SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED / REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM INFECTIONS

INFORMATION BOOKLET
Chlamydia
Caused by a bacteria which can affect the penis, cervix, urethra, fallopian tube, anus, rectum and less commonly the throat and eyes.

How is it transmitted?
Sexually transmitted or transmitted via fingers from genitals to the eyes. Symptoms appear 2-3 weeks after contact but might not show for years.

Symptoms
In many cases it has no symptoms.
Women: Unusual vaginal discharge, pain during sex and urinating, bleeding after sex, abdominal pain;
Men: Discharge from tip of penis, pain when urinating and/or pain/swelling of testicles if left untreated.

Treatment
Antibiotics. If left untreated in women it may lead to pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), potentially causing chronic pain and an increased risk of ectopic pregnancy or even infertility.

Gonorrhoea
A bacterial infection of the genitals, throat or rectum.

How is it transmitted?
Sexually transmitted. If left untreated may lead to pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) in women or even infertility in both men and women. Symptoms appear 3-5 days after contact with infection.

Symptoms
Women: Yellow or green vaginal discharge, pain during sex, abdominal pain, burning when urinating. 50% of women have no symptoms.
Men: Yellow discharge from penis, irritation/discharge from anus, pain in the testicles or when urinating. Most men have symptoms.

Treatment
Antibiotics

Syphilis
Caused by a bacterial infection. If left untreated can result in serious complications (including damage to the heart, brain and spinal cord).

How is it transmitted?
Sexually transmitted.

Symptoms
Single, painless clear ulcer usually on the genitals, enlargement of glands in groin, rash on body, flu-like illness, hair loss. There may be no symptoms.

Treatment
Antibiotic injections.

Herpes
Caused by the herpes simplex virus (HSV). There are two types of HSV. Type 1 is usually found around the lips and is commonly known as a cold sore. Type 2 is usually found around the genital of anal area.

How is it transmitted?
Transmitted via close skin contact including unprotected sex. Sometimes contracted even when people have no symptoms of the virus. Can be transmitted from mouth to genitals during oral sex. Symptoms appear 3-10 days after contact.

Symptoms
Blisters on the genitals which usually burst leaving sore ulcers, painful urination, swelling of glands, soreness/irritation. The first attack may be the worst. Recurrent episodes are usually less severe and of shorter duration.

Treatment
Medication cream for mild cases i.e. cold sores. Antiviral tablets, saline baths for pain relief. No known sure so can recur. Sexual contact should be avoided from the first indication of an infection until the skin has returned to normal.

HIV
HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) is a virus which damages the immune system and can lead to serious infections. AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) is a late form of infection with HIV.

How is it transmitted?
Sexually transmitted and can also be transmitted via blood i.e. transfusions, needles.

Symptoms
Most people develop a glandular fever-like illness (fever, sweats, diarrhoea, rash, mouth ulcers) between one and six weeks after becoming infected with HIV. This may last a few days to a few weeks. Many have no symptoms for several years.

Treatment
There is still no known cure. The most effective form of treatment is a combination of antiviral therapy, which attacks HIV directly.

Genital Warts
Caused by the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV)

How is it transmitted?
Transmitted via close skin contact usually during unprotected sex. Sometimes there is no identified source of transmission of the virus. Symptoms can recur.

Symptoms
Visible warts/cauliflower-like clusters [can be single or multiple] in genital area (vagina/penis) and/or anus. May be itchy.

Treatment
Small warts can be removed with nitrogen (freezing), diathermy (heat) or a chemical paint. Usually a few treatments are needed as there is a risk of warts coming back.
### Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID)
Women only. Caused by the spread of infection into the upper part of a woman’s reproductive system (the cervix, uterus and fallopian tubes).

**How is it transmitted?**
Can be a result of earlier STI (such as Chlamydia or Gonorrhoea) but not everyone who has had these STI’s will get PID. Occasionally develops after termination of pregnancy or other surgical procedures.

**Symptoms**
Symptoms are not always obvious. Low abdominal pain, pain during sex, smelly vaginal discharge, irregular bleeding and/or high fever.

**Treatment**
Antibiotics.

### Thrush / Candida
Caused by an overgrowth of candida yeast that irritates the mucous membrane of genitals or throat.

**How is it transmitted?**
Not sexually transmitted. The overgrowth can happen as a result of antibiotics, when your immunity is low as a result of diabetes, during pregnancy, following sex and/or a change in weather/diet.

**Symptoms**
Women: Vulva and vaginal itchiness, soreness and stinging, superficial pain when urinating, a thick whitish/yellow discharge, redness and swelling and/or pain during sex.

Men: (rare) irritation of the glans and discharge from penis.

**Treatment**
Anti-fungal treatment such as creams, pessaries (inserted into the vagina) and/or saline baths. Oral anti-fungal tablets (such as Diflucan) may be given if cases are severe.

### Trichomoniasis
A protozoal infection often referred to as “trike”.

**How is it transmitted?**
Sexually transmitted. Symptoms appear 1-4 weeks after contact.

**Symptoms**
Women: Yellow, frothy, smelly discharge, itchiness and soreness of vagina/vulva, pain during sex, burning when urinating.

Men: Usually no symptoms—occasional pain when urinating, discharge from penis.

**Treatment**
Antibiotics

### Hepatitis B
A viral infection that affects the liver.

**How is it transmitted?**
Sexually transmitted. Symptoms appear 4 weeks to 6 months after transmission. Very common in Africa, Asia, South America.

**Symptoms**
Flu-like symptoms, fever, dark urine, pale bowel movements, loss of appetite, night sweats, white of eyes and skin may go yellow indicating jaundice. Can have no symptoms.

**Treatment**
Drug treatment may be effective for some carriers. Long term medical supervision is required for people with chronic Hepatitis C. Alcohol and some other drugs should be avoided. Can be immunised for prevention.

### Hepatitis C
A viral infection that affects the liver.

**How is it transmitted?**
Transmitted via infected blood (sharing needles, syringes, etc) and rarely through sexual contact.

**Symptoms**
Mild flu-like symptoms, tiredness, nausea, abdominal pain, dark urine, yellowing of the skin and whites of the eyes.

Often no symptoms.

**Treatment**
No known cure—long term medical supervision required. Rest, exercise and a well balanced diet avoiding alcohol and drugs. There is no vaccine for Hepatitis C. Some antiviral treatments are now available.

### Hepatitis A
A viral infection that affects the liver.

**How is it transmitted?**
Can be sexually transmitted but more commonly through contaminated food or water, not washing hands after the toilet or before touching food.

**Symptoms**
Dark urine, mild flu like symptoms, vomiting, abdominal pain, yellowing of the skin and white of eyes. Often no symptoms.

**Treatment**
No known cure—long term medical supervision required. Bed rest and adequate fluids. Alcohol and some other drugs should be avoided. Can be immunised for prevention.
**BACTERIAL VAGINOSIS**

Affects women only.

Sometimes called BV or gardnerella

**How is it transmitted?**

Not sexually transmitted. Caused by changes in the balance of bacteria in the vagina such as from new sex partners or increased sexual activity, but can also occur in women who are not sexually active.

**Symptoms**

Unpleasant odour (worse after sex of after periods) and/or greyish/yellow/green discharge. Can have no symptoms.

**Treatment**

Antibiotic tablets or vaginal creams.

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**BALANITIS**

Affects men only.

Inflammation of the head of the penis (caused from an overgrowth of organisms which are normally present on the skin of the head of the penis).

**How is it transmitted?**

Not always sexually transmitted. Usually occurs in uncircumcised men (as the environment under the foreskin is warm and moist which favours the growth of organisms). More likely to occur if you have not washed for a couple of days.

**Symptoms**

Spots, rash, itching, discharge, pain during sex, difficulty urinating, swelling and/or inflammation of foreskin.

**Treatment**

Anti-fungal cream; saline baths; washing with soap and warm water; good skin care.

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**CYSTITIS**

A bacterial infection causing inflammation of the bladder lining. It can spread to the kidneys and cause damage to the kidney function. Most common in women.

**How is it transmitted?**

Not sexually transmitted but can occur after sex. Caused from bacteria getting from the anus into the urethra and bladder or by not emptying the bladder properly.

**Symptoms**

Burning/pain when urinating, urinating more frequently, blood in urine, lower back or abdominal pain and/or fever.

**Treatment**

Drink plenty of water; use cystitis powder (i.e., Ural); antibiotics.

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**SCABIES**

Small mites that burrow into the skin.

**How is it transmitted?**

Not always sexually transmitted. Skin to skin contact. Can also be transmitted via sharing bedding or clothing with an infected person. Symptoms will appear around 4 weeks after infestation.

**Symptoms**

Itchiness, especially at night on any part of body (except head and central back). A rash.

**Treatment**

Special lotions applied to whole body and cream to relieve itching. Clothing and bedding should be washed.

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**PUBLIC LICE**

Tiny parasitic insects found in the genital areas as well as in other parts of the body. They live in pubic and body hair.

**How is it transmitted?**

Close body contact usually during sex. Can also be transmitted via sharing bedding or clothing with an infected person. Symptoms and signs can usually be expected after several weeks.

**Symptoms**

Inflammation, irritation and/or intense itchiness in and around the pubic area.

**Treatment**

Special lotions/shampoos applied to affected area. Clothing and bedding should be washed.

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**NON-SPECIFIC URETHRITIS**

Men only. An infection that causes an inflammation of the male urethra contracted by a bacteria or virus.

**How is it transmitted?**

Usually sexually transmitted. Symptoms appear 2 weeks after contact.

**Symptoms**

Milky pus-like discharge from the penis, burning when urinating, painful ejaculations, itching, tingling, irritation inside the penis, pelvic pain and/or sore testicles. Some men have no symptoms.

**Treatment**

Antibiotics

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*Source information: Love Bugs information leaflet from Marie Stopes International*