



HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections

Who we are

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Overview

A sexually transmitted infection (also called a STI) is an infection that is passed from one person to another during sex. This can be through vaginal, anal and oral (mouth) sex. Sexually transmitted infections are very common.

There are many different types of sexually transmitted infections. Syphilis, gonorrhoea, genital warts, herpes and HIV are all different types of sexually transmitted infections.

How do I know if I have or my partner has a sexually transmitted infection?

Some sexually transmitted infections have signs that are easy to identify once you are infected. Other sexually transmitted infections are not so easy to see. You can usually identify a sexually transmitted infection because the signs usually appear on the sex organs – penis or vagina. It is more difficult to see in women since the female's sex organs are not external.

It is very important to receive medical treatment as soon as possible because sometimes the signs go away but the infection remains. It's not always possible to know you have a sexually transmitted infection as you may not always have signs of an infection. Always get checked if you know or think your partner has a sexually transmitted infection.

Where it can be easily identified, you may see signs of a sexually transmitted infection between three and 21 days after having unprotected sex.

Some signs of sexually transmitted infections

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| White, yellow or green smelly vaginal fluids or discharge from the penis. The discharge may also look like pus | ✓ |
| Blisters, sores or warts in or around the vagina, penis or anus | ✓ |
| Pain in the lower stomach | ✓ |
| Pain when having sex | ✓ |
| Pain in the testicles | ✓ |
| Unusual swelling in the groin | ✓ |

Should you have had sex without a condom and have any of these signs, you should visit your Healthcare Professional immediately. It's very important to treat any sexually transmitted infection as they all increase the risk of getting HIV or passing HIV on, should you have sex without a condom.

Protect yourself against sexually transmitted infections

Sexually transmitted infections weaken the skin of the penis or vagina and may cause sores. This makes it easier for the virus to enter the body. People with sexually transmitted infections are also more likely to get HIV if they don't go for treatment.

You can protect yourself from sexually transmitted infections by using a condom every time you have sex. Good quality condoms are available from local clinics and hospitals at no cost.

HIV, AIDS and sexually transmitted infections

HIV is also a sexually transmitted infection. Unlike most other sexually transmitted infections that can be cured, HIV cannot be cured.

It is very important to get treatment for a sexually transmitted infection because if you leave it untreated you are at risk of contracting HIV.

Treating sexually transmitted infections

Many sexually transmitted infections can be cured. See your healthcare professional as soon as you think you may have a sexually transmitted infection.

- A Healthcare Professional is the best person to diagnose and treat sexually transmitted infections
- The Healthcare Professional will treat the infection with either pills or injections or both
- It is important to take the treatment properly, according to the instructions.

For more information on HIV and AIDS or about Bankmed's HIV/AIDS Programme, contact 0800 BANKMED (0800 226 5633). All calls are treated with complete confidentiality.

Disclaimer

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Decisions about the diagnosis and treatment of any medical condition always requires the professional opinion of your Healthcare Professional and therefore no such advice should be disregarded or delayed,



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Complaints process

You may lodge a complaint or query with Bankmed Medical Scheme directly on 0800 BANKMED (0800 226 5633) or address a complaint in writing directly to the Principal Officer. Should your complaint remain unresolved, you may lodge a formal dispute by following Bankmed Medical Scheme's internal disputes process.

Members, who wish to approach the Council for Medical Schemes for assistance, may do so in writing to: Council for Medical Schemes Complaints Unit, Block A, Eco Glades 2 Office Park, 420 Witch-Hazel Avenue, Eco Park, Centurion 0157 or via e-mail at complaints@medicalschemes.com. Customer Care Centre: 0861 123 267/website www.medicalschemes.com

