



Your Guide to

# Sexually Transmitted Infections

(STIs) and some  
common genital conditions



[sexualwellbeing.ie](http://sexualwellbeing.ie)



This document provides information on sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Some conditions that are not sexually transmitted are also included because they can cause symptoms (signs of a sickness) in the genital area.

# What is an STI?

**An STI is a sexually transmitted infection.**

**STIs are passed on through sexual contact with someone who has an infection.**

## What if I think I have an STI?

If you think you may have an STI, visit your GP, pharmacist or an STI clinic for professional advice. If you do not have any symptoms, you can do a free home STI test. You will find information on free STI testing services at the end of this guide.

## How would I know if I had an STI?

You may not know if you have an STI, so it is important to be tested. Your partner(s) may benefit from testing too.

## When should I have a test?

You should be tested if:

- > You have any symptoms which suggest an STI (see symptoms below).
- > Your partner has an STI.
- > You change your sexual partner.
- > You have multiple sexual partners.

## What does the test involve?

The type of test will depend on what kind of sexual contact you had and if you have symptoms.

For **men and people with a penis**, you will be asked to give a urine sample into a small bottle. You should not urinate (pass urine) for 2 hours before giving a urine sample. Sometimes a sample called a swab is taken from inside the top of the penis - this will depend on what your symptoms are and will be explained to you by the healthcare professional seeing you.

Sometimes swabs will also be taken from the throat or rectum (back passage).

A swab is like a cotton bud.

For **women and people with a vagina**, a swab is taken from the vagina, this can be done by the healthcare professional and sometimes by yourself.

Everyone will be asked to do a blood test to check for HIV, syphilis and sometimes hepatitis B and C.

## Do I have to tell my partner if I have an STI?

It's a good idea to tell your partner(s) if you have an STI so they can be tested and treated if necessary. Your healthcare provider can give you advice and help on how to do this.

# STI facts:

- > You can get an STI the first time you have sex.
- > You can get an STI even if you know your partner.
- > You can't tell if someone has an STI by looking at them.
- > You can get STIs from oral sex.
- > You can be infected with more than one STI at a time.
- > You can get an STI more than once.

## Common STIs and genital conditions

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# Bacterial Vaginosis (BV)

## What is BV?

BV is the most common cause of abnormal discharge from the vagina. The normal vagina contains a mixture of bacteria which help to keep the vagina healthy. BV is an overgrowth of some of the bacteria (called anaerobes) resulting in an overall imbalance of the bacteria. It is not sexually transmitted.

## How do I get BV?

Any woman or person with a vagina can get BV at any time, even if they are not sexually active. You may be more likely to get BV if you:

- > have a new partner
- > smoke
- > have oral sex
- > douche
- > have sex with multiple partners

## What symptoms would I have?

Common symptoms include an abnormal smell from the vagina, like a 'fishy' smell, or a discharge from the vagina which can be grey, pale and thin. Sometimes the 'fishy' smell is worse after sex. BV does not cause itch, soreness or irritation.

## How can I be tested for BV?

BV can be diagnosed based on the symptoms you describe and some simple tests on your vaginal discharge. This can be explained to you by the healthcare provider who sees you when you attend the clinic.

## Can BV be treated?

BV is treated with antibiotics. It sometimes comes back and needs to be treated again. Your sexual partner(s) do not need to be tested or treated for BV unless they have symptoms.

## How can I avoid getting BV again?

The best ways of preventing BV are not known but avoiding anything that upsets the natural balance of bacteria in the vagina may help. This includes avoiding:

- > douching (rinsing inside your vagina)
- > overwashing the genital area
- > bubble baths, scented soaps, antiseptics such as dettol, tea tree oil, baby wipes and feminine washes

# Chlamydia

## What is chlamydia?

Chlamydia is a bacterial infection. It is one of the most common STIs. If it is not treated, it can lead to infertility (not being able to have children) in women and people who can get pregnant.

## How do I get chlamydia?

Chlamydia is passed from one person to another from:

- > condomless sex (oral, vaginal, anal)
- > using unwashed sex toys
- > mother-to-baby during delivery

Chlamydia can infect the cervix (neck of the womb), urethra (the tube through which you pass urine), rectum (back passage), pharynx (throat) and sometimes the eyes.

## You cannot get chlamydia by:

- > hugging
- > kissing
- > swimming
- > sitting on toilet seats
- > sharing cutlery or towels

## What symptoms would I have?

Many people with chlamydia don't have any symptoms. If they do have symptoms they can include:

### Men and people with a penis

- > discharge from the tip of the penis
- > pain or discomfort passing urine
- > pain and swelling in one or both testicles

### Women and people with a vagina

- > bleeding after sex
- > bleeding between periods
- > change in your normal vaginal discharge
- > pain passing urine
- > pain in your abdomen (tummy)

Some people may have bowel symptoms such as diarrhoea, pain, mucus discharge or bleeding from the back passage.

## **How can I find out if I have chlamydia?**

Chlamydia is diagnosed on a urine sample or a vaginal swab. Sometimes a swab is taken from the rectum or throat.

## **Can chlamydia be treated?**

Yes. Chlamydia is treated with antibiotics.

## **When can I have sex again?**

You should avoid sex (even oral sex or sex with a condom) with anyone until after you have finished your treatment.

Your partner(s) should be offered testing and may need to be treated. If a partner also has chlamydia and you have sex with them before they are treated, you may become infected again.

## **How can I prevent myself from getting chlamydia again?**

Using condoms correctly and every time you have sex will reduce your risk of getting chlamydia. If you have a new partner it is a good idea for both of you to have an STI test before any condomless sex.

## **What is LGV?**

LGV stands for lymphogranuloma venereum.

It is a type of chlamydia which is not very common. LGV is more likely to be seen in gay, bisexual and men who have sex with men (gbMSM).

LGV can cause rectal pain, bleeding or pus from the back passage, bowel symptoms, genital ulcers (sores), and swollen lymph glands. It is usually treated with a longer course of antibiotics than the more common type of chlamydia.

# Genital Herpes (HSV)

## What is genital herpes?

Genital herpes is a viral infection caused by the herpes simplex virus (HSV). There are two types: HSV 1 and HSV 2.

HSV 1 is more commonly associated with 'cold sores' around the mouth. HSV 2 is most commonly associated with genital infection.

## How do I get genital herpes?

The herpes virus is transmitted by skin-to-skin contact, kissing, oral, vaginal and anal sex, and from mother-to-baby during delivery.

## What symptoms would I have?

Symptoms are like a cold sore in the genital area. This can include multiple spots and blisters around the genital area. These can be very painful. In time, these swellings can break open and form sores or ulcers which gradually crust over and heal. You may also have swollen glands in the groin, flu-like symptoms, a feeling of being unwell and pain when passing urine.

## Can genital herpes be treated?

If you have symptoms of genital herpes for the first time, the treatment usually involves antiviral tablets, to help speed up the healing process. Usually the pain can be managed with simple painkillers and a local anaesthetic (numbing) cream.

Once you have HSV, the virus stays in your body. It can become active again if you are ill or under stress. These later 'outbreaks' or 'episodes' are usually less severe than the first one and usually become less frequent over time. These later episodes can also be treated with antiviral tablets and simple painkillers.

## What if I get a lot of episodes?

Some people are put on daily antiviral medication if they get a lot of episodes. Other people who occasionally get recurrent episodes just take the antiviral medication when they get symptoms. Your healthcare provider will explain what may be the best option for you.



## **How can I avoid passing genital herpes to a partner?**

Using condoms and taking antiviral medication can reduce the risk of passing on genital herpes. It is best to avoid sex during an episode.

In some cases your partner will be offered a blood test to see if they also have been exposed to herpes before. You can discuss this further with your healthcare provider.

## **What if a partner tells me they had genital herpes in the past?**

If a partner tells you they have had genital herpes in the past it is a good idea to discuss this with your healthcare provider. You should avoid having sex with a partner if they have an episode. A blood test can be done to see if you have been exposed to herpes in the past.

## **Is it ok to have sex after an episode?**

Yes. Talk with your healthcare provider about what you can do to reduce the risk of passing genital herpes on to someone else. It is important to avoid sexual contact with someone during an episode.

## **If I had genital herpes in the past and get pregnant, what should I do?**

In most cases, there will be no problem with the pregnancy and it will not affect the baby. If you are pregnant or planning a pregnancy, tell your healthcare provider of your history of herpes. Sometimes antiviral medication towards the end of pregnancy is recommended. In most cases, a history of herpes will have no impact on how your baby will be delivered.

# Genital Warts (HPV)

## What are genital warts?

Genital warts are 'warts' in the genital area caused by a virus called the human papillomavirus (HPV). There are many different types of HPV. Types 6 and 11 are the types that commonly cause genital warts.

There are some types of HPV that can lead to cancer, including anal cancer, throat cancer, penile cancer and cervical cancer. The types of HPV that cause genital warts do not cause cancer.

## How do I get HPV?

HPV is passed by skin-to-skin contact, usually genital skin-to-skin contact. It is common for sexually active people to come in contact with HPV. Most people do not develop warts or cancer.

### You cannot get HPV by:

- > hugging
- > kissing
- > sharing towels
- > using swimming pools
- > sharing cutlery, cups or other utensils

## What symptoms would I have?

Most people with HPV do not have any symptoms and don't know that they have the infection. If you do get genital warts, they are often flesh-coloured lumps or bumps on the skin, anywhere in the genital or anal area.

They may appear weeks to months after you come into contact with the virus.

## Can I be tested for genital warts?

Genital warts are diagnosed by the healthcare provider examining the genitals.

## **Can genital warts be treated?**

Sometimes genital warts go away on their own without treatment, but most people prefer to get them treated. Treatments may take a few weeks or months to work.

Sometimes the warts come back after treatment.

### **Treatments include:**

- > cryotherapy (freezing)
- > creams
- > surgery – if there are lots of warts or if they do not respond to other treatments

## **Is it ok to have sex again?**

Yes. Most sexually active people have been exposed to HPV at some time but have not had any symptoms, so they may be immune. You can talk with your healthcare provider about this.

## **Is there a vaccine?**

There is now a vaccine which protects against the main types of HPV, including types 6 and 11 which cause genital warts, and types 16 and 18 which cause the majority of HPV - associated cancers.

The HPV vaccine is offered to all first year students through the schools immunisation programme.

This HPV vaccine is also available to some gay, bisexual and men who have sex with men and transgender women through public STI clinics, and to some people living with HIV who attend HIV clinics. Ask your healthcare provider for more information about the HPV vaccine and find out if it is suitable for you.

# Gonorrhoea

## What is gonorrhoea?

Gonorrhoea is a bacterial infection. If it is not treated, it can lead to infertility in women and people who can get pregnant.

Gonorrhoea can infect the cervix (neck of the womb), urethra (the tube through which you pass urine), the rectum (back passage), pharynx (throat) and sometimes the eyes.

## How do I get gonorrhoea?

Gonorrhoea is passed from one person to another through:

- > condomless sex (oral, vaginal, anal)
- > rimming (mouth to anus contact)
- > using unwashed sex toys
- > mother-to-baby during delivery

### **You cannot get gonorrhoea by:**

- > hugging
- > swimming pools or saunas
- > toilet seats
- > sharing cutlery or towels

## What symptoms would I have?

Many people with gonorrhoea don't have symptoms. If they do have symptoms they can include:

### **Men and people with a penis**

- > discharge from the tip of the penis
- > burning pain when passing urine
- > pain and swelling in one or both testicles

### **Women and people with a vagina**

- > bleeding after sex
- > bleeding between periods
- > change in normal vaginal discharge
- > pain in passing urine
- > pain in your abdomen (tummy)

Some people may have bowel symptoms such as diarrhoea, pain, mucus discharge or bleeding from the back passage.

## **How can I be tested for gonorrhoea?**

Gonorrhoea is diagnosed on a urine sample or a vaginal swab. Sometimes a swab is taken from the throat or rectum.

## **Can gonorrhoea be treated?**

Yes. Gonorrhoea is treated with antibiotics.

## **When can I have sex again?**

You should avoid sex (even oral sex or sex with a condom) with anyone until after you have finished your treatment.

Your partner(s) should be offered testing and may need to be treated. If a partner also has gonorrhoea and you have sex with them before they are treated, you may become infected again.

## **How can I prevent myself from getting gonorrhoea again?**

Using condoms correctly and every time you have sex will reduce your risk of getting gonorrhoea. If you have a new partner, it is a good idea for both of you to have an STI test before any condomless sex.

# Hepatitis B

## What is hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is a viral infection that infects the liver. In most people a full course of vaccination protects against infection.

## How do I get hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B can be passed on through:

- > condomless sex (oral, vaginal, anal) and rimming (mouth to anus contact)
- > sharing needles
- > mother-to-baby during pregnancy or delivery
- > sharing toothbrushes, razors or towels contaminated with infected blood

## You cannot get hepatitis B from:

- > sneezing or coughing
- > kissing or hugging
- > sharing dishes or glasses
- > food or water

## What symptoms would I have?

Many people have no symptoms. Others have symptoms when they first become infected. These can last for several weeks and may include flu-like symptoms, yellow skin, nausea, vomiting or diarrhoea.

## How is hepatitis B detected?

Hepatitis B is detected by a blood test.

## Can hepatitis B be prevented?

There are vaccines that protect against hepatitis B infection. The hepatitis B vaccine is given to infants as part of the primary childhood immunisation programme, in the 6 in 1 vaccine. If you have not been vaccinated and would like to find out more about hepatitis B vaccination please discuss this with your healthcare provider. Hepatitis B can also be prevented by using condoms and not sharing needles.

## **Can hepatitis B be treated?**

Yes, hepatitis B can be treated. If you are diagnosed with hepatitis B, you will need to see a doctor who specialises in the treatment and management of the infection.

There are different stages of hepatitis B infection. Some stages need treatment and some do not need treatment but need to be checked regularly (monitored).

If you have hepatitis B, the stages of infection, treatments and check-ups will all be explained to you by your healthcare provider.

## **When can I have sex again?**

This will depend on the stage of your hepatitis B infection and will be explained by your healthcare provider.

The people you have sex with and the people who live with you may be at risk of getting the infection from you and will need to be tested and offered vaccination.

# HIV

## What is HIV?

Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is a virus that attacks the human immune system and weakens its ability to fight infection and disease.

## How do I get HIV?

HIV can be passed on by:

- > having sex (vaginal or anal) without a condom or PrEP, with someone who is HIV positive and not on effective HIV treatment
- > sharing needles or works (injecting equipment) with someone who is HIV positive and not on effective HIV treatment
- > during pregnancy, delivery or breastfeeding from mother-to-baby where the mother is not on effective HIV treatment
- > contaminated blood products (very unlikely in Ireland as all donors are tested)
- > very rarely through oral sex without a condom

## You cannot get HIV from:

- > touching, hugging or kissing
- > coughing or sneezing
- > sharing a glass, cup, cutlery or other utensils
- > saliva, sweat or urine
- > sharing a public toilet

## Treatment as prevention (TasP)

When a person living with HIV is on treatment and the level of virus (viral load) in the body is so low that it cannot be detected (is 'undetectable'), HIV cannot be transmitted to sexual partners. This is also known as 'undetectable' equals 'untransmittable' (U=U).



## **What symptoms would I have?**

Some people get a flu-like illness when they first become infected with HIV. If you have these symptoms after a potential exposure to HIV, you should go for a HIV test.

Some people are unaware that they're infected because they may not feel sick right away or for many years after being infected with HIV.

If you have been at risk of getting HIV, it is important to get tested.

## **How can I be tested for HIV?**

A blood test is used to diagnose whether you have HIV. The home STI testing service and all STI clinics offer HIV testing for free. Some GPs provide HIV testing or can arrange for you to have a test. More information on testing services is at the back of this guide.

## **How can I protect myself from getting HIV?**

You can reduce your risk of getting HIV by:

- > using condoms every time you have vaginal or anal sex
- > not sharing needles or other injecting equipment, including spoons, filters and water
- > taking post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) if you have been exposed to HIV
- > taking pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) if you are at substantial risk

## **What is post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP)?**

PEP is a course of medication that you need to start as soon as possible (and within 72 hours, 3 days and nights) after you have been exposed to HIV. PEP reduces the chance of you becoming HIV positive.

If you think you have been at risk of getting HIV you should go to your nearest STI clinic as soon as possible (or to a hospital emergency department outside of clinic hours) to see if you need to go on PEP.

For more information on PEP and where to access PEP, visit <https://www.sexualwellbeing.ie/need-urgent-information-and-care-/post-exposure-prophylaxis/>

## **What is pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP)?**

PrEP is medication taken by HIV negative people before having sex (pre-exposure) and after sex, to prevent HIV (this is called prophylaxis).

PrEP has been shown in many studies to be safe, and when taken correctly, highly effective at preventing HIV.

PrEP is the newest HIV prevention tool available and is best used in combination with other HIV prevention measures.

PrEP is available through the HSE free of charge to those who are considered to be at increased risk of acquiring HIV through sex.

For further information on PrEP and where PrEP is available, visit [www.sexualwellbeing.ie/prep](http://www.sexualwellbeing.ie/prep)

## **Can HIV be treated?**

HIV can be treated effectively with medications. HIV treatment stops HIV reproducing in the body. When taken properly, HIV treatment enables most people with HIV to live a long and healthy life.

When taken properly, HIV treatment also reduces the chance of a person living with HIV passing HIV on to someone else. When a person living with HIV is on treatment and the level of virus (viral load) in the body is so low that it cannot be detected (is 'undetectable'), HIV cannot be transmitted to sexual partners. This is also known as 'undetectable' equals 'untransmittable' (U=U).

The earlier you are diagnosed and can start treatment, the better. At the moment there is no cure for HIV, which means that treatment is lifelong.

# Molluscum Contagiosum (MC)

## What is MC?

Molluscum contagiosum is a viral skin infection.

It is not considered an STI.

## How do I get MC?

MC is transmitted through skin-to-skin contact, including genital contact during sex.

## What symptoms would I have?

If you have MC in the genital area you may notice small lumps or bumps on the skin of your genitals which may spread to your abdomen (belly area) or thighs. They are usually not painful or itchy.

## How can I be tested for MC?

MC is usually diagnosed by physical examination.

## How is MC treated?

Most people don't need treatment as the spots usually go away by themselves. Sometimes they are frozen off by a healthcare provider or treated with a cream or lotion.

## How can I reduce the risk of passing MC to a partner?

- > Avoid squeezing or scratching the spots because doing so will make them more likely to spread.
- > Avoid sharing towels and clothing.
- > Avoid sharing baths.

# Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID)

## What is PID?

PID is an infection of the uterus (womb), ovaries and fallopian tubes. It is usually caused by a bacterial infection.

About one in four cases are caused by STIs, such as chlamydia, gonorrhoea or *Mycoplasma genitalium*.

If PID is not treated, it can lead to infertility (not being able to have children), ectopic pregnancy (where the baby starts to grow in the tubes instead of the womb) or chronic (long lasting) pelvic pain.

## How do I get PID?

PID can develop after:

- > an untreated STI (such as chlamydia, gonorrhoea or *Mycoplasma genitalium*)
- > an infection in the abdomen, which may not be sexually transmitted
- > surgery to the womb (such as a pregnancy termination or other surgery)

## What symptoms would I have?

- > pain passing urine
- > pain in the abdomen (tummy or belly area)
- > pain during or after sex
- > raised temperature
- > nausea or vomiting
- > bleeding after sex
- > bleeding between periods
- > a change in your normal vaginal discharge

## How is PID diagnosed?

There is not a single test that can diagnose PID. PID is diagnosed based on your symptoms and what your healthcare provider finds when they examine you.

You will need to have swabs taken to check for STIs. Sometimes these tests will be negative and it isn't possible to find out exactly what infection caused the PID.

## **How is PID treated?**

PID is treated with antibiotics. These may be given as tablets, an injection or through a drip in hospital. The type of antibiotics you need will depend on the severity of the infection. Occasionally, PID needs to be treated with surgery.

## **Will my partner need treatment?**

As PID can be caused by an STI, your partner(s) should be offered testing and may need treatment with antibiotics.

## **When can I have sex again?**

You will have to wait until you have finished the antibiotics and have had a check-up by your healthcare provider before having sex again.

If you were diagnosed with an STI, it is really important that you don't have sex with a partner before they are tested and treated as you could become infected again.

# Pubic lice (crabs)

## What are pubic lice?

Pubic lice are small insects that live in the kind of coarse hair you might have on your chest, abdomen, underarms and pubic areas. They do not live in head hair.

Their eggs are called 'nits'.

## How do I get pubic lice?

Pubic lice are passed from person to person by:

- > skin-to-skin contact
- > sexual contact
- > sharing clothing, towels or bedding

## What symptoms would I have?

You may have one or more of the following symptoms:

- > itching
- > black spots (from the lice droppings) on your underwear
- > brown lice eggs in your pubic hair
- > small blood spots on your skin or underwear

## How are public lice diagnosed?

Pubic lice are diagnosed by a careful clinical examination.

## How are pubic lice treated?

Pubic lice are treated with a cream, shampoo or lotion that you can get over the counter in your local pharmacy. This treatment is repeated after 3 to 7 days.

Your sexual partner(s) will also need to be treated, even if they don't have any signs or symptoms.

You do not need to shave off your body hair. You can remove nits (eggs) with a special comb available in pharmacies.

You will need to wash all your clothing in a hot (50 degree or higher) wash to kill the lice and avoid re-infection.

## When can I have sex again?

Avoid close body contact until you and your partner(s) have finished treatment.

# Scabies

## What is scabies?

Scabies is caused by small insects (called mites) which burrow under the skin and lay eggs.

## How do I get scabies?

Scabies is usually passed from one person to another by skin-to-skin contact including genital skin contact.

However, scabies can live outside the body for 72 hours (3 days and nights) so you can also get them from clothing, bed sheets and towels.

## What symptoms would I have?

You may not develop symptoms for up to 6 weeks after being infected.

Scabies cause an intense itch which is often worse at night or after a warm shower.

You may also have a red, itchy rash or tiny red spots.

## How is scabies diagnosed?

Scabies is diagnosed by careful examination of the skin.

## How is scabies treated?

Scabies is treated with a cream, lotion or shampoo which is left on overnight.

Occasionally tablets are needed to clear scabies infection.

Your partner(s) and anyone else living in your home should also be treated, even if they have no symptoms.

The itch can be treated with antihistamine tablets or cream.

You should wash all clothing in a 50 degree wash.

Anything that cannot be washed (such as duvets, leather jackets and so on,) should be put in tied black plastic bags and left for 4 days and nights until the mites die.

# Syphilis

## What is syphilis?

Syphilis is caused by a bacteria called *Treponema pallidum*.

## How do I get syphilis?

You can get syphilis from:

- > skin-to-skin contact or coming into direct contact with a syphilis sore
- > condomless sex (oral, vaginal, anal)
- > mother-to-baby during pregnancy (congenital syphilis)

## Can I get syphilis from oral sex?

Yes.

## How would I know if I have syphilis?

There are different stages of infection. Some people have no symptoms. This is why it is important to get tested if you are at risk (especially if you are a gay or bisexual man who has sex with other men). Symptoms can vary from a painless sore (ulcer) to a rash all over the body. The symptoms often depend on how long you have had the syphilis infection.

If syphilis is not treated, it can cause problems with your heart, brain, eyes and nervous system.

## How can I be tested for syphilis?

Syphilis is usually diagnosed by a blood test. Sometimes a swab is taken from a sore (ulcer).

## How is syphilis treated?

Syphilis can be treated and cured with antibiotics. Treatment depends on your symptoms and how long you have had the infection. You will be followed up after treatment to make sure the infection has cleared.



## **When can I have sex again?**

Discuss with your healthcare provider when it is okay to have sex again after you have finished treatment.

Your partner(s) should be offered testing and may need to be treated.

If a partner also has syphilis and you have sex (even oral sex or sex with a condom) with them before they are treated, you may become infected again.

## **How can I prevent myself from getting syphilis again?**

Having syphilis once does not protect you from getting it again.

Use condoms every time you have sex. If you have a new partner, it is a good idea for both of you to have an STI test before any condomless sex.

# Thrush

## What is thrush?

Thrush is a very common cause of itch and discomfort in the genital area. It is caused by an overgrowth of yeast (candida). It is not an STI.

## How common is thrush?

Thrush is a very common condition and anyone can get thrush. It is more common in women and people with a vagina, and is also more common during pregnancy and in people who have diabetes or HIV.

## What symptoms would I have with thrush?

### Men and people with a penis

- > irritation under the foreskin or tip of the penis (balanitis)
- > spotty, red rash at the tip of the penis
- > white discharge under the foreskin

### Women and people with a vagina

- > vulval/vaginal itch, soreness or redness
- > vaginal discharge which is usually white and thick
- > discomfort during sex or when urinating

## How is thrush diagnosed?

The diagnosis is usually made based on the symptoms you describe. Thrush can also be diagnosed through an examination by your healthcare provider.

## How is thrush treated?

Thrush can be treated with creams, pessaries (vaginal tablets) or oral tablets.

Some treatments are available from a pharmacy without a prescription. If your symptoms do not improve, you should see your healthcare provider.

## How can I avoid getting thrush again?

- > wear cotton underwear
- > avoid tight clothing
- > avoid overwashing the genital area
- > avoid bubble baths, scented soaps, antiseptics such as dettol, tea tree oil, baby wipes and feminine washes

# Trichomonas Vaginalis (TV)

## What is TV?

TV is a sexually transmitted infection caused by a germ called a protozoan.

TV can infect the vagina in women and people with a vagina. In men and people with a penis, TV can infect the urethra (the tube through which you pass urine) and underneath the foreskin.

## How do I get TV?

TV is passed from one person to another in three ways:

- > condomless sex (oral, vaginal, anal)
- > using unwashed sex toys
- > from mother-to-baby during delivery

## You cannot catch TV by:

- > hugging
- > kissing
- > swimming
- > sitting on toilet seats
- > sharing cutlery or towels

## What symptoms would I have?

Many people with TV do not have any symptoms but they can still pass on TV to sexual partner(s). If they do have symptoms they can include:

### Men and people with a penis

- > discharge from the penis
- > pain passing urine
- > soreness around the foreskin
- > passing urine more frequently

### Women and people with a vagina

- > discharge from the vagina
- > smelly vaginal discharge
- > vulval/vaginal itching or soreness
- > pain during or after sex

## **How can I be tested for TV?**

A swab will be taken and tested.

## **How is TV treated?**

TV is treated with antibiotics.

## **When can I have sex again?**

You should avoid sex for 1 week after you and your partner(s) have finished your treatment before having sex again (even oral sex or sex with a condom).

## **How can I avoid getting TV again?**

Using condoms correctly and every time you have sex will reduce your risk of getting TV or other STIs.

# Services and Supports

Free home STI testing is available through the HSE. For more information and to order a test, visit [www.sexualwellbeing.ie](http://www.sexualwellbeing.ie).

STI testing and treatment is free in public STI or GUM (genito-urinary medicine) clinics. These are listed on <https://www.sexualwellbeing.ie/sexual-health/hse-sti-services-in-ireland.html>

STI testing is also available through many GPs or private services for a fee. Some NGOs or student health services provide STI testing for free or at a reduced rate.

## **Free STI Testing Locator:**

<http://www.hivireland.ie/hiv/testing/free-hiv-sti-testing-centre-locator/>

**Sexualwellbeing.ie** provides more information on sexual health, including more detailed information on STIs and genital conditions.

**Man2Man.ie** provides information on HIV and sexual health for gay, bisexual and men who have sex with men in Ireland.

**Healthpromotion.ie** provides sexual health information leaflets that you can download or order free of charge.

## **HIV & Sexual Health Helpline**

1800 459 459      [helpline@hse.ie](mailto:helpline@hse.ie)

## **Disclaimer**

This booklet gives you basic information about STIs. It does not replace the advice of a healthcare professional. If you have questions or concerns about STIs, or need more information, visit your GP, pharmacist or an STI clinic for professional advice.

You can order more copies of  
this booklet free of charge from  
[www.healthpromotion.ie](http://www.healthpromotion.ie)