



Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) Fact Sheet

What are Sexually Transmitted Infections?

- They are infections that are spread by any kind of sexual contact, through semen, vaginal fluids or blood. This can include vaginal, anal and oral sex. A virus, bacteria or parasite can cause them.
- There are more than 20 different STIs around the world, including HIV, AIDS, Hepatitis B, Gonorrhoea, and Chlamydia. Having one or more STI infection at the same time can increase your risk of getting HIV infection, by almost 10 times.

What Are The Signs And Symptoms?

- Signs and symptoms can be different for many people, and depends on the cause of the infection:
 - Bumps, sores or feeling itchy around your penis or vagina
 - Discharge from your vagina or penis
 - A burning feeling when urinating (peeing)
 - Rash or swelling in the groin area
- Some people have no symptoms at all, but the infection can still cause other problems e.g. infertility (not being able to get pregnant), or cancer of the cervix. These infections can still be passed on to others, even if you have no symptoms.

What Is The Treatment?

- There are different medications available to treat some of these infections.
- For a few of the infections however, there is no treatment or cure.

How are Travellers at Higher Risk for STIs?

- The rates of STI's in developing countries are much higher than in Canada.
- Some travellers may have sex while they are away, because they are lonely, feel more adventurous, or are not known by the people in a new place.
- Some people travel just to have sex (e.g. sex tourism). Sex with sex trade workers increases the chance of getting an STI. It may also be against the law in some countries.
- Drinking alcohol or using drugs can make people more likely to take chances, and make poor decisions.

How Do You Prevent STIs?

- The only sure way to prevent getting an STI is to not have any sex.
- Don't have any kind of sex with sex trade workers, expatriates, locals or other travellers.
- Only have sex with a partner who you know is not infected and is not having sex with anyone else.
- Be vaccinated against Hepatitis A and B (Hepatitis A can also be spread through some kinds of sex).
- Remember there are no cures or vaccines to prevent HIV.
- Always use latex condoms, for all kinds of sex. Check the expiry date before using.
- For those with latex allergies, polyurethane condoms should be used.
- Buy your own condoms before you leave Canada, as the quality of condoms in other countries can be poor.
- Female condoms may also be an option. They may not work as well as male condoms, but are better than no protection at all.
- Don't mix drugs, alcohol & sex.
- Don't have any kind of sex, if your sex partner has sores or signs of infection.
- Remember that some STIs are spread through blood
 - Do not share your toothbrush, razor, syringes or needles.
 - Avoid tattooing, body piercing and acupuncture.
 - Avoid blood transfusions or injections, even in a hospital or clinic, unless it is an emergency. If it is not, return home for treatment.
 - Consider taking a safe needle kit with you.

What Do You Do If You Think You May Have An STI?

- If you have had any kind of sex while you were travelling, even if you have no symptoms, or signs of infection, see your doctor for an STI check-up. Let your doctor know that you have recently travelled