**HIV Infection**

**Symptoms:**
Infection with HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) is usually followed by an incubation period that may last for years. There are usually no noticeable symptoms during this time. With the development of AIDS, symptoms reflect the secondary infections which result from an impaired immune system.

**Special considerations:**
Anyone who has had an STI or who has risk factors for HIV infection should be tested, especially now that there are treatments that help slow the development of AIDS in HIV-infected people. These treatments are most effective if started early after infection, which makes early diagnosis through blood testing all the more important.

**Treatment:**
While there is no cure for AIDS, newer drugs, used in combination, have been effective in prolonging the health of people who are infected with HIV. It is not yet known how long these drugs can prevent the development of AIDS, but they do provide hope and a longer, productive life.

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**Herpes Simplex**

**Symptoms:**
Herpes simplex virus (HSV) causes genital herpes. Many people with HSV have no recognizable symptoms. Others have painful sores or blisters on the genitals. The first episode may also include fever, flu-like symptoms, and swollen glands in the groin. Recurrences are common, but tend to have milder symptoms. Herpes may be inactive for years, and later result in an outbreak during physical or emotional stress.

**Special considerations:**
Genital herpes is more common than most people realize. As many as 1 in 5 adolescents and adults have an infection. Most of them have an unrecognized infection (without symptoms) although they remain contagious. A specific herpes virus, HSV-2, is the cause of most genital herpes. “Cold sores” are usually caused by a different strain of herpes virus, HSV-1. However, both of these types can be transmitted through oral-genital contact, and HSV-1 can also cause a genital herpes infection.

**Treatment:**
Treatment with an oral medication very early in an outbreak can decrease or shorten symptoms, but there is no cure. Suppressive medication can be taken to help prevent frequent outbreaks.

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**Hepatitis B**

**Symptoms:**
Hepatitis B is a viral infection of the liver. It makes your liver swell and stops it from working correctly. This viral infection can be transmitted in the same manner as HIV, i.e., contact with an infected person's blood, semen, or other bodily fluid. Therefore, having sex with an infected person without using a condom or sharing drug needles, a toothbrush, or a razor with an infected person can expose you to the infection. You cannot become infected by hugging, sitting next to, or shaking hands with an infected individual. Some people who become infected show no symptoms, but it may make them feel like they have the flu (including fever, stomach pain, diarrhea, etc.). Some infected people will also exhibit dark-yellow urine, light-colored stools, or yellowish eyes and skin.

**Special considerations:**
Make sure that any body piercing or tattooing is done with sterile equipment. Hepatitis B is diagnosed with a simple blood test or sometimes with a liver biopsy.

**Treatment:**
There are currently several treatments for chronic hepatitis B that can increase a person's chance of clearing the infection. Treatments are available in the form of antivirals or immune system modulators such as Interferon but will not always be effective.

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**HPV**

**Symptoms:**
Human Papillomavirus (HPV) is a viral infection that may cause genital warts in some people. However, most people who become infected with HPV will not know they are infected, will not have any symptoms, and will clear the infection on their own. In women, warts may occur on the vulva, in or around the vagina or anus, or on the cervix. In men, warts may occur on or around the penis, scrotum, or anus. Warts are painless, skin-colored growths or bumps with a smooth or cauliflower-textured surface. They can occur weeks, months, or even years after infection with HPV. If you are infected with HPV you may still transmit the virus to others through sexual contact regardless of the presence of genital warts.

**Special considerations:**
HPV is the most common STI. At least 50% of sexually active men and women acquire genital HPV infection at some point in their lives. A few of the more than 100 strains of HPV are linked to cervical cancer. Regular Pap tests can detect and allow the clinician to treat any traces of genital warts. A new vaccine is available for those who are not currently infected that protects against several of the more potent strains of HPV.

**Treatment:**
Although there is no treatment for the virus, visible warts can be removed by medications or by treatments at a clinic. Some individuals choose to forego treatment to see if the warts will disappear on their own. Even if warts are removed, the virus can remain in an invisible and contagious form.
### Chlamydia

**Symptoms:**
Chlamydia is a bacterial infection of the cervix and urethra in women, and of the urethra in men. About 75% of women and 50% of men with chlamydia have few or no symptoms. Men may have a clear or white discharge from the penis and burning with urination. Women may have an abnormal vaginal discharge or painful urination. PID (pelvic inflammatory disease) can develop if the infection spreads upward from a woman’s cervix to her uterus and fallopian tubes. Women with PID may have pain or bleeding with intercourse, abdominal pain, fever, and/or unusual vaginal bleeding.

**Special Considerations:**
Chlamydia is a bacterial STI, most commonly affecting adolescents and young adults. Untreated chlamydia that has advanced to PID can result in infertility and ectopic (tubal) pregnancies in women. Less commonly, untreated chlamydia in men may lead to epididymitis (infection in the tubes where sperm are stored), which can also lead to infertility.

**Treatment:**
Early treatment with oral antibiotics can prevent advanced disease and resulting complications.

### Gonorrhea

**Symptoms:**
Gonorrhea is a bacterial infection of the urethra in men, the cervix in women, or the throat or rectum of either gender. Most men with gonorrhea develop a yellow or creamy discharge at the opening of the urethra, and/or a burning sensation with urination, although some men never develop symptoms. Women with gonorrhea in the early stages develop a vaginal discharge, unusual vaginal bleeding, pain with urination, or sometimes no symptoms at all. PID (pelvic inflammatory disease) can develop if the infection spreads towards a woman’s uterus and fallopian tubes. Women with PID may have pain or bleeding with intercourse, abdominal pain, fever, and/or unusual vaginal bleeding.

**Special Considerations:**
Untreated gonorrhea in women, which has led to PID, can result in infertility or ectopic (tubal) pregnancies. Less commonly, untreated infection in men may lead to epididymitis (infection in the tube where sperm are stored) and can result in infertility.

**Treatment:**
Gonorrhea can be treated with antibiotics. Early diagnosis and treatment can prevent PID and its potential complications.

### Syphilis

**Symptoms:**
Syphilis is a complex bacterial infection that may progress through different stages over time if not treated. In the first stage, primary syphilis, a single genital sore is usually firm and painless, lasts 1-5 weeks, and heals on its own. A non-itching rash anywhere on the body characterizes the second stage. The rash may appear as the sore is fading, or may be delayed up to 10 weeks. It lasts 2-6 weeks and disappears on its own, sometimes accompanied by fever and swollen glands. People are contagious during the first and second stages. The latent (hidden) stage begins if the disease is not treated. During this third stage, damage to internal organs (brain, nerves, heart, blood vessels, bones, joints, liver, eyes) may occur.

**Special Considerations:**
Although syphilis is far less common in the U.S. than it was at its height after WWII, it is still around today.

**Treatment:**
This potentially deadly infection can be cured with antibiotics if recognized and treated before serious damage is done.

### STI PREVENTION

- No sexual contact is the surest way to protect yourself.
- STIs occur from intimate contact with an infected individual.
- Exposure to an STI does not automatically mean you will be infected. If you believe you may have been exposed, seek testing from a health care provider.
- Some infections (HPV and herpes) can be transmitted via other contact such as mutual masturbation; oral-genital, genital-genital or anal-genital contact.
- Condoms provide excellent, although not perfect, protection from STIs if used correctly and consistently.
- Condoms can be made into effective latex barriers for oral-genital or oral-anal contact by cutting a condom lengthwise and stretching it over the desired area.

### Resources

- [www.health.niu.edu](http://www.health.niu.edu)
- NIU Health Services
  815-753-1311
- DeKalb County Health Department
  815-758-6673