

secretions of a person infected with the virus. It is passed on through anal or vaginal sex without a condom, by sharing drug injecting equipment, and through unsterile body piercing or tattooing in developing countries. The risk of HIV transmission through oral sex is very low.

- The test for HIV is a blood test.
- In Australia, a HIV test is done during pregnancy as part of routine blood tests.
- HIV is not curable but can be managed well with medication.
- If you are in a group at higher risk of HIV, medications are available to reduce the chance of becoming infected with HIV (PrEP & PEP). See the SHFPACT PrEP & PEP brochure for more information or talk to your health care provider.

### Trichomoniasis

- Trichomoniasis (Trich) is a genital infection caused by protozoa. It is more common in older people with a vagina and who are living in remote areas. It is less common in people with a penis.
- It usually has no symptoms, but if symptoms do occur, they can include:
  - A frothy yellow-green vaginal discharge, unpleasant vaginal odour, vaginal and vulval itching, and burning.
  - Penile symptoms may include discharge from the penis and pain passing urine.
- Trichomoniasis is not usually serious but can be unpleasant.
- It is not routinely tested for unless you have symptoms or are at higher risk. The test is a vaginal swab taken by a doctor or nurse or a urine sample.
- Trichomoniasis is treated with an oral antibiotic.

### Conditions which are not STIs but which can affect the genital area

#### Pubic lice (crabs)

- Pubic lice are tiny parasites that infect the pubic hair, armpits, or chest hair. The symptoms are itching in the affected area.
- They are passed on by direct contact with the infected area or by contact with infected bedding or clothes, not necessarily during sexual contact.
- They can be treated with lotions or creams available from pharmacies. Clothes and bedding also need to be treated.

#### Scabies

- Scabies is a skin infestation of a tiny mite. The main symptom is intense itching, which is worse at night and after a hot shower. Sometimes a small rash is visible. It occurs most commonly between the fingers, on wrists, armpits,

stomach, and genitals. Scabies can remain in your skin for months if not treated.

- Scabies can be spread sexually as well as through non-sexual skin-to-skin contact.
- Scabies is treated by applying a special topical cream to the entire body's skin. Bedding and clothing also need to be washed in hot water at the same time that you have your treatment.

### Molluscum Contagiosum

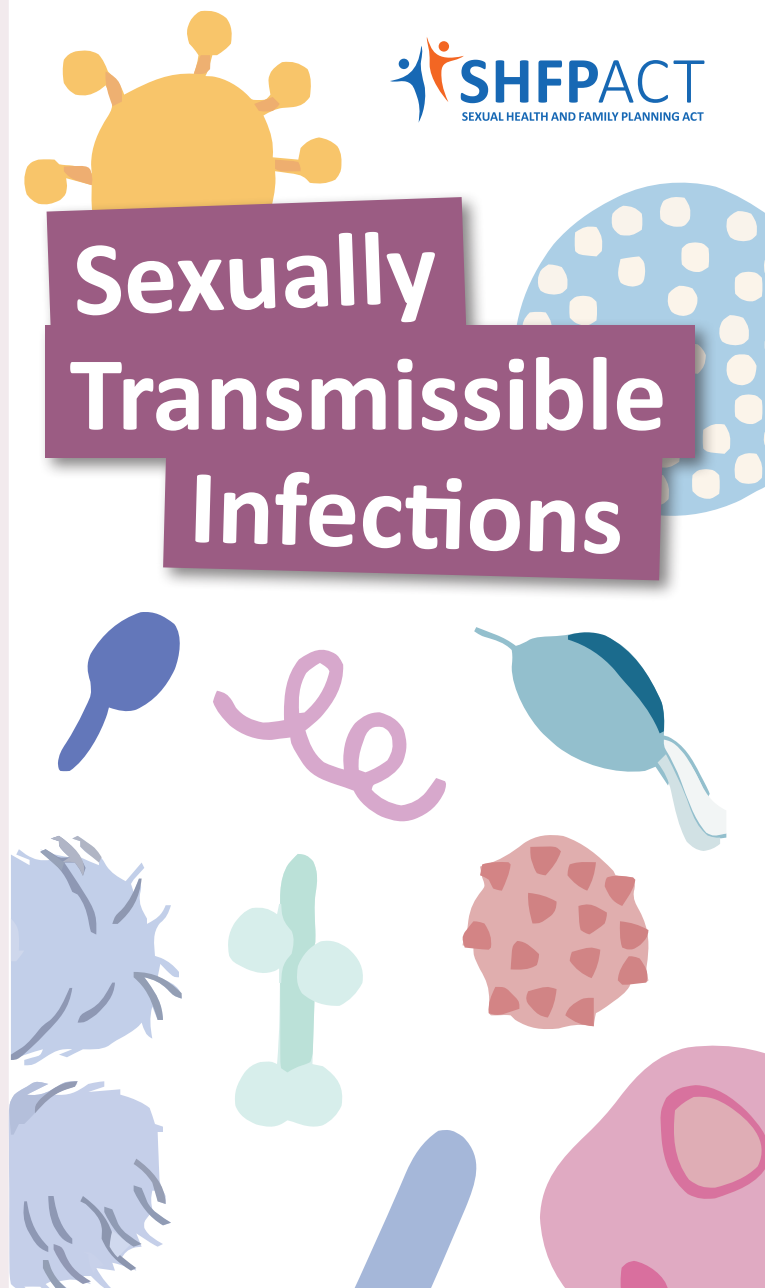
- Molluscum contagiosum is a skin infection caused by a virus that causes small painless, firm lumps with a dimple in the centre. It is common in children. It can appear anywhere on the body, but in adults, they usually appear on the buttocks, thighs, lower abdomen, and genital area.
- It can be spread sexually as well as through non-sexual skin-to-skin contact.
- It will resolve on its own within 12 months but can be treated with freezing or cream.

### Mpox

- Mpox is a rare infection caused by the Mpox virus. In humans it is spread through close contact with an infected person, this can include:
  - Droplets from coughing or sneezing
  - Physical contact with infected body fluids through touching, kissing, or sexual activity
  - Contact with clothing, bedding or towels used by someone infected with Mpox
- Mpox is usually a mild illness that resolves in 2 to 4 weeks.
- There is no treatment for Mpox. Rest, pain relief, and staying hydrated is usually all that is needed.
- An effective vaccine is now available for higher risk groups. This includes:
  - Gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men
  - People living with HIV
  - A recent history of multiple sex partners, taking part in group sex, or attending sex on premises venues
  - Sex workers, particularly those working with higher risk clients
- For further information regarding Mpox or the Mpox vaccine contact your local sexual health service. If you are in the ACT please contact **Canberra Sexual Health Centre on 51242184**

References/acknowledgements: Australian STI Management Guidelines for Primary Care (2021): <https://sti.guidelines.org.au/>  
Melbourne Sexual Health Centre: <https://www.mshc.org.au/>  
ASHM: <https://ashm.org.au/>. healthdirect: <https://www.healthdirect.gov.au>

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# Sexually Transmissible Infections

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## What are STIs?

- Sexually Transmissible Infections (STIs) are infections passed from one person to another during sexual contact or the exchange of body fluids.
- They are caused by microorganisms such as bacteria, viruses, or parasites.
- They can affect areas of the body other than the genitals.
- They do not always cause signs or symptoms.

## What puts me at risk of getting an STI?

Having unprotected vaginal, anal, or oral sex can put you at risk of getting an STI. You can also get some STIs from skin-to-skin contact. Some activities can place you at higher risk.

### Riskier activities include having unprotected sex:

- With casual partners (the more partners, the greater the risk).
- With a partner who has had unprotected sex with casual partners.
- When travelling outside Australia or with a partner who has had unprotected sex outside Australia.

## Chlamydia

- Chlamydia is Australia's most common bacterial STI, especially in young people aged 15 to 30.
- If left untreated, chlamydia can lead to Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID), an infection of the uterus and fallopian tubes, which can cause infertility.
- Chlamydia can also damage the tubes in the testicles and affect fertility.
- Most people who have chlamydia do not have any symptoms. However, if symptoms occur, they can include:
  - Lower abdominal pain, pain with sex and/or when passing urine, more painful periods, bleeding between periods, and bleeding after sex.
  - Penile discharge and pain passing urine or on ejaculation.
- The test for chlamydia is a urine test or a simple self-inserted vaginal swab. If you are having anal sex, a self-inserted anal swab may be needed. A throat swab may also be required.
- Chlamydia is treated with oral antibiotics.

## Gonorrhoea

- Gonorrhoea is a bacterium that infects the penis, vagina, rectum, or throat.
- It is becoming increasingly common in Australia.
- Many people who have gonorrhoea do not have any symptoms. However, if symptoms do occur, they can include:
  - Discharge from the penis or pain passing urine.
  - Discharge from the anus, anal irritation, and pain.

- Abnormal vaginal discharge, pain with sex, and bleeding between periods or after sex.
- If you have no symptoms, the test for gonorrhoea is a urine test or a simple self-inserted vaginal swab. If you are having anal sex, a self-inserted anal swab is recommended. You might also need a throat swab.
- Gonorrhoea is treated with antibiotics which are given orally and by injection.

## Genital warts and Human Papilloma Virus (HPV)

- Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) is a large group of viruses common in humans. There are many HPV types. Some HPV types can cause genital warts, and some can cause cancers of the cervix or genitals if left undetected and untreated.
- HPV is transmitted by skin-to-skin contact during sexual activity. HPV is very common, and most people will be exposed to HPV in their lifetime. However, most HPV infections will clear by themselves with no symptoms.
- If genital warts occur, they can be on the penis, vulva, anus, and skin close to these areas. They can be single or multiple lumps. They can sometimes be itchy, painful, or may bleed.
- There is no test for the HPV types that cause visible warts — if you have symptoms, you need to see a doctor.
- Effective treatment for warts is available and includes freezing or using a topical liquid or cream.
- A vaccine is available which protects against some of the strains of HPV that cause genital warts, cancer of the cervix, and some other cancers — check with your doctor.



## Herpes

- Herpes is caused by a virus called the herpes simplex virus (HSV), which is transmitted by skin-to-skin contact during genital or oral sex.
- There are two types: HSV 1 and HSV 2.
  - HSV 1 causes almost all oral herpes (cold sores) and about half genital herpes infections.
  - HSV 2 causes the remainder of genital herpes infections.
- HSV often has no symptoms. However, if symptoms do occur, they can include painful blisters or sores on the skin or an area of skin that occasionally becomes sore, red, or itchy.
- Once you have herpes, it remains in your body for life but is not always active.
- Treatment is available to reduce the frequency of episodes; help manage any symptoms and reduce the risk of transmission to partners.

- There is no helpful screening test available for herpes. However, if you have any symptoms, such as a genital sore that appears occasionally, see a doctor for diagnosis when the sore is present.
- Avoid oral sex when a cold sore is present on or around the mouth to avoid transmission from mouth to genitals.

## Hepatitis B

- Hepatitis B is a viral infection that causes liver inflammation and can cause serious illness.
- It can be passed on through unprotected vaginal or anal sex, by sharing drug injecting equipment, during unsterile tattooing or body piercing, or sometimes through dental or other procedures in developing countries.
- A very effective vaccine is available to prevent Hepatitis B. Check if you have had this vaccine and if you haven't had it discuss this with your doctor.
- The test for Hepatitis B is a blood test. If you know that you have been vaccinated, you may not need this test.
- All pregnant women in Australia are usually tested for Hepatitis B during routine pregnancy blood tests.

## Syphilis

- Syphilis is caused by the bacteria *Treponema Pallidum*. It is very infectious and is transmitted through close skin-to-skin contact during oral, vaginal, or anal sex with a person who has the infection. It can also be passed from mother to baby during pregnancy. It can cause serious health problems if it is left untreated. Syphilis infections are increasing in Australia.
- There are three stages of syphilis, and the symptoms vary in each stage. In the early stages of syphilis, you are highly infectious to any partners. Not everyone has symptoms, so you may not know if you have it. Early symptoms can include an ulcer-like sore on the genitals, mouth, or anus which is usually painless, or a rash that generally appears on the hands and feet.
- The test for syphilis is a simple blood test.
- If a pregnant woman is infected with syphilis, it can cause serious health problems for her baby. Therefore, it is now advised that all pregnant women be tested for syphilis 3 times during their pregnancy. Your GP will arrange this for you along with other routine tests in pregnancy.
- Syphilis is treated with antibiotics given by injection.

## HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus)

- HIV is a viral infection that, if left untreated, breaks down the body's natural defences against infections by weakening the immune system and can lead to Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS).
- HIV can be present in the blood, semen, or vaginal