

STD and STI Basics - Detailed Patient FAQs

Educational FAQ | Updated October 2026 | 12 patient questions

What is this condition or topic?

An STI is an infection transmitted primarily through sexual contact; STD often describes illness caused by an infection. Some infections have no symptoms.

What symptoms should someone look for?

Discharge, sores, rash, burning urination, pelvic pain, or no symptoms at all.

Which tests are appropriate?

Testing depends on anatomy, exposures, symptoms, and timing; blood, urine, or swab samples may be needed.

What treatment or medical care is available?

Bacterial and parasitic infections are often curable; viral infections may be managed or prevented with vaccines.

How can it be prevented?

Condoms, vaccination, testing, and communicating with partners lower risk but do not eliminate it.

What follow-up is recommended?

A positive result should lead to treatment planning, partner care, and any recommended repeat testing.

What important warning should patients know?

Avoid diagnosing an STI based only on appearance or symptoms.

Can someone have this without symptoms?

Yes. Many sexually transmitted infections can be present without obvious symptoms. A lack of symptoms does not rule out infection, especially after a relevant exposure. The need for screening depends on risk, anatomy, and test timing.

Should a partner be tested or treated?

Partner evaluation is often important, but the exact advice depends on the infection. Discuss the diagnosis, relevant exposure periods, and whether partners require testing, treatment, or vaccination with a qualified clinician.

Can one negative test rule out every STI?

No. Different infections require different tests and specimen sites. Testing too early can miss an infection. A clinician can advise whether repeat testing or additional swabs or blood tests are needed.

When should urgent medical care be sought?

Seek prompt care for severe pelvic or testicular pain, high fever, significant swelling, pregnancy with concerning symptoms, or new neurological symptoms. After a possible HIV exposure, seek urgent advice about PEP, which must start within 72 hours.

Can I use leftover antibiotics or online remedies?

Do not self-treat. Incorrect medication can delay diagnosis, cause side effects, and contribute to antibiotic resistance. Use a clinician-prescribed regimen appropriate for the infection and personal circumstances.

Reliable medical references

<https://www.cdc.gov/sti/testing/index.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/std/treatment-guidelines/screening-recommendations.htm>

<https://www.cdc.gov/sti/hcp/clinical-guidance/index.html>

<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240090767>

Medical disclaimer: This document provides general education, not a diagnosis or individualized treatment plan. Testing and treatment guidance may differ by country, age, pregnancy status, and clinical circumstances. Consult a licensed healthcare professional.