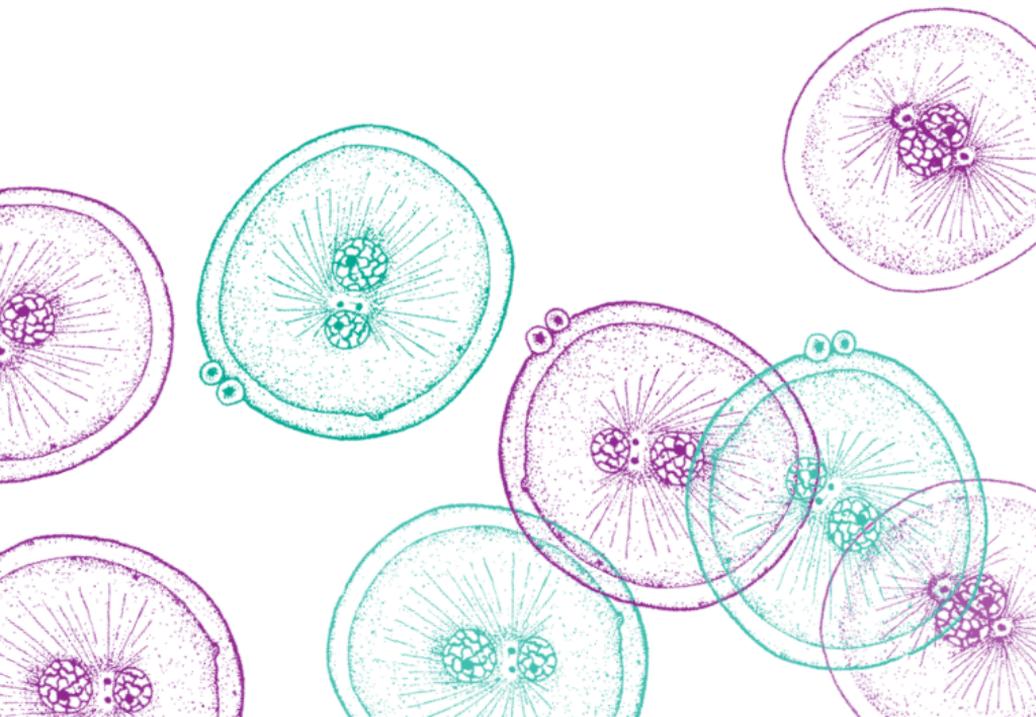




Folkhälsomyndigheten
PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCY OF SWEDEN

Advice and facts about

Sexually transmitted infections



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Advice and facts about Sexually transmitted infections
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Sexual encounters

Having sex can be a positive part of life. Sexual encounters are in many cases an expression of desire and acknowledgement. Sex can be much more than vaginal intercourse, anal sex or oral sex. Having sex does not necessarily mean that the penis is inserted into the vagina, rectum or mouth. Masturbating together is having sex. Using sex toys alone or together with someone else is also having sex. In a sexual encounter with another person, there is always a risk of sexually transmitted infections.

What causes infections?

Sexually transmitted infections are caused by bacteria or viruses. The infections described here are:

- chlamydia (bacteria)
- mycoplasma genitalium (bacteria)
- gonorrhoea (bacteria)
- syphilis (bacteria)
- HIV (virus)
- condyloma (virus)
- herpes (virus)
- hepatitis (virus).

The mucus membrane is the thin tissue found in the urethra, mouth, throat, vagina and rectum. Bacteria and viruses that cause venereal diseases normally enter here where disease is present. Condyloma, herpes and syphilis can also be present on the skin around the genitals. Bacteria and viruses can also be present in sperm, vaginal secretions, pus and blood. HIV and hepatitis are examples of this.

An infection caused by bacteria can be cured. An infection caused by a virus is seldom curable via treatment with pharmaceuticals. The symptoms can however be alleviated and the progression of the disease slowed. You can be vaccinated against certain types of condyloma (HPV) and hepatitis A and B.

If you do not receive treatment for a current infection, you can have complications which affect your health in different ways.

When can you get an infection?

All people, regardless of age, gender and sexual orientation, can get a sexually transmitted infection. Regardless of whether you have sex with women or men, are heterosexual, homosexual or bisexual, you can be infected. To get a sexually transmitted infection, you must have unprotected sex with a person who carries the bacteria or virus that cause such infections.

You will be unable to tell whether or not a person is carrying an infection, and not everyone that has an infection is aware of it. A number of venereal diseases have no symptoms, especially at the beginning of an infection. It is not certain you will notice that you have been infected. You may therefore get an infection from your sexual partner without either of you being aware of it. This also means that you may yourself unintentionally spread an infection to a partner. It is enough for you to have sex with a single partner to get an infection. If you have sex with several partners, the likelihood that you get or transmit an infection increases.

Some infections are transmitted more easily than others

Unprotected sex means not using protection such as a condom during a sexual encounter. The likelihood that various infections are transmitted thereby increases. The risk may also vary depending on the manner in which you have unprotected sex, i.e., if you have unprotected vaginal intercourse, anal intercourse or oral sex.

Some infections are transmitted more easily than others. Chlamydia is transmitted more easily than HIV, for example. It is enough to in some way come

into contact with the mucus membrane of a sex organ in order for the chlamydia bacteria to be transmitted. This means you do not need to have vaginal or other forms of intercourse in order to get chlamydia.

When you have an untreated venereal disease, other infections can be more easily transmitted. If for example you already have chlamydia, you are more receptive to other sexually transmitted infections such as syphilis, condyloma, herpes or HIV. Some of these you cannot get rid of despite medical treatment. Medical treatment for viral infections can however slow the progression of the disease and alleviate the symptoms. You can protect yourself against infections and have sex in a safer manner.

Condoms are a good form of protection

You yourself can reduce the risk that you and your sexual partner will get a sexually transmitted infection by using condoms or dental dam. You should use condoms for all types of sex whereby the penis is either inserted into the vagina, the rectum or the mouth. The condom must remain on throughout the intercourse. If the condom slips off or breaks, the intercourse is unprotected. Correct and consistent use of protection considerably reduces the risk of transmitting bacteria and viruses.

Protection against pregnancy

The condom is a good form of protection for both men and women. It prevents the transmission of bacteria and viruses, including HIV. If used correctly, the condom also provides good protection against unwanted pregnancy. But in order to have safe protection against unwanted pregnancies, this should be complemented with a hormonal contraceptive such as birth control pills, Nexplanon or IUD (intrauterine device). Only condoms protect against HIV and other venereal diseases. If the condom has broken during intercourse, as a woman you can take emergency birth control pills to reduce the risk of pregnancy.

A habit with shared responsibility

Make it a habit to use condoms with temporary sexual partners or when you begin a new relationship. If you start a new relationship, you can use condoms together for at least the first three months of the relationship. During this time, you can both be tested and rule out the possibility that one of you has an infection such as gonorrhoea or chlamydia. For certain sexually transmitted infections such as HIV and hepatitis, however, it can take up to three months following infection for this to show up in a test. You should therefore continue with condoms until you are

both tested again after three months. If both are negative, i.e., neither of you have a venereal disease, and you both agree, you can stop using condoms within the relationship.

To use protection is to show respect and consideration, both for yourself and your sexual partner. Surveys among young Swedes, including UngKABog¹, reveal that the majority think it is positive if a partner suggests that they use condoms together to protect one another.

It is not only one person's responsibility to protect others against infection in sexual encounters. The responsibility is distributed equally between you and the person you have sex with. You should therefore ask your partner for a condom if you yourself have forgotten to bring one with you when you are about to have sex. It's always a good idea to carry several in reserve. You can find more tips in other parts of the brochure.

1 Carried out in 2009 by the University of Gothenburg on commission from the National Board of Health and Welfare. Over 15,000 people aged 15–29 answered the survey, which contained questions about knowledge, attitudes and sexual acts among young people. Read more on www.ungkab.se

Get tested if ...

- you have had unprotected sex
- you suspect that you may have been infected
- you have symptoms that indicate you are carrying an infection
- your sexual partner has an infection
- the condom you were using broke and you suspect that you have an infection

If you are found to have a sexually transmitted infection, your partner should also be tested.

If you have had an infection, you may be tested again six months after treatment has ceased. This way you can ensure you have not been reinfected. If you have had unprotected sex again with a new partner before six months have passed, you should of course get tested earlier. In this case, four weeks should have passed following treatment with antibiotics so that the test can be certain.

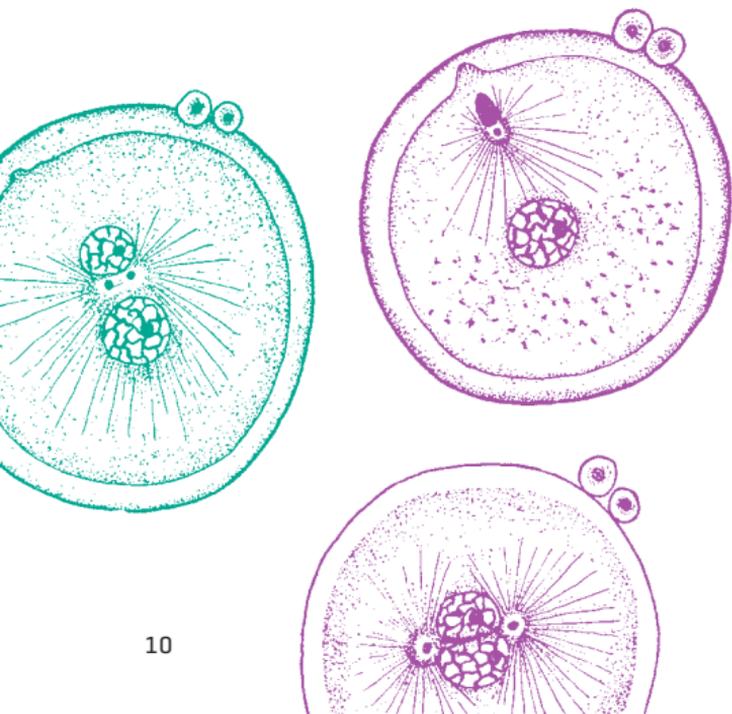
Rights and responsibilities

A number of the infections we account for here are included in the Communicable Diseases Act. These are diseases that are considered so serious to the

individual and/or society that those infected must be offered care and treatment, and other persons close to them may need protection, e.g., by means of vaccination, in order to prevent the further spread of infection. The Communicable Diseases Act covers some sixty or more communicable diseases. Among infections that are solely or normally transmitted through sex, the ones covered by the act are HIV, chlamydia, syphilis, gonorrhoea and hepatitis B. Hepatitis A and C, which are sometimes transmitted sexually, are also included in the act. Among other things, this means that testing and treatment are free. You can also receive advice and special support if required. By getting tested, you will know whether or not you have an infection. This way, you can in most cases receive treatment and get rid of the infection or the symptoms.

If you have contracted a disease which is included in the Communicable Diseases Act, you must assist with contact tracing. You must inform of whom you believe you may have been infected by. Normally, you will give the names of your partners over the past year, as it can be difficult to determine when and by whom you have been infected. You must also tell whom you may have spread the disease to before you were aware of your infection. These persons are then contacted so

that they can be tested and offered treatment if they are found to be infected. If you do not wish to contact them yourself, the health service will assist with this. Those of your partners that the health service contacts will not be informed of who gave their names, for reasons of medical confidentiality.



Chlamydia

Chlamydia is caused by a bacterium which is transmitted sexually. It attacks cells in the mucus membrane, in the urethra, and in women also in the vagina as well as the cervix. During anal sex it is easy to become infected in the rectum. It is sometimes also found in the throat.

Chlamydia is very infectious and is normally spread via unprotected vaginal and anal intercourse. It is more uncommon for it to be transmitted via oral sex, although it does happen. Even during mutual masturbation and the use of sex toys, secretions from an infected mucus membrane can transmit an infection to another person.

Symptoms of chlamydia

Chlamydia normally does not cause much discomfort. This is true for both men and women. You can therefore infect your sexual partner or get an infection from your partner without either of you being aware of this. If you have symptoms, it can take anything from less than a week to three weeks from being infected to actually feeling any discomfort. For men, this is normally a burning sensation in the urethra when

urinating. There may also be itching or irritation in the urethra. A clear discharge (like thin mucus) is also common. The most common problem for women is changes in discharge. Bleeding between menstruation and during intercourse are also common problems. Sometimes the epididymis can become infected, causing pain and swelling in the scrotum. Chlamydia can also be transmitted to the eyes from genitalia via fingers and result in inflammation of one or both eyes. Chlamydia infections can sometimes result in arthritis in one or more joints, e.g., the knee joint.

Get tested for chlamydia

Get tested for chlamydia if you have had unprotected sex. Testing is free as chlamydia is covered by the Communicable Diseases Act. For men, a urine sample is normally enough to show signs of chlamydia. In women, a self-administered vaginal swab test is normally sufficient. During a gynaecological examination, a section sample is sometimes taken from the external orifice of the uterus. Sometimes, the vaginal swab test or cervical swab is combined with a urine sample.

In examinations carried out at STI clinics, tests are often run for several STIs (Sexually Transmitted Infections) at the same time. They use secretion samples from the urinary meatus which can be taken

very carefully. The taking of these samples is thus not painful, although it can feel a bit uncomfortable. The cervical smear is used for microscopic examination so as to rule out (or confirm) gonorrhoea, which can produce similar symptoms, and to decide whether or not treatment should be administered straight away. It may also be taken so that the doctor can decide if an extra urine sample is required in order to check for another bacterium known as *Mycoplasma genitalium*. Double infection is possible, and treatment of the different infections differs. If you have had unprotected anal sex, a rectal swab should be taken.

If you have only had unprotected oral sex, a throat swab is sometimes taken.

It can take up to a week from you being infected to the test showing that you have chlamydia. You should therefore wait at least one week after having unprotected sex before you get tested. If you make a self-diagnosis of chlamydia via the internet and the result indicates you are infected, you must always contact a doctor so as to be offered treatment (in accordance with the Communicable Diseases Act).

Treatment

Treatment is free if you have chlamydia. The infection is treated with antibiotics and it is important that you

refrain from having sex during the course of the treatment so that the infection can be fully cured. If you have chlamydia, your sexual partner also needs to be examined and treated for the infection, to ensure that either of you get reinfected. If you have several sexual partners, all of them need to be examined and offered treatment if it is discovered that they have chlamydia.

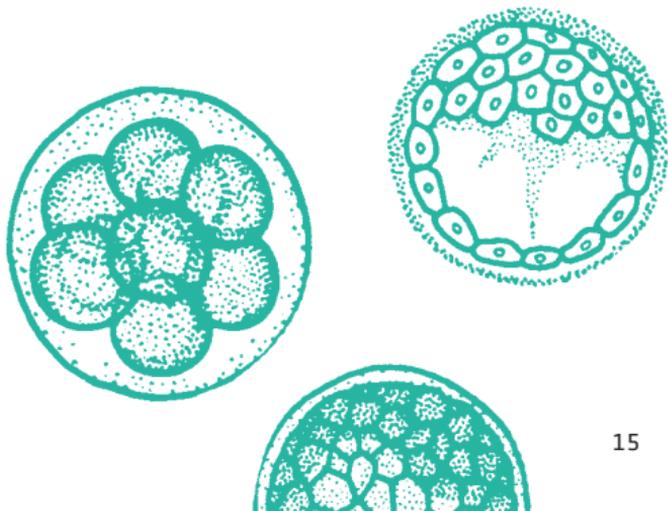
Important points about chlamydia

You can get chlamydia several times. If you have taken the entire course of antibiotics and refrained from having sex during the treatment, you normally will not need to take a diagnostic test following completion of treatment as chlamydia can be cured effectively with antibiotics. If you wish to have this nevertheless, e.g., because you have forgotten to take tablets, you should consult the clinic that prescribed the treatment. However, a new test cannot be taken until four weeks after the treatment started, in order to ensure that results are reliable.

We know that it is normal for a person who has had chlamydia to get chlamydia again within a year or so. This is almost always a result of becoming infected again by a new partner. It is therefore important to always use a condom when having sex with a new partner. Untreated or repeated chlamydia infections

can result in complications which in women can lead to sterility or ectopic pregnancy due to oviduct infection. In men, chlamydia can probably have a negative effect on the quality of the sperm. The risk of complications is reduced if you receive treatment quickly after being infected.

The venereal disease *mycoplasma genitalium* (see the next section) is caused by a bacterium that can produce symptoms similar to those of chlamydia. This is more difficult to treat and is usually treated with an antibiotic other than the one used for a chlamydia infection. If you have residual problems after completing a course of treatment for chlamydia, you must once more contact the clinic that prescribed the treatment so that a test for *Mycoplasma genitalium* can also be taken, and perhaps even for other infections that could explain the problems.



Mycoplasma genitalium

Mycoplasma genitalium is a bacterium that can be transmitted sexually via vaginal and anal intercourse and during close contact with a mucus membrane, and it can lead to an infection in the genitals. It has symptoms similar to those of chlamydia, but can also be entirely without symptoms. The infection is roughly half as common as chlamydia among patients examined in STI clinics.

Mycoplasma genitalium can be present in the urethra, the vagina and the rectum and can sometimes result in more complicated infections such as salpingitis among women and epididymitis among men. In isolated cases it can result in an eye infection. It is never present in the throat.

Symptoms of mycoplasma

The symptoms are similar to those for chlamydia. *Mycoplasma genitalium* can lead to problems in the urethra for both men and women – a burning sensation when urinating, itching or discomfort in the urethra and sometimes discharges. Women can also have vaginal secretions, bleeding between menstruation and lower abdominal pain. Men can experience

epididymitis with swelling and pain in one side of the scrotum.

Testing

Testing for *Mycoplasma genitalium* is recommended only in the event of symptoms and signs of infection. The bacterium will not be detected in tests until at least one week following infection. Men can provide urine samples and women urine samples combined with swabs from the vagina or cervix. Rectal swabs can also be taken if you have had anal sex, and if you have had an eye infection, an eye swab can also be taken.

Treatment

Infection with *Mycoplasma genitalium* is treated with prescription antibiotics. The treatment normally given for chlamydia is not normally effective against *Mycoplasma genitalium*. The treatment is not free as the illness is not covered by the Communicable Diseases Act. It is important that you do not have sex or close mucus membrane contact with another person during the course of the treatment. A diagnostic test can be taken three to four weeks after completion of treatment. If you have residual problems following treatment, you should always have a diagnostic test.

Sometimes treatment is ineffective, in which case another antibiotic must be used.

If you have a long-term partner, he or she should also submit samples and receive treatment. You otherwise risk being reinfected after completing your treatment.

Important points about mycoplasma

You can be infected with *Mycoplasma genitalium* several times. *Mycoplasma genitalium* has been found in women with pyometra and salpingitis, but this is less common than with a chlamydia infection. The bacterium has also been found in men with epididymitis. As knowledge of this venereal disease is quite new, it is not yet clear as to whether, and if so, to what extent the infection can lead to difficulties having children.

Gonorrhoea

Gonorrhoea is caused by a bacterium that is transmitted through sex and that is normally present in the urethra. The bacterium can also be found in the throat or the rectum of both men and women, and sometimes in the eyes. The bacterium can also be found in the vaginal mucosa.

Gonorrhoea is spread via unprotected vaginal intercourse and unprotected anal sex. The bacterium can also be transmitted via unprotected oral sex. Though it is not common, gonorrhoea can also be transmitted during mutual masturbation via direct contact with an infected mucus membrane. It is enough for the fingers to come in contact with the infected mucus membrane and then infect the healthy mucus membrane. The eyes can also become infected in this way. You can even contract gonorrhoea by sharing sex toys with someone.

Symptoms of gonorrhoea

Gonorrhoea is easily transmitted and does not always produce symptoms. You can transmit the infection to your sexual partner without any symptoms. In the same way, you can contract gonorrhoea from your partner without either of you being aware of it.

Gonorrhoea can cause problems, but it will take from two to seven days from infection for you to notice the symptoms. The symptoms are normally in the form of secretions from the urethra, and you may also experience a burning sensation when urinating. If the infection is in the throat or rectum, the symptoms can be mild or even unnoticeable. Sometimes, the infection may also lead to inflammation of the joints.

Get tested for gonorrhoea

Testing for gonorrhoea is free as the illness is covered in the Communicable Diseases Act. To test for the infection, a urine or bacteria sample is taken from the urethra. For women, a cervical swab is also taken. If you have had unprotected oral or anal sex, you should provide swabs from the throat and rectum.

Get tested if you suspect that you have contracted gonorrhoea. However, it can take anything from a number of days up to a week from you being infected to the test showing that you have gonorrhoea. You may therefore need to wait a few days after having unprotected sex before you get tested.

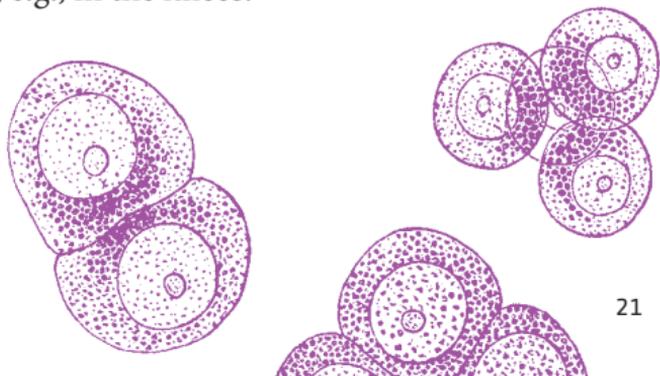
Treatment

Treatment for gonorrhoea is free and the infection is treated with antibiotics. During treatment, it is

important that you do not have sex with anyone. You must also provide additional samples once treatment is complete so as to check that the bacteria is gone and be sure that you are cured before having sex again. This is because the bacterium is sometimes resistant and difficult to treat. In such cases, you may need another type of antibiotic. Your sexual partner must also provide samples. If you have several partners, all of them need to be examined and receive treatment if infection is confirmed.

Important points about gonorrhoea

You can get gonorrhoea several times. You can also have complications if the infection is not treated. The risk of complications decreases if you receive treatment quickly. Women can suffer from salpingitis. Men can suffer from epididymitis. If untreated, gonorrhoea can affect your chances of having children as you can become sterile. The bacterium can even reach the bloodstream and thus cause blood poisoning and arthritis, e.g., in the knees.



Syphilis

Syphilis is caused by a bacterium. The bacterium can be present in the mucus membrane of a sex organ, but also in the rectum, in the mouth and in the throat. The bacterium can also be found in sores or in rashes on the skin caused by the bacteria. Syphilis is spread via unprotected sexual contact and is easily transmitted between people during vaginal intercourse, anal sex and oral sex. Syphilis can be transmitted via saliva. The bacterium then makes its way into sores or wounds in the oral mucosa. You can also contract syphilis via blood if you use drugs and share syringes and needles with someone who carries the bacteria.

Symptoms of syphilis

You will not necessarily have symptoms when you are infected with syphilis. It can take many years for the disease to manifest itself. If you have early symptoms, known as primary syphilis, these will appear roughly two weeks to three months after you have been infected. In such cases you may have sores on your genitals or in places where the bacterium has found its way via the mucus membrane, for example around the anus or in the oral cavity. The sores will

not necessarily burn or cause pain. Lymphatic glands close to the sore often swell up.

Get tested for syphilis

Testing for syphilis is free as the disease is covered in the Communicable Diseases Act. You can be tested by providing a blood sample. Samples can also be taken from any sores in which the bacterium may be found. The bacterium can be detected no sooner than four weeks after infection. To be sure that the infection is picked up by the test, it may be necessary to wait three months after the infection. Get tested if you suspect that you have syphilis.

Treatment

Treatment for syphilis is free. The infection is normally treated with penicillin injections for one to three weeks. Following treatment, a diagnostic test is always taken. Your sexual partner also needs to be tested if you carry the bacteria. If you have several partners, all of them need to be tested.

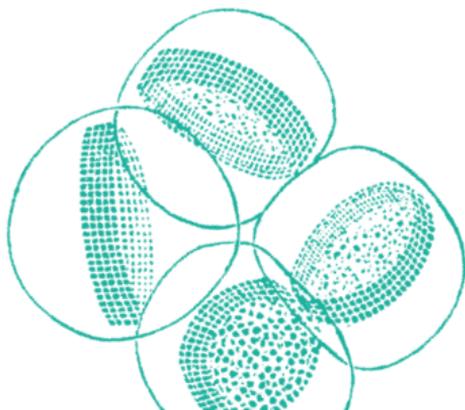
Important points about syphilis

You can get syphilis several times. Syphilis sores can heal by themselves and the infection may remain in the body for many years. You may have complications

if the infection is not treated. The risk of complications reduces if you receive treatment quickly.

Syphilis can return in secondary and tertiary stages of infection. Here, the symptoms differ from those of the first stage. In secondary syphilis, for example, you may experience scaly rashes on the body, fever and hair loss. The secondary stage of syphilis occurs seven to ten weeks after the effects of the first stage have healed. Tertiary syphilis can occur much later and result in severe damage to the cardiovascular system. Skin and mucus membranes can also be damaged, as well as the nervous system and the brain. Damage to blood vessels, the nervous system and the brain can be life-threatening if you do not receive treatment.

Untreated syphilis can be transmitted to children during pregnancy and thus result in the child being severely damaged. During pregnancy, expectant mothers will be offered a syphilis test. This is to allow you to receive treatment and protect the child.



HIV

HIV infection, or HIV as the disease is normally known, is caused by a virus. HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus. HIV can be transmitted via unprotected vaginal or anal intercourse. The virus can sometimes be transmitted via unprotected oral sex, especially if you get sperm in your mouth and there are wounds or sores on the oral mucosa. You can also contract HIV via blood if you use drugs and share syringes and needles with someone who carries the virus.

Symptoms of HIV

In the beginning, you will not necessarily perceive any problems if you have contracted HIV. Some experience a sore throat, fever, swollen lymph glands or rashes on the body. The symptoms occur in such cases roughly one to four weeks after infection. This is known as primary infection. Symptoms can be similar to those of influenza and normally disappear after a week or so. However, the infection continues, undetected, to weaken the body's immune system. The disease is especially infectious during the first months after infection. At this point, before the immune sys-

tem has had time to react, the viral load is very high, regardless of whether or not you develop symptoms.

Get tested for HIV

Testing for HIV is free as it is covered in the Communicable Diseases Act. You can be tested for HIV by providing a blood sample and it is possible to be tested anonymously if you wish. If you suspect that you have HIV, you must be tested so as to gain access to medical help and support, as well as knowledge about the infection so that you avoid transmitting HIV to others as well.

Depending on the type of test, it may be possible to detect the infection in the blood from around two weeks after the time of infection and normally within six weeks. If you suspect that you may have contracted HIV, it is important that you contact the health services as soon as possible for advice and testing. To receive a 100% certain response, it is recommended that you get tested again three months after suspected transmission of the virus, if you had an initial test just a short time afterwards. If the test reveals that you have HIV, your sexual partner must also be tested.

Treatment

There is no vaccine or cure for HIV. There is however effective medicine today that stops the progression

of the disease and prevents the destruction of your immune system if administered in time, thus also preventing the development of AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome).

Successful medical treatment also means that infectiousness becomes very low, as the viral load in the blood and other bodily fluids is drastically reduced. This is true provided that you do not have any other sexually transmitted infection. Condoms must therefore always be used during intercourse in order to minimise the risk of infection and protect against venereal diseases.

As the treatment does not cure the disease, it must continue throughout the person's life. The treatment normally consists of a combination of three different medicines and can sometimes result in a number of side effects that have a negative impact on quality of life. However, there are a number of different medicines available today, which means that it is normally possible to find a combination which results in minimal negative impact. If the treatment is initiated in time, the person should anticipate largely the same life expectancy as he or she would have had without being infected by HIV.

Important points about HIV

The best protection against contracting or transmitting HIV is to practice safe sex with condoms during intercourse and to avoid mucous membrane contact with blood and other bodily fluids that may contain viruses.

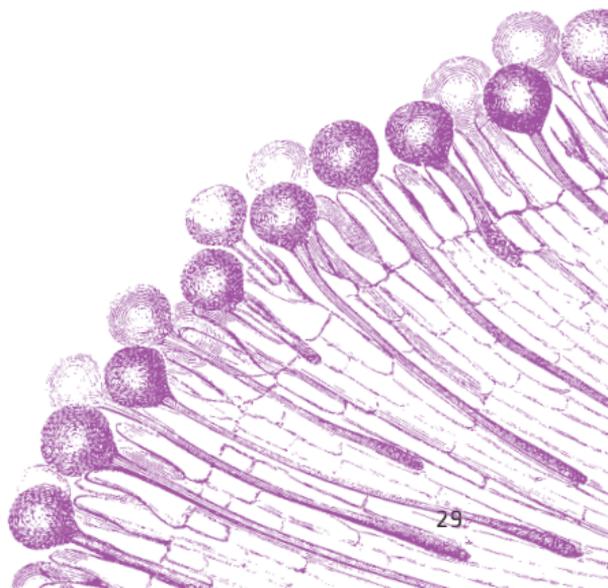
If you currently have another sexually transmitted infection, you are more likely to contract HIV if you have unprotected sex with a partner that has HIV. If you know that you have been subjected to HIV within the last day or couple of days, you must contact your local infection clinic as soon as possible for an assessment of whether or not preventive treatment against HIV (Post-Exposure Prophylaxis – PEP) can be administered so as to try to prevent the infection from taking hold.

An HIV infection does not necessarily mean that you have or will develop AIDS.

If treatment is not administered, the HIV infection breaks down the body's white blood cells, which are important to the body's immune system. Once the immune system has been severely weakened, normally after a number of years, you can have various complications. These complications can be life-threatening and are referred to using the generic term AIDS. By this stage, the viral load has also increased and thereby also the infectiousness.

To prevent the development of aids, it is important to commence treatment before your immune system has taken too much damage. It is therefore important that you do not delay in being tested if you suspect that you may have been subjected to the risk of infection with HIV. Unfortunately, there are still many people in Sweden who receive a diagnosis of HIV at such a late stage that the immune system has already been severely damaged.

All pregnant women are offered an HIV test so that treatment can commence during pregnancy and so that precautionary measures can be taken during delivery in order to reduce the risks to the child if the mother has HIV. It is very uncommon today in Sweden that a mother with HIV transmits the virus to the baby during pregnancy or in childbirth.



Condyloma/HPV

Condyloma is also caused by a virus; human papillomavirus (HPV). Condyloma often manifests itself in small warts and is spread via unprotected vaginal intercourse, anal sex and oral sex. The virus can also be spread during mutual masturbation and petting when skin rubs against skin. The symptoms are normally mild, but the warts can be perceived as uncomfortable.

Symptoms of condyloma

You will not necessarily have symptoms when you have condyloma. If you have symptoms, it can take a few weeks, up to a few months, before they appear in the form of warts. They are usually found around and on the genitals and may also be present on the anus or in the urinary meatus. The warts are either round and slightly raised or indented and gathered in groups. In some cases they are difficult to see. You may experience itching, broken skin with a small amount of bleeding and a burning sensation around the genitals. As a woman, you may also experience pain in the genitals during intercourse. In rare cases, condyloma can be present in the oral cavity. The condyloma virus can sometimes remain in the skin for months, even up to a year or so, before symptoms appear.

Get tested for condyloma/HPV

There is no standard test for condyloma, but you can have a doctor examine you if you suspect you have condyloma. The examination is not always free.

Treatment

An HPV infection will pass, but it can take a long time. Even the warts may disappear by themselves. They can be treated with a special cream or a solution that is spread over them. The warts can also be burned or frozen off. For treatment, you must contact a doctor and the treatment takes varying lengths of time depending on the method.

The virus can remain in the mucous membrane or on the skin, meaning the warts may return. They can also return if you are reinfected, in which case you will need to be treated again. Condyloma is not covered by the Communicable Diseases Act and the treatment is therefore not free.

Important points about condyloma

Condyloma does not affect your chances of having children. If the expectant mother has warts, these may grow in size and number during pregnancy, but they normally disappear after the birth. During delivery,

there may be a certain risk of the child being infected with the condyloma virus.

Condoms are a good protection against spreading the condyloma virus, provided of course that the condom covers the area of skin where the warts are located. You should tell your sexual partner if you have condyloma so that you can both protect each other.

Condyloma is caused by several different types of HPV. Certain other types of HPV can cause cellular changes in the genitals among women. The majority of cellular changes heal by themselves. But isolated cellular changes may after a long period of time result in cervical cancer. It is therefore important for women to undergo smear tests, which they are regularly called in for by the health services. Certain HPVs can also cause cancer in the rectum, penis and tonsils, although these types of cancer are more uncommon than cervical cancer.

You can be vaccinated against certain types of HPV. This should preferably be done before your first sexual experience. The vaccine protects you against the most common types of virus which can result in warts or cause cancer. Even if you are vaccinated, it is important that you as a woman continue to go for smear tests as there are more types of virus than those the vaccine can protect against.

Herpes

Herpes is caused by a virus of which there are different types. One type causes rashes, blisters and sores on the lips or in the mouth. Another type causes blisters, sores and rashes on the genitals. Herpes is spread via fluid from blisters and sores. Oral herpes is also spread via saliva and kissing. Genital herpes is spread via pus in secretions from the genitals if you have unprotected vaginal sex at a time when you have an outbreak of the infection. Herpes is also transmitted via unprotected anal and oral sex.

Symptoms of herpes

Herpes manifests itself first as redness, and sometimes itchiness in a limited area in which the virus is present. Thereafter, fluid-filled blisters are formed which can break and form sores. These can be very painful, especially if you touch them. Large parts of the mucous membrane can become red and swollen. During the first outbreak of the infection in your genitals, you may also have a high fever, headache and swollen lymph glands in the groin area which are thus very tender. You may also have difficulties urinating.

But you will not necessarily have symptoms the first time there is an outbreak of the infection. The majority of people who get herpes have no noticeable symptoms. If symptoms are to arise, it can take one to three weeks from the time of infection until there is an outbreak and they appear.

Herpes viruses often remain in the body after an outbreak and there may be subsequent outbreaks of the infection, though often in milder forms and for shorter periods.

Get tested for herpes

Herpes can be detected by taking samples from the blisters and sores. The diagnosis can and should always be secured using virus samples from pus. The examination is not always free.

Treatment

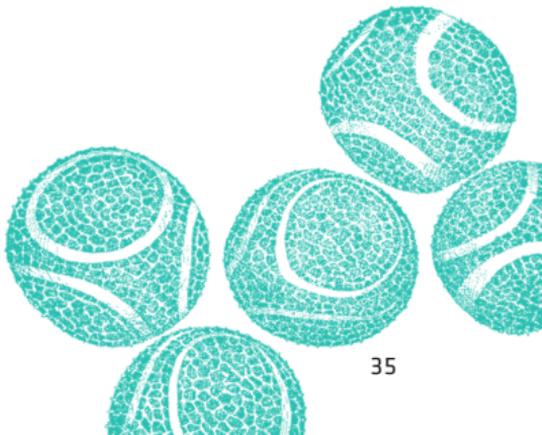
Herpes is not curable. Outbreaks can be alleviated and shortened with the use of certain medicine which counteracts the herpes virus. The treatment is not free and the disease is not covered in the Communicable Diseases Act.

Important points about herpes

Oral herpes is more common than the type of herpes virus found only in the genitals (genital herpes). Oral herpes is however also quite commonly found in the genitals.

Genital herpes does not affect your chances to have children, although outbreaks may be painful. It is a good idea to tell your sexual partner that you have herpes, even if you do not have a current outbreak of the infection. The symptoms often become milder over time and you may have an outbreak without noticing any symptoms. Condoms are a good protection against herpes, regardless of whether or not you currently have an outbreak of the infection.

The risk of a child contracting herpes during delivery is very small. If you as an expectant mother have a current outbreak of herpes, various measures are taken during delivery in order to protect the child against the infection.



Hepatitis

Hepatitis (or jaundice) is a generic term for an inflammation of the liver which can be caused by a number of different viruses. Various types of hepatitis can be transmitted via e.g., food or via blood when unclean needles are used. Some types of hepatitis can also be transmitted sexually. This applies especially to hepatitis A and B. Sexual transmission of hepatitis C is also possible, although it is less common.

Hepatitis is covered by the Communicable Diseases Act, which means that you have the right to a free test if you suspect that you may be infected. Being vaccinated against hepatitis A and B, consistently using condoms during intercourse and not sharing injection devices with others are strategies that can be adopted so as not to become infected.

Hepatitis A

Hepatitis A is spread mainly via drinking water or food that has been contaminated with sewage, in countries with poor sanitation. As viruses are secreted via excrement, hepatitis A can also be transmitted from person to person via close contact, such as sexual contact. A person who is infected may after a number of weeks

fall ill with fever and nausea, followed by vomiting and yellowing of the whites of the eyes and the skin. The urine becomes dark in colour and excrement becomes lighter. The symptoms can vary in strength. Some are unaware that they have been infected, and for others the only symptoms are fatigue and a reduced appetite for a few weeks to a few months. The diagnosis is established by means of a blood test.

There is no treatment for hepatitis A. The infection goes away by itself and is completely gone after a few months. A person who has had hepatitis A gains an immunity which protects them from reinfection for the rest of their life. There is also an effective vaccine against hepatitis A.

Hepatitis B

Hepatitis B is spread via infected blood and unclean needles, for example when getting a tattoo or injecting drugs. An infected mother can also transmit the infection to her children during delivery. The disease can also be transmitted sexually via vaginal or anal sex.

The symptoms are often mild; the most common being fatigue, aching joints and poor appetite. Sometimes, the whites of the eyes and the skin can also turn yellow. It can take up to six months after infection for the symptoms to appear. In most cases, the infection heals and leads to life-long immunity. In a minority

of cases, the infection becomes chronic instead. This means that there remains a certain risk of infecting others via sexual contact or blood. A chronic infection also entails a risk of complications later in the form of cirrhosis of the liver and even cancer of the liver. Medicine can slow the damage the virus causes to the liver, and in some cases even cure the disease. The diagnosis is established via blood sample, which is also used to see whether or not the infection has been cured. There is an effective vaccine against hepatitis B.

Hepatitis C

Hepatitis C is transmitted mainly via blood and by sharing unclean needles when injecting drugs. Sexual transmission is uncommon but also possible, especially among people who have been infected with HIV.

Hepatitis C normally has no noticeable symptoms, or very mild ones in the form of fatigue and nausea for a number of weeks to months following infection. The diagnosis is established via blood sample. However, a large proportion of those infected become chronic carriers and continue to be infectious. They can develop cirrhosis of the liver over time, and in some cases cancer of the liver. Today, there are medicines that often lead to the infection being cured. There is however no vaccine for hepatitis C.

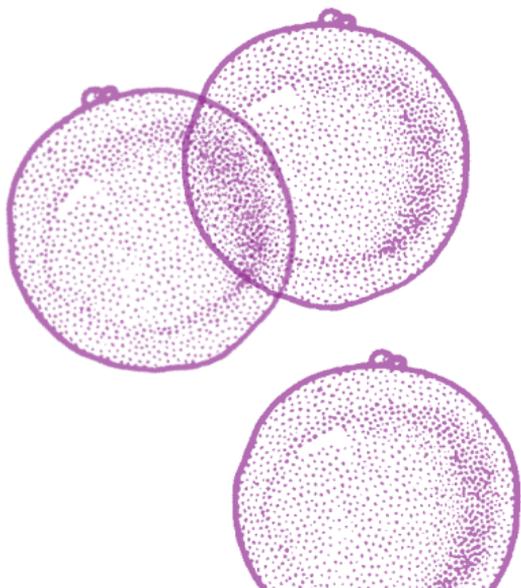
Find protection that suits you

- Condoms can be bought from many places, such as in supermarkets, at petrol stations, in pharmacies and via the internet.
- They are also often available free or at a low price at youth clinics or other clinics that provide treatment for sexually transmitted infections.
- Regardless of whether or not you are circumcised, the condom is a good form of protection. Condoms are available in different sizes. Try out different ones until you find a brand that suits you. Use the condom correctly and consistently.
- Condoms are made from latex, and they are often pretreated with lubricant. If you or your sexual partner are allergic to latex, there are latex-free condoms available for purchase.
- You can also purchase dry condoms, to which you can apply water- or silicon-based lubricant yourself.

- “Vaginal” condoms (referred to as “female condoms” in English and previously “femidoms”) are named based on where this type of condom is normally placed; namely the vagina or anally in the rectum, regardless of gender, gender expression and sexual orientation. To simplify, we can describe the female condom as a larger condom. It can be an alternative when normal condoms are either too large or too small. Female condoms can be inserted several hours before sex, unlike normal condoms which must be put on immediately before sex. One advantage is therefore that this type of condom does not lead to the same kind of interruption. Note that they are disposable and should not be reused. There are various brands of female condoms, but they are still relatively unknown to the Swedish public. It is easiest to buy them online.
- A dental dam can be an alternative form of protection for oral sex. It is a thin film of rubber or latex that you can lay over the vagina or anus when having oral sex. It can be purchased online and in specialist shops. A dental dam should be of a certain size, often 15 × 25 cm or smaller if worn as a “mouthguard” – fastened with a strap behind the ears. It is not recommended to make your own

dental dam by cutting up a condom as this will be much too small to completely cover the affected area. As the handling of dental dams differs entirely depending on the individual's habits and technique, there is a general lack of studies in the area which show just how effective dental dams are as a means of protection.

- You should preferably have a number of these in reserve when you plan to have sex.

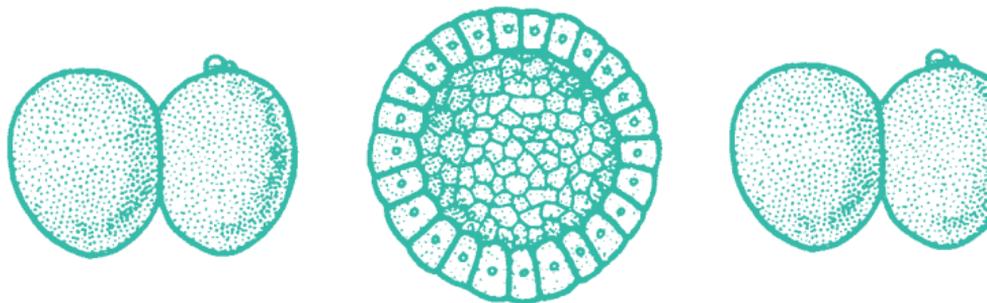


The right way to handle protection

- Handle protection carefully. Teeth, stubble in the genital area and sharp nails can damage the protection. Condoms that are subjected to sunlight and warmth or left in a wallet age quicker. You should therefore exchange them often.
- All types of condom, and even dental dams, are perishable. There is always a best before date on the packaging. Adhere to it.
- Never use double condoms when having sex. This does not provide extra protection. On the contrary, it increases the risk of breakages.
- Men who are not used to using condoms can practice when masturbating. First pull back the foreskin towards your body before slipping on the condom. Pinch the top of the condom when sliding it onto your penis. This is to avoid increased friction resulting from air trapped in the tip, as this increases the risk of breakages.

- If you are circumcised, you can use a small amount of lubricant on the tip of your penis before putting on the condom. This may also enhance the pleasure. If you use too much, however, the condom may slip off.
- When using lubricant, it must be water or silicon-based. Lubricant with fat and oil weaken the protection, which can in turn mean that it breaks.
- Always use condoms on dildos and sex toys if you share them with someone. Bacteria and viruses can be transmitted between you and your sexual partner if you share sex toys.

Further tips and advice on condoms and more besides can be found on some of the recommended websites found at the end of this brochure.



Sex when travelling

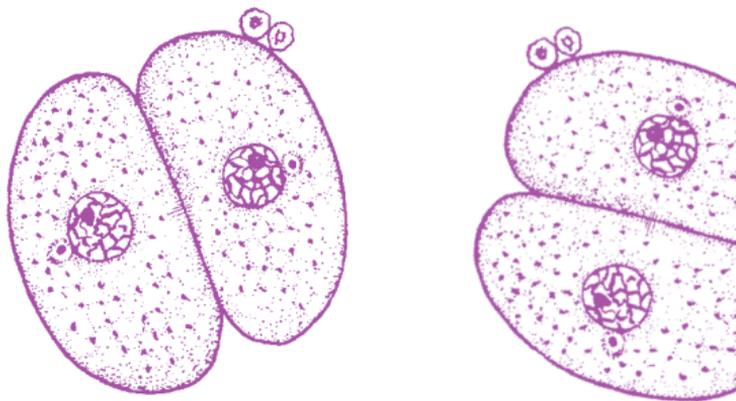
Sexually transmitted infections are found in Sweden as well as in every other country in the world. HIV and other venereal diseases are in many cases more common in other countries. Chlamydia is however at least as common in Sweden as in other countries. Make it a habit to always take condoms with you when travelling in Sweden or abroad.

Having unprotected sex abroad can sometimes entail a greater risk than having unprotected sex in Sweden, regardless of whether you have vaginal intercourse, anal sex or oral sex. This is especially true for touristic towns and popular destinations where people from many different countries meet and potentially make sexual contact.

There are differences in the health services in different countries, both within Europe and outside. The opportunities for testing differ from one country to the next. Similarly, the access to medicine for e.g., HIV differs. Many are unaware that they have been infected with HIV and therefore do not take a test. Furthermore, they have as a result of this not had any treatment to reduce the infectiousness. Other venereal

diseases may also be untreated or improperly treated, and thus remain.

Use condoms if you have vaginal intercourse, anal sex or oral sex on your travels. If you have had unprotected sex with someone on your travels, it is important that you make an appointment to be tested when you return. If you have received treatment for a sexually transmitted infection abroad, you should always contact health services when you return, even if you have no residual symptoms. This is to be sure the infection has passed.



Advice and tests

You can go for an examination or receive advice at various clinics in the county where you live, for example:

- the youth clinic
- “Elevhälsan” (the School Health Services)
- the STI, skin, vein and sexual health clinic
- “Studenthälsan” (the Student Health Centre)
- the gynaecology clinic
- the Health Care Centre
- the antenatal clinic
- the Sex and relationship clinic (Sesam)
- the infectious disease clinic
- your county council or region’s website.

In some parts of the country, organisations such as Noaks Ark, RFSU and RFSL provide advice and testing; see the respective organisation’s website.

In addition, in most county councils in Sweden you can order a chlamydia test online. For more information, visit your county council or region’s website, as well as klamydiatest.nu or klamydia.se.

Homosexual and bisexual clinics

A number of major cities have clinics dedicated to men who have sex with other men. In Göteborg there is Gayhälsan (Gay Health) at Sahlgrenska University Hospital, and in Stockholm you will find Venhälsan at Stockholm South General Hospital. In Malmö, men who have sex with men are among the target groups of the “Centrum för sexuell hälsa” (Sexual Health Centre). Malmö also has RFSL Rådgivningen Skåne which offers HIV testing.

Special clinics for women who have sex with women are less common. In Stockholm, there is a gynaecological clinic for lesbian and bisexual women. Other major cities are home to clinics with special opening hours for women who have sex with women. Look up your county council’s website for more information.

Would you like to know more?

There are many good websites that provide information about condoms, HIV and other sexually transmitted infections:

www.1177.se

www.umo.se (youth clinic online)

www.sakraresex.se

www.sentry.nu

www.rfsl.se

www.rfslungdom.se

www.sexperterna.com

www.rfsu.se

www.hiv-sverige.se

www.noaksark.org

www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se

If you have any questions about HIV, you can also contact Noaks Ark directly on 020-78 44 40.

This brochure was originally produced in 2009 by the National Board of Health and Welfare and last revised and updated by the Public Health Agency of Sweden in 2014.

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HIV and sexually transmitted infections exist. Knowledge helps.

This brochure provides knowledge about how to have safer sex and thereby protect yourself against sexually transmitted infection. Chlamydia is one such infection, as is HIV. Here you will find information on some of the most common infections and which complications may arise if you do not receive medical treatment. You will even receive tips on where to turn for advice and where you can be tested.

Sexually Transmitted Infections are known by the acronym STIs. They are the same as venereal diseases.

Looking for information in another language?

Visit: www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se



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