



Wellness Articles

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If you would like to be added to the distribution list for these articles, please email: Rebecca.johnson2@albertahealthservices.ca. You will receive a monthly email containing articles for the upcoming four weeks.

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Seek help for sexually transmitted infections

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are some of the most widespread infections in the world. STIs affect both men and women, and almost half of all STIs occur in people younger than 25 years old.

Some STIs can be transmitted through skin to skin contact alone. Exposure is more likely if you have more than one sex partner or do not use condoms.

Some STIs can be passed by nonsexual contact, such as by sharing needles or during the delivery of a baby or during breastfeeding. Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are also called sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

Some STIs have been linked to an increased risk of certain cancers and infection with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). Pregnant women can spread STIs to their babies. Many people may not have symptoms of an STI but are still able to spread an infection. STI testing can help find problems early on so that treatment can begin if needed. It is important to practice safer sex with all partners, especially if you or they have high-risk sexual behaviours.

To find an STI clinic near you, go to www.ahs.ca/srh or call Health Link at 811.

If you think you may have symptoms of an STI:

- Do not have sexual contact or activity while waiting for your appointment. This will prevent the spread of the infection.
- Women should not douche. Douching changes the normal balance of bacteria in the vagina. Douching may flush an infection up into your uterus or fallopian tubes and cause pelvic inflammatory disease.

There are at least 20 different STIs. They can be caused by viruses, bacteria, and protozoa. Bacterial STIs can be treated and cured, but STIs caused by viruses usually cannot be cured.

You can get a bacterial STI over and over again, even if it is one that you were treated for and cured of in the past.

Risks specific to women with sexually transmitted infections

In women, STIs can cause a serious infection of the uterus and fallopian tubes (reproductive organs) called pelvic inflammatory disease (PID). PID may cause scar tissue that blocks the fallopian tubes, leading to infertility, ectopic pregnancy, pelvic abscess, or chronic pelvic pain.

STIs in pregnant women may cause problems such as:

- Miscarriage.
- Low birth weight.
- Premature delivery.
- Infections in their newborn baby, such as pneumonia, eye infections, or nervous system problems.

It is important to seek treatment if you think you may have an STI or have been exposed to an STI. Most health units, family planning clinics, and STI clinics provide confidential services for the diagnosis and treatment of STIs. Early treatment can cure a bacterial STI and prevent complications.