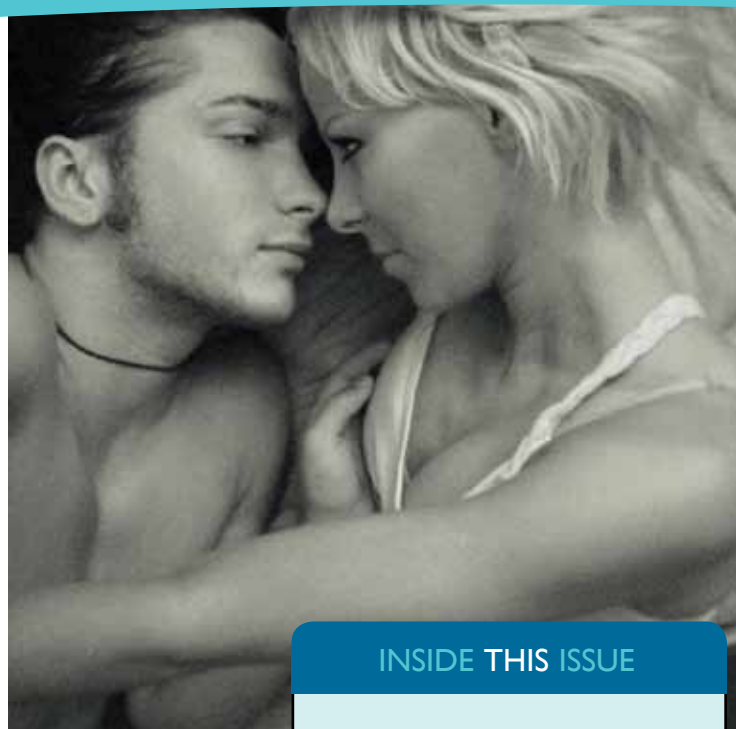




HALDIMAND-NORFOLK HEALTH UNIT

Sexual CONNECTION

The Ugly Truth About Sexually Transmitted Infections



Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI's), are not something people like to think about. Unfortunately though, if the right precautions aren't taken once a person becomes sexually active, the risk is there.

STI's are caused by various microorganisms, which include bacteria and viruses. These microorganisms live in vaginal fluid, semen, blood and other bodily fluids, and may be transmitted during sexual activity. Some STI's are easily curable (chlamydia and gonorrhea) while others can be treated but not cured (genital herpes, genital warts and HIV).

Transmission

Transmission of STI's occurs during sex-related activities. These activities may include:

- Unprotected vaginal, anal or oral sex.
- Close skin-to-skin contact with an infected area anywhere on the body.

Transmission of STI's may also occur if a person has sex with a person who has or has had a previous STI infection. The risk of acquiring an STI increases if the person:

- Has sex with strangers or sex workers.
- Has a partner who has sex with others.
- Has a partner who uses injection drugs.

General Symptoms

Some people with STI's may have few or no symptoms, where others may have obvious symptoms. Some symptoms to look for may be:

- Different or heavier discharge from the vagina.
- Discharge from the penis.
- Burning while going to the bathroom.
- Going to the bathroom more often.
- Sores, especially in the genital area.
- Bumps in the genital area or mouth/throat.
- Itching around the genitals and/or anus.
- Rash in the genital area.

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- Pain during or after sex.
- Lower abdominal pain.
- Swollen glands in the groin area.
- Sudden onset of flu like symptoms.

Testing and treatment

Since STI's are caused by a number of different microorganisms, it's possible to have more than one STI at a time.

Most STI's are easily treatable, but can turn dangerous if ignored. For most STI's, all sexual partners need to receive treatment. For the bacterial infections, chlamydia and gonorrhea, they can be treated with antibiotics, but each requires different medication. No single medication is effective against all bacteria. As for viral infections such as genital herpes, genital warts and HIV, treatment is available, but these infections are not curable.

Interventions to Decrease STI Risk

Modifying risky sexual behaviour will help to decrease the risk of acquiring STI's. Risky behaviour that can be modified is:

- Having sex with an untreated partner.
- Lack of mutual monogamy.
- Having unsafe sex (no condoms).
- Having multiple partners.

To reduce the risk of acquiring an STI one should engage in low-risk behaviours. Low risk behaviours may include:

- Mutual monogamy.
- Using condoms with every act of vaginal, anal or oral sex.

Conclusion

STI's that occur in relationships are the result of modifiable behaviours. Changing one behaviour may not decrease the risk of STI's, but changing all behaviours might. Being aware of the risk factors for STI's and their symptoms may reduce the risk of infection.

Bottom Line

If you are going to have sex, there is only one way to protect yourself from getting an STI – by practicing safer sex. This means using a condom every time. Dental dams can also be used for oral sex.

Unfortunately condoms are not fool-proof and do not offer 100% protection against STI's. The only 100% method of protection is abstinence.

So talk with your partner about condom use before sex becomes part of the relationship. Otherwise you could get caught up in the heat of the moment and do something you may regret later.

Sexually Transmitted Infections

Chlamydia

Most common STI between the ages of 15-24, especially in females.

What is it?

A bacterial infection of the genital area.

Symptoms:

For many people, especially women, there are no symptoms. Some may have abnormal vaginal bleeding, unusual discharge, discharge from the penis, burning while urinating.

How it's spread:

Unprotected vaginal, anal, oral sex

Testing:

Testing can be done by a urine test or swabbing of the vagina, penis, or anus

Treatment:

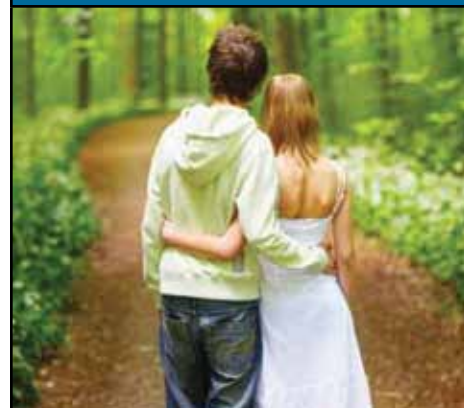
Antibiotics need to be taken by both partners. If left untreated, it may result in:

Women:

- Pelvic inflammatory disease (PID)
- Ectopic pregnancy (pregnancy implants in the fallopian tubes)
- Infertility

Men:

- Epididymitis
- Swelling of the prostate
- Inflammation of the urethra





Gonorrhea

Although gonorrhea was on the decline, the number of gonorrhea cases is on the rise in Canada.

What is it?

A bacterial infection of the genital area or throat.

Symptoms:

For many there are no symptoms.

Women may have:

- Abnormal vaginal discharge and bleeding.
- Burning while urinating.

Men may have:

- Discharge from the penis.
- Burning while urinating.
- Painful/swollen testicles.

How it's spread:

Through unprotected vaginal, anal or oral sex.

Testing:

Testing can be done by a urine test or a swab from the vagina, penis, or throat

Treatment:

Antibiotics need to be taken by both partners. If left untreated, it may result in:

Women:

- PID
- Ectopic pregnancy
- Infertility

Men:

- Inflammation of the prostate
- Epididymitis

Genital Herpes

What is it?

A viral infection of the genital area (and sometimes around the mouth, or in the throat or eyes).

Symptoms:

In the mouth, herpes can cause cold sores and blisters. These blisters may also be found on the penis, vagina, cervix, and/or anal areas. During the first outbreak it may be accompanied by fever, headache, and swollen glands. Once herpes is acquired, sores recur over and over every few months for years. Outbreaks tend to occur more frequently when stressed.

How it's spread:

Herpes is spread by skin-to-skin contact and/or having unprotected sex with someone having active sores. Do not touch your eyes. The virus can be spread at any time, especially when sores are present. Between outbreaks, the virus remains in the body in an inactive state. Spread is possible even with no symptoms. **Note: Condoms may not prevent herpes if the infected area and secretions are not protected by the condom due to skin-to-skin transmission.*

Testing:

Testing is done by swabbing an open sore.

Treatment:

There is no cure for herpes. Medication is available to decrease the severity and frequency of the outbreaks.

Prevention:

Don't have sexual contact if your partner is having an outbreak.

Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) or Genital Warts

What is it?

A viral infection of the genital area. It is very common among 15-24 year olds, both men and women.

Symptoms:

Soft, itchy warts, in and around the genitals. They look like little cauliflower bumps.

How it's spread:

HPV is spread through unprotected sex and skin-to-skin contact.

Testing:

Testing can be done in women as part of their annual pap test, for a fee. Otherwise, HPV is only able to be detected while an outbreak is occurring.

Treatment:

There is no cure for HPV. Warts can be removed through medication or surgery, but the virus remains in the body.

**Note: Condoms do not guarantee protection against HPV due to skin-to-skin transmission. There is currently a vaccine (Gardasil) that is available to both males and females to prevent genital warts.*

Clinic Schedule



All of the listed clinics require an appointment. Please call:

- Terri Hartwick RN, BScN, Caledonia 905-318-5367 Ext. 346
- Margot Fournier RN, BScN, Simcoe 519-426-6170 Ext. 3225

For an appointment with Kristal Pitter RN(EC), BScN, our Nurse Practitioner, please call 519-426-6170 or 519-875-4485 Ext. 1851.

Haldimand	
Cayuga Secondary School	1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month
Dunnville Secondary School	2nd Wednesday of the month
Hagersville Secondary School	3rd Thursday of the month
Nurse Practitioner available in the Caledonia office 2nd Wednesday of the month by appt only	
Norfolk	
Waterford District Secondary School	2nd Tuesday of the month
Port Dover Composite School	2nd Thursday of the month
Delhi District Secondary School	1st Wednesday of the month
Valley Heights Secondary School	4th Thursday of the month
Nurse practitioner available in the Simcoe/Langton offices Monday – Friday by appt only	

Other services available in the high schools:

H-N Women's Services	519-426-8048
Community Addiction and Mental Health Services	519-426-8760
	519-428-1805

Public Health Nurses in your School

The following Public Health Nurses are in your school once a week:

Marilyn Antkiw	Valley Heights Secondary School
Sabine Murphy	Delhi Secondary School Waterford District Secondary School
Angie Swick	Simcoe Composite School Holy Trinity Secondary School
Lynda Burville	Port Dover Composite School Cayuga Secondary School
Mona Aaltonen	Dunnville Secondary School
Angie Campbell	Hagersville Secondary School McKinnon Park Secondary School

Please visit our website for more information at www.hnhu.org.

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