treatment from a health centre, and complete the course of medication that you have been given or the STI will not be cured.

How can I be sure that I have an STI?

The only way to be sure is if you have gone for a test taken at a clinic or hospital.

If I have sores or pimples on my genitals does that mean I have an STI?

Not always. Sometimes it is possible to have pimples on your genitals, particularly if you shave them. At times the hair might not grow properly and cause an infection at the root making a small pimple or growth.

Can you get an STI from giving oral sex?

Yes, in the case of genital herpes, lesions or sores can appear in the mouth due to oral sex.

Does having an STI mean you have AIDS?

No. But there is a connection between HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. Having an STI can increase a per-

son's risk of becoming infected with HIV, because of open sores or breaks in the skin. This is especially in the case of syphilis, herpes and chancroid. If the STI causes irritation of the skin, breaks or causes sores, it makes it easier for HIV to enter your body through these open "doors".

Do STIs make you go mad?

Generally STIs don't make you crazy, but if left untreated, some STIs such as syphilis can cause brain damage and insanity in their later stages.

Can I get an STI if I only had sex with a person once?

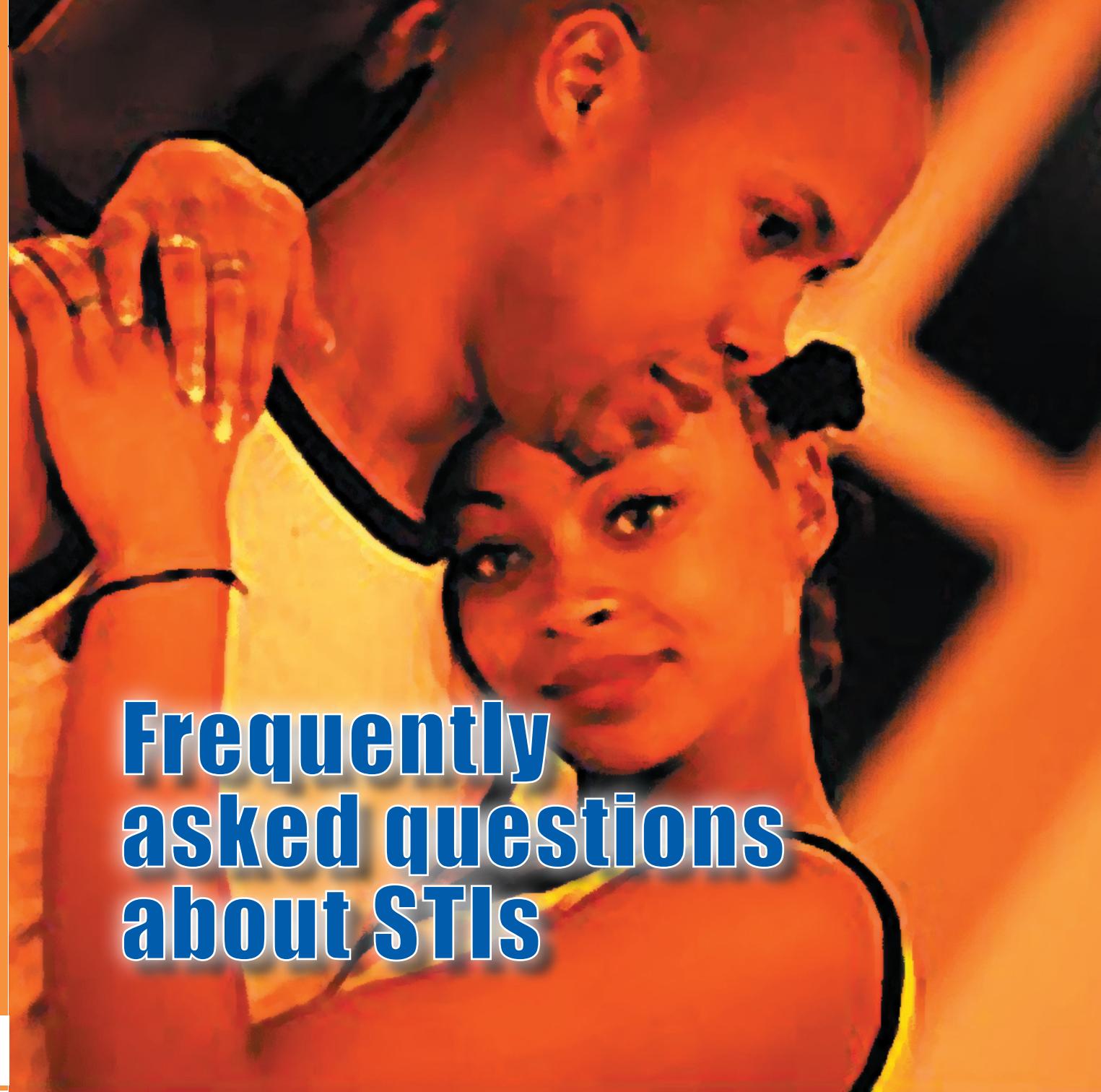
Yes. It is entirely possible for you to get a STI even if you only have sex once without a condom once with a person who is infected with an STI.

If I take medicines immediately before I have sex, will that prevent me from getting an STI?

No. There are only two sure ways of protecting yourself from STIs and that is by abstaining or using a condom in each and every sexual act.

If I am circumcised, can I still get an STI?

Yes, whether you are circumcised or not you can still get infected with an STI. If you are circumcised, your chances of getting infected are a little less.



Frequently asked questions about STIs



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