

# Exposure to Sexually Transmitted Infections: Care Instructions

## Your Care Instructions

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are those diseases spread by sexual contact. There are at least 20 different STIs, including chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis, and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), which causes AIDS. Bacteria-caused STIs can be treated and cured. STIs caused by viruses, such as HIV, can be treated but not cured. Some STIs can reduce a woman's chances of getting pregnant in the future.

STIs are spread during sexual contact, such as vaginal intercourse and oral or anal sex.

**Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety.** Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

## How can you care for yourself at home?

- Your doctor may have given you a shot of antibiotics. If your doctor prescribed antibiotic pills, take them as directed. Do not stop taking them just because you feel better. You need to take the full course of antibiotics.
- Do not have sexual contact while you have symptoms of an STI or are being treated for an STI.
- Tell your sex partner (or partners) that he or she will need treatment.
- If you are a woman, do not douche. Douching changes the normal balance of bacteria in the vagina and may spread an infection up into your reproductive organs.

## To prevent exposure to STIs in the future

- Use latex condoms every time you have sex. Use them from the beginning to the end of sexual contact.
- Talk to your partner before you have sex. Find out if he or she has or is at risk for any STI. Keep in mind that a person may be able to spread an STI even if he or she does not have symptoms.
- Do not have sex if you are being treated for an STI.
- Do not have sex with anyone who has symptoms of an STI, such as sores on the genitals or mouth.
- Having one sex partner (who does not have STIs and does not have sex with anyone else) is a good way to avoid STIs.

## When should you call for help?

**Call your doctor now** or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have new pain in your belly or pelvis.
- You have symptoms of a urinary tract infection. These may include:
  - Pain or burning when you urinate.
  - A frequent need to urinate without being able to pass much urine.
  - Pain in the flank, which is just below the rib cage and above the waist on either side of the back.
  - Blood in your urine.
  - A fever.
- You have new or worsening pain or swelling in the scrotum.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- You have unusual vaginal bleeding.
- You have a discharge from the vagina or penis.
- You have any new symptoms, such as sores, bumps, rashes, blisters, or warts.
- You have itching, tingling, pain, or burning in the genital or anal area.
- You think you may have an STI.

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