

STDs (Sexually Transmitted Diseases)

STDs are also called venereal diseases. They are caused by germs that live on the skin or in body fluids such as semen, vaginal fluid or blood. The germs are passed from an infected person often through sexual contact with skin, blood or body fluids. These germs can enter the body through the vagina, mouth, anus and open sores or cuts. STDs are not spread by casual contact, by being in swimming pools or by sitting on toilet seats.

Signs of STDs

Signs may occur days, weeks or months after exposure. Some men and women have no signs but have a STD and can pass it onto others.

Common signs include:

- Burning with urination
- Genital ulcers such as open sores or blisters
- Warts
- Skin rash
- Discharge from the penis or vagina
- Abdominal pain, most often in women

Types of STDs

- Gonorrhea
- Syphilis
- Herpes
- Chlamydia
- Hepatitis (HBV)
- Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)
- Human Papilloma Virus (HPV or genital warts)
- Chancroid

Preventing STDs

Abstinence, or no sexual relations, is the best way to prevent the spread of STDs. If you choose to have sexual relations, have one partner and always use latex condoms that have nonoxynol-9 and use with spermicidal jelly.

Testing

You should be tested for STDs if you:

- Have had oral, anal, or vaginal sex and did not use latex condoms.
- Share needles to inject drugs or have sex with someone who does share needles.
- Feel you may have been exposed to or have signs of a STD.

You can be tested for a STD by your doctor or at your local health department. Most testing for STDs is anonymous.

You can go to the Sexual Health walk-in Clinic at the Columbus Health Department at 240 Parsons Avenue, Columbus, OH. Their phone number is (614) 645-7772. Testing for HIV is free and tests for other STDs have a small fee.

Your Care

Most STDs are treatable. Some can be cured but others cannot. Medicine can be used to help signs and keep the disease from getting worse.

As a part of your care:

- Avoid sexual relations until you and your partner have been treated.
- Take antibiotics as directed until your treatment is done. Be sure to take all of the medicine your doctor orders.
- Call to make an appointment to repeat tests 3 weeks after finishing your antibiotics.
- Return to the Emergency Department or call your doctor if your signs get worse or you have a fever of more than 101 degrees F or 38 degrees C.

There are risks of other problems and more serious disease if you do not get treatment or get incomplete treatment.

Talk to your doctor or nurse if you have any questions or concerns.