

There are more than 20 known **sexually transmitted infections (STIs)**. Some of them will cause symptoms that should be brought to the attention of a doctor immediately. A person could have the disease but might not notice any symptoms of the infection. Therefore, it is important to be tested for STIs if you take part in unprotected oral, genital, or anal sex.

### The most common STIs are listed below

- **Gonorrhoea.** This bacterial infection at first may cause a slight discharge from the vagina, penis, or anus. However, 50% of women and 10% of men with gonorrhoea have no symptoms at all. If the infection is not treated, it can lead to sterility and other complications. Gonorrhoea can be treated with antibiotics. One of the most frequently reported STIs. Untreated, women can contract pelvic inflammatory disease, which may lead to sterility.
- **Chlamydia.** Chlamydia trachomatis is often called "the silent epidemic" because infections are common yet many people do not realize that they are infected. Only one in four of infected people have symptoms of a slight discharge and stinging on passing urine. It is the commonest STI in Australia. This bacterial disease is easily cured with antibiotics but can have serious health consequences if left untreated. Difficult to detect sometimes, 75% of infected women and 25% of infected men have no symptoms at all.
- **Syphilis.** Syphilis is a bacterial infection that can be easily missed. The first symptom is a painless blister or sore that will disappear on its own, but the infection can be passed on to others for up to eighteen months. Syphilis can be treated with antibiotics. However, if left untreated, the disease can spread throughout your body over the course of many years and cause considerable organ damage.
- **Trichomonas.** Trichomonas vaginalis is a microscopic parasite that may or may not cause symptoms of watery discharge and stinging on passing water. Treatment is available.
- **Human papillomavirus (HPV).** This virus can infect the genital area, causing genital warts (condylomata). Some types of the virus have been associated with cervical cancer. Early detection with cervical smear testing can limit the risk of cancer.
- **Genital herpes.** This virus causes recurrent, periodic outbreaks of sores in the genital region and remains in your body for life. However, there are anti-viral therapies available that can shorten the duration of symptoms.
- **Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C.** These are viral infections that can be transmitted through sexual contact. Hepatitis B and C affect the liver and can severely damage it. Treatment with interferon is available, but this drug therapy may have serious side effects. A vaccine exists, but there's no cure, can cause cancer of the liver.
- **Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV).** HIV is associated with AIDS. This virus attacks and destroys certain white blood cells (T-helper lymphocytes) that are involved in the immune system. As the number of these cells is reduced, the ability of your body to fight off infections also decreases. This eventually results in death. Although there is no cure, early detection allows for treatment with anti-viral therapies that can help to prolong life.
- **Thrush.** This STI is caused by a yeast, Candida albicans, that lives harmlessly on your skin, in your mouth and in your gut. Genital infection can cause itching and burning, a thick white cheesy discharge from the vagina or under the foreskin, pain during sex and discomfort on passing water. The infection can be treated with a cream or pessary and a single dose tablet

that can be bought from a chemist.

- **Herpes** is spread by direct skin to skin contact. For example, STIs if you have a cold sore and kiss someone, you can transfer the virus from your mouth to theirs. If you have active genital herpes and have vaginal or anal intercourse, you can transfer the virus from your genitals to your partner's. Finally, if you have a cold sore and put your mouth on your partner's genitals (oral sex), you can give your partner genital herpes. Herpes also can be spread through sexual contact at times when there are no obvious signs or symptoms. Herpes is often transmitted by people who are unaware that they are infected or by people who simply don't recognize that their herpes infection is in its active phase.

### **The most commonly found sexually transmitted infection in India are Gonorrhea**

Gonorrhea (or "Clap") is an infectious sexually transmitted infection that chiefly affects the mucous membrane of the urogenital tract, the rectum, and occasionally the eyes. The disease is caused by gonococci and belongs to the genera of Neisseria. Discharges from the involved mucous membranes are the source of infection and the bacteria are transmitted by direct contact, usually sexual or during passage of a newborn through the birth canal.

#### **Causes, Incidence, and Risk Factors**

This infection occurs in people who have been infected with gonorrhea. It affects women more frequently than men (4:1) and its highest incidence is among sexually active adolescent girls. There is also increased risk during menstruation and pregnancy. Two forms of arthritis exist, one with skin rashes and multiple joint involvement but no demonstrable gonococci in the joint fluid, and a second, less common form where disseminated gonococcemia leads to infection of a single joint (monoarticular) and joint fluid cultures are positive.

Single joint arthritis follows generalized spread (dissemination) of the gonococcal infection. Dissemination is associated with symptoms of fever, chills, multiple joint aches (arthralgia) and rashes (1mm–2cm red macules). This episode may end as a single joint becomes infected. The most commonly involved joints are the knee, wrist, and ankle.

#### **In Males**

Usually, suffer's inflammation of the urethra with pus and painful urination. Fibrosis sometimes occurs in an advanced stage, causing narrowing of the urethra. There also may be involvement of the epididymis and prostate gland.

#### **In Females**

Infection may occur in the urethra, vagina, and cervix, and there may be a discharge of pus. However, infected females often harbor the disease without any symptoms until it has progressed to a more advanced stage. If the uterine (Fallopian) tubes become involved, pelvic inflammation may follow. Peritonitis, or inflammation of the peritoneum, is a very serious disorder. The infection should be treated and controlled immediately because, if neglected, sterility or death may result. Although antibiotics have greatly reduced the mortality rate of acute peritonitis, it is estimated that between 50,000 and 80,000 women are made sterile by gonorrhea every year as a result of scar tissue formation that closes the uterine tubes. If the bacteria are transmitted to the eyes of the newborn in the birth canal, blindness can result.

### Prevention

Prevention consists of following safer sexual practices. Monogamous sexual relations with a known disease-free partner are considered the ideal means of prevention. The use of condoms provides the best protection against gonorrhea and other sexually-transmitted infections. Treatment of all sexual partners of a known infected person is essential to prevent further spread or re-infection.

### Symptoms

#### The Common Symptoms are:

- Migrating joint pain for 1 to 4 days (polyarthralgia).
- Single joint pain.
- Fever.
- Skin rash or lesion.
- Vaginal or urethral discharge.
- Pain or burning on urination.
- Lower abdominal pain.

### Signs and Tests

#### The Doctor may advice one or more of the following tests:

- Positive cervical gram stain (positive for gonococci).
- Urethral culture for gonorrhea in men.
- Cervical culture for gonorrhea in women.
- Throat culture for gonorrhea.
- Joint fluid gram stain.
- Synovial fluid culture for gonorrhea (culture of joint aspirate).

### Treatment

Abstinence from coitus until the infection is eradicated. Patients are advised bed-rest and analgesics. Various antibiotics are prescribed.

#### Medication Include:

- Injections.
  - Ceftriaxone 125 mg IM (injected into a muscle).
  - Spectinomycin 2 grams IM (injected into a muscle).
- Oral (by mouth) one-time dose.
  - Cefixime 400 mg.
  - Ciprofloxacin 500 mg.
- Ofloxacin 400 mg.
  - Cefuroxime Axotal 1 gram.
  - Cefpodoxime proxetil 200 mg.
  - Enoxacin 400 mg.
- Oral (by mouth) multiple dose.
  - Erythromycin 500 mg, four times per day, for one week.

A follow-up visit 7 days after treatment to recheck cultures and confirm the cure of infection is important.

### **Complications**

If untreated, Gonorrhea may lead to: persistent discomfort, other gonorrhea complications, such as disseminated gonorrhea (spread throughout the body). Hence, immediate diagnosis and treatment of gonorrhea is essential.