



An STI has
come
between us...



Let's talk about it



Santé
et Services sociaux

Québec



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There's no culprit

It is never pleasant to find out that you have a sexually transmitted infection (STI). Disappointment, regret and anger are typical reactions. You may be worried about your health, feel guilty or fear rejection. There is no point in being angry with yourself or accusing your partners. The infection is often transmitted by someone who is unaware that he or she is infected. For this reason, there's really no culprit.

What should you do?

The best thing to do is find out about the infection to get over it as quickly as possible and protect yourself in the future.

One way to protect yourself is to stop transmitting the infection. Since people often suffer from STIs without knowing it, a good way to prevent the infection from spreading is to talk about it with your sexual partners so that they can seek treatment.



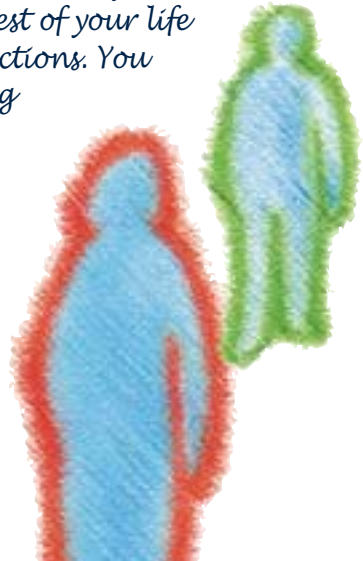
Inform my partners, it's worth it!

By informing my partners that they may have caught an STI, I:

- *enable them to seek prompt treatment and avoid serious complications ;*
- *help them to avoid transmitting the infection to other people;*
- *reduce the risk of reinfection. Indeed, even if you are cured, you are not protected for the rest of your life either from this STI or other such infections. You can be reinfected by someone suffering from an untreated STI.*

By informing my partners I am acting responsibly.

If you are too ill at ease to talk directly to your partners, you can get help.

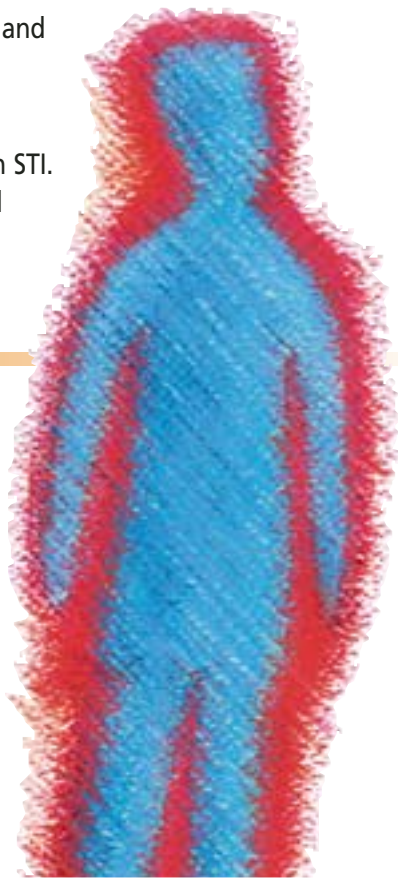


What to do if you think you have an STI?

- Do not hesitate to seek help.
- You must consult a health professional and ask to be tested for STIs.
- Be sure to use a condom until the test results confirm that you do not have an STI.
- Contact Info-Santé to obtain additional information on STIs.

What to do when you have an STI?

- Take all of the medication prescribed by the physician. Avoid the use of non-prescribed creams, ointments and medication.
- You must inform your partners, men or women, with whom you have engaged in oral, vaginal or anal sex so that they can be examined and treated. The partners to be contacted vary depending on whether you



suffer from chlamydia, gonorrhea or syphilis, as indicated in the table at the end of this brochure.

- Avoid vaginal, anal or oral sex. Otherwise, you must use a condom.
- In the case of chlamydia, gonorrhea and syphilis, the partners must usually receive treatment even if they do not display symptoms and, occasionally, even if they test negative for the disease.



To protect yourself, use a condom

When used properly, a latex or polyurethane condom offers good protection against STIs and unwanted pregnancy.

You must use a condom every time you have oral, vaginal or anal sex with:

- a new partner;
- a partner who has other sexual partners;
- anonymous or casual partners;
- or even with a regular partner who has not recently been examined for STIs, unless you are certain that this individual never has sex with other partners.

In all of these cases, for greater security, it is better to use a condom every time you have sex, even if your partner does not display any symptoms. Remember that it is possible to be infected by an STI without displaying symptoms.

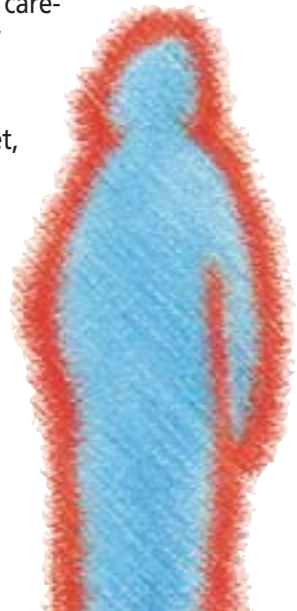


Helpful tips

- Before you buy or use a condom, check its expiry date.
- Put the condom on before any contact between the penis and the genitals, mouth or anus and be careful not to tear it.

- Pinch the tip of the condom to remove air and leave room for the sperm.
- Unroll the condom to the base of the erect penis.
- To avoid tearing the condom or irritating the vagina, use a water-based lubricant such as K-Y Jelly or a silicone-based lubricant such as WET.
- Avoid using oil-based products such as Vaseline and certain massage oils with latex condoms as they can damage the latex and cause tearing. However, these products can be used with polyurethane condoms.
- After ejaculation and while the penis is still erect, carefully remove the condom making sure to properly grasp the condom by the base to prevent sperm from spilling.
- Throw the condom in the garbage, no in the toilet, since it is not biodegradable. Never reuse a condom.

A **female condom** can also be used. It resembles a male condom but is bigger and more lubricated. The closed end is inserted into the vagina and the open end remains outside it and covers the vulva. Female condoms, like male condoms, are sold over the counter in pharmacies.



Tips to enhance your pleasure

Here are some tips to enhance your pleasure while ensuring your protection.

- Use a thinner condom or one with different textures to heighten your pleasure. Put a few drops of water-based or silicone-based lubricant inside the condom.
- Add a touch of novelty by using a coloured condom.
- Always keep condoms within easy reach to ensure more spontaneous protection.
- To make the use of a condom seem more natural, practise putting it on before having sex.
- Try several types and brands of condoms to find the one that best suits you.



Protection for oral sex

It is important to use some means of protection during oral sex. Flavoured condoms are the ideal solution.

A condom that has been used for oral sex should not then be used during vaginal or anal sex.

To protect yourself while stimulating the female genital organs with the mouth use a condom that has been cut-open.

Storing condoms

Condoms must be stored at room temperature far away from heat and cold. They should not be stored in the glove compartment of a car, a wallet or your pant pocket.

How to communicate with your partners?

When you have an STI such as chlamydia, gonorrhea or syphilis, it is important to promptly notify the individuals with whom you have had unprotected sex. The sooner your partners are treated, the quicker the infection's spread will be halted.

You may decide to meet with each partner to talk about the infection and pass along an information brochure. It is sometimes useful to prepare yourself before the meeting to ensure that you find the right words and to bolster your self-confidence.

You can also discuss the matter with a friend or a health professional to decide on the best way to notify your partners. This may be:

- by meeting with them;
- by calling upon the help of a health professional;
- by telephone;
- by means of a letter or card.

Some examples of messages are proposed at the end of the brochure.



Need help?

Problems can arise. Some people will say, for example, that they:

- do not know which partners to notify;
- are too embarrassed;
- are afraid of the partners' reactions;
- want to avoid seeing their partners again or talking to them;
- do not have their partners' addresses or telephone numbers.

Other people will say that they notified certain partners but that they did not succeed in convincing them of the importance of consulting a physician.



If you are experiencing difficulties, health professionals can help you by answering your questions. They can even notify certain partners on your behalf, a service that is strictly confidential.

Call Info-Santé to find out how to obtain help from a health professional.

What you need to know about three of the more common STIs:

- *chlamydia*
- *gonorrhea*
- *syphilis*

Chlamydia

What is chlamydia?

Chlamydia is a bacterial sexually transmitted infection.

How does it spread?

You can catch or transmit chlamydia during vaginal or anal sex. An infected mother can transmit the bacteria to her baby during childbirth. **An infected individual can transmit the bacteria even when he or she does not display any symptoms.** You can catch this infection more than once.

What are the symptoms?

In most cases, chlamydia does not cause any symptoms and infected individuals are unaware that they are infected. When symptoms appear, they usually do so within several days to three weeks of having sex with an infected individual. The symptoms are sometimes hard to recognize and they are intermittent, that is, they come and go.



Symptoms:

- **Women** can experience unusual vaginal discharges, a burning sensation when urinating, bleeding between periods, abdominal pain occasionally accompanied by fever and shivering, and pain during vaginal penetration.
- **Men** can experience clear or whitish discharges from the penis, itching inside the penis, a burning sensation when urinating, and pain in the testicles.
- **Both women and men** sometimes experience anal pain, discharges or bleeding.

How is a chlamydia test done?

The chlamydia test is usually conducted using a sample of secretions from the uterine cervix or the urethra, or from a urine sample.

What are the health effects of chlamydia?

Failure to properly treat and cure chlamydia can lead:

- **among women** to the spreading of the infection to the uterus and the Fallopian tubes (salpingitis), which can cause chronic lower abdominal pain, pelvic inflammatory disease, extra-uterine (ectopic) pregnancy, or sterility;



chlamydia

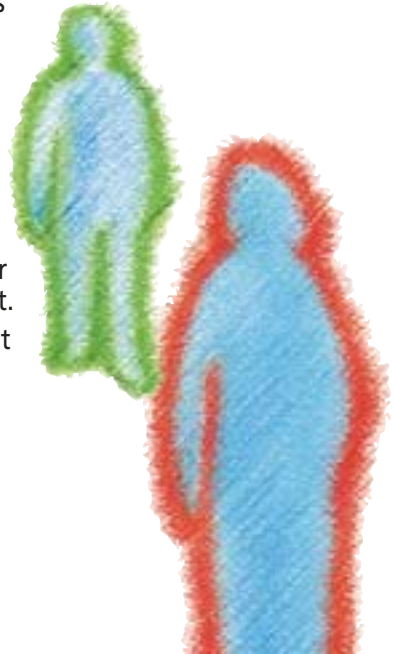
- **among men** to the spreading of the infection to the testicles and pain;
- **among both women and men** to inflammation of the joints and eyes.
- **A child** born to an infected mother may suffer in the weeks following birth from eye and lung infections.

How is chlamydia treated?

Chlamydia can be treated effectively with antibiotics. Medication to treat chlamydia is available **free of charge** to infected individuals and their partners upon presentation of a health insurance card.

Partners must be treated even if they display no symptoms and they test negative for the disease.

Avoid vaginal, anal and oral sex or use a condom until the treatment is completed or for seven days after a single-dose treatment. If the symptoms persist, go back and consult a physician.



Gonorrhea

What is gonorrhea?

Gonorrhea is a bacterial sexually transmitted infection sometimes called the clap.

How does it spread?

You can catch or transmit gonorrhea through vaginal, anal or oral sex (the stimulation with the mouth of the genitals). The infection can also be spread through contact between infected secretions and a mucous membrane such as the inside of the mouth, vagina, and so on. It can be transmitted even if ejaculation does not occur. **An infected individual can transmit the bacteria even if he or she does not display any symptoms.** You can catch this infection more than once.

What are the symptoms?

Gonorrhea does not cause any symptoms in some people and infected individuals may not be aware of the infection. When symptoms appear, they usually do so three to five days after sex with an infected person.

gonorrhea
gonorrhea
gonorrhea



The symptoms vary depending on the mucous membrane that is infected.

- Mouth or throat: There are usually no symptoms. A sore throat can be a symptom.
- Urethra:
 - a burning sensation when urinating;
 - a discharge from the penis that can be thick, creamy or yellow-green.
- Anus: pain, itching, discharges and occasionally, bleeding.
- Uterine cervix or vagina: unusual vaginal discharges, pain during vaginal penetration, bleeding between periods and, occasionally, lower abdominal pain.

How is a gonorrhea test done?

The gonorrhea test is conducted using a sample of secretions from the urethra, the anus, the throat or the uterine cervix. It may also be done by way of a urine sample.

What are the health effects of gonorrhea?

Failure to properly treat and cure gonorrhea can lead:

- among women to the spreading of the infection to the uterus and the Fallopian tubes (salpingitis), which can cause chronic lower abdominal or extra-uterine (ectopic) pregnancy;



gonorrhea

- among men to the spreading of the infection to the prostate or the testicles and pain;
- among both women and men to inflammation of the joints and eyes.
- A child born to an infected mother may suffer in the weeks following birth from eye infections, arthritis or a generalized infection.

How is gonorrhea treated?

Gonorrhea can be treated effectively with antibiotics. Medication to treat gonorrhea is available **free of charge** to infected individuals and their partners upon presentation of a health insurance card.

Partners must be treated even if they display no symptoms and they test negative for the disease.

Avoid vaginal, anal and oral sex or use a condom until the treatment is completed or for seven days after a single-dose treatment.

If the symptoms persist, consult a physician.



gonorrhea

Syphilis

What is syphilis?

Syphilis is a bacterial sexually transmitted infection. If left untreated, it can turn into a serious chronic infection.

How does it spread?

You can catch or transmit syphilis through vaginal, anal or oral sex (the stimulation with the mouth of the genitals). An infected individual who is not treated is contagious for one year after catching the infection and **can transmit the bacteria even if he or she does not display any symptoms.** Syphilis can, more rarely, be transmitted through dirty needles used to inject drugs. A pregnant woman with syphilis can transmit the infection to her baby during pregnancy (the baby can be born with serious deformities). You can catch syphilis more than once.

What are the symptoms?

Not all infected individuals display symptoms. When symptoms do appear, they may be mild and unnoticeable.





The symptoms of syphilis vary depending on the stage of the disease.

Primary stage: One or more painless sores appear where the infection entered the body, usually 9 to 90 days after sex with an infected person. The sores can appear on the penis, inside the mouth or anus or around or in the vagina (sores inside the anus or vagina often go unnoticed). The sores usually disappear even when untreated but the bacteria remains in the body and, without treatment, the infection can worsen.

Secondary stage: Between six weeks and six months after the onset of infection, flu-like symptoms may appear (fever, fatigue, joint and muscle pain, swollen lymph glands, and so on). A rash or pimples may appear on the palms of the hands, the soles of the feet or elsewhere on the body. As is the case during the primary stage, these symptoms usually disappear of their own accord although, left untreated, the infection can worsen.

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syphilis

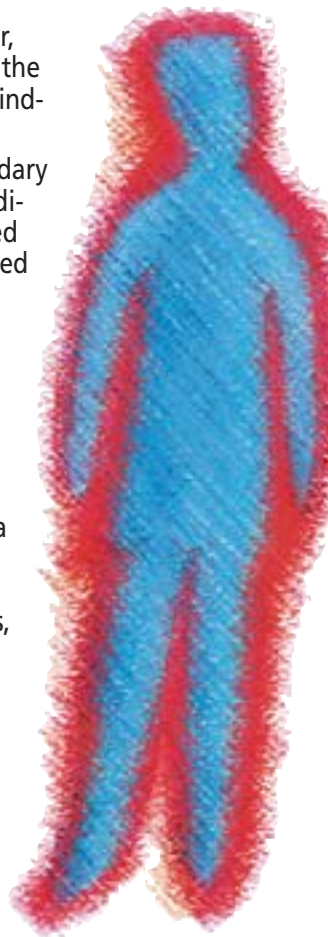
Tertiary stage: Between 10 and 30 days later, untreated syphilis can significantly damage the heart, liver, bones and brain. It can cause blindness or deafness and even death.

Several years can go by between the secondary and tertiary stages without the infected individual's experiencing symptoms. This is called **latent syphilis**. In some instances, the infected individual can nonetheless transmit the disease.

Syphilis can progress more rapidly to the secondary or tertiary stages in HIV-positive individuals and can be harder to treat.

How is a syphilis test done?

The syphilis test is usually conducted using a blood sample. If a sore is present, a sample of secretions can be taken. At the onset of the infection, the test may not reveal syphilis, which is why the health professional may deem it necessary to repeat the test.



syphilis

How is syphilis treated?

Syphilis is treated with antibiotics, usually high doses of penicillin. Other antibiotics can be used to treat individuals who are allergic to penicillin. Follow-up tests are required after treatment.

Medication to treat syphilis is available **free of charge** to infected individuals and their partners upon presentation of a health insurance card.

Certain partners must be treated at the outset while others may be treated depending on the results of the screening test.

Avoid vaginal, anal and oral sex or use a condom throughout the course of treatment and until the physician confirms that the infection has been cured.



We flirted and made love without protection.

It's hard for me to say this, but I must tell you that we probably caught a sexually transmitted infection (STI).

This particular STI is called: _____.

While you may have no symptoms, the infection can have serious consequences for your health and you might infect other people. You must consult a physician.

It is advisable to avoid sex or to use a condom until you have seen a physician and received proper treatment. That way, you will avoid transmitting the infection to anyone else.

To obtain additional information or if you would like to contact a physician who specializes in the treatment of STIs, please call Info-Santé.



This is to inform you that you have probably contracted a sexually transmitted infection (STI).

This STI is called: _____.

You should see a physician right away even if you do not have any symptoms. This way, you can avoid complications and infecting anyone else.

Until you have consulted a physician, it is preferable to avoid sex. If you do have sex, use a condom.

To obtain additional information or if you would like to contact a physician who specializes in the treatment of STIs, please call Info-Santé.



Notify my partners

I must notify all of my partners, men or women, with whom I have recently had unprotected sex. I must take into account the type of disease (see the chart below):

Infection	Inform
<input type="checkbox"/> Chlamydia	<i>my partners during the past 2 months or, if I have not had any partners during that time, my most recent partner</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Gonorrhea	<i>my partners during the past 2 months or, if I have not had any partners during that time, my most recent partner</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Syphilis	
<input type="radio"/> Primary stage	<i>my partners during the past 3 months</i>
<input type="radio"/> Secondary stage	<i>my partners during the past 6 months</i>
<input type="radio"/> Latent period	<i>my partners during the past 12 months or other partners on the advice of the health professional</i>
<input type="radio"/> Tertiary stage	<i>my partners during the period indicated by the health professional</i>

This table will help me draw up a list of the partners to be notified. In case of doubt or should I have questions, I should not hesitate to consult a health professional.

Partner	Date of last sexual contact	Means of reaching the partner	Address and telephone number



