



**SEXUAL HEALTH AWARENESS AND GUIDANCE WEEK  
9TH MARCH – 13TH MARCH 2009**

**PLEASE CALL INTO THE HEALTH CENTRE FOR ADVICE  
FREE CONDOMS AVAILABLE THIS WEEK!!  
BOOK AN APPOINTMENT FOR THE CHLAMYDIA SCREENING CLINIC**

### **What is Sexual Health??**

"Sexual health is a state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being in relation to sexuality; it is not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction or infirmity. Sexual health requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships, as well as the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences, free of coercion, discrimination and violence. For sexual health to be attained and maintained, the sexual rights of all persons must be respected, protected and fulfilled"

#### **What is a sexually transmitted disease (STD)?**

It is an infection or disease passed from person to person through sexual contact. Although many STI's cause no symptoms they remain infectious and may pose considerable health risks for those who are infected.



#### **Common types of STI's**

**HIV & AIDS  
SYPHILIS  
CHLAMYDIA  
GONORRHOEA  
GENITAL HERPES  
GENITAL WARTS**



### **What is HIV?**

•HIV is the human immunodeficiency virus that causes AIDS. A member of a group of viruses called retroviruses, HIV infects human cells and uses the energy and nutrients provided by those cells to grow and reproduce.

### **What is AIDS?**

- Aids stands for Acquired immune deficiency syndrome.
- It is a disease in which the body's immune system breaks down and is unable to fight off certain infections, known as "opportunistic infections," and other illnesses that take advantage of a weakened immune system.
- When a person is infected with HIV, the virus enters the body and lives and multiplies primarily in the white blood cells. These are the immune cells that normally protect us from disease.

### **How is it passed on?**

- HIV is usually transmitted through sexual activity. HIV is the most dangerous of all STI's. HIV can be transmitted by:
  - By unprotected anal sex (when the man's penis enters the anus / back passage)
  - By unprotected vaginal sex (when the man's penis enters the woman's vagina)
  - By injecting drug users sharing needles
  - Through infected blood or blood products
  - From a HIV positive mother to her baby in the womb, during, during birth or breast feeding.

### **SYPHILIS**

This is a chronic system infection caused by bacteria. It can be spread through close sexual contact, usually in the form of oral, vaginal or anal sex. It will start as a sore within 10-90 days in the genital area. The lesion may be painless, with a clear discharge. If untreated it can persist for 2-6 weeks. There may also be symptoms, which are similar to having the flu, such as fever, aches and pains, and headaches. These symptoms, which can last for up to a year, may eventually disappear

You can be diagnosed on the basis of a blood test. Syphilis is easy to cure in its early stages. A single intramuscularly injection of penicillin, an antibiotic, will cure a person who has had syphilis for less than a year. Additional doses are needed to treat someone who has had syphilis for longer than a year. There are no home remedies or over-the-counter drugs that will cure syphilis. Without treatment there can be serious consequences causing heart and brain damage in later life.

### **CHLAMYDIA**

Chlamydia is a curable sexually transmitted infection caused by the bacterium. It is the most common curable bacterial sexually transmitted infection in the western world and the numbers affected are likely to be underestimated. Chlamydia is known as a "silent" disease because about three quarters of infected women and about half of infected men have no symptoms.

Most women have no symptoms. There may be a vaginal discharge. It may cause recurrent cystitis. It can also cause irregular bleeding and abdominal pain. The infection may spread through the vagina and womb into the pelvis causing inflammatory disease, which can lead to problems with future fertility. Men have no symptoms or have a discharge from the penis or pain passing urine.

There are laboratory tests to diagnose chlamydia. Some tests can be performed on urine; other tests require that a specimen be collected from a site such as the penis or cervix.

Treatment is Antibiotics. The infection must be treated as if it is left untreated it can lead to problems with future fertility.

## **GONORRHOEA**

Gonorrhoea is sexually transmitted by oral, anal or genital sex.

Infection may occur in the urethra (penis), cervix, throat and rectum. Infection in the throat occurs during oral sex and infection in the rectum may happen during anal sex. Gonorrhoea is sometimes detected in the rectum of women who have not had anal intercourse, due to spread from the genital area.

### **Symptoms of Gonorrhoea?**



Of those infected, approximately half the women and a third of the men do not show any symptoms. In men, the primary symptom is painful urination. Levels of pain can often be extremely severe. Discharge is also seen from the urethra (the tube through which urine passes from the body). At first, this discharge is slimy and of limited quantity but it quickly develops into a more substantial yellowish substance.

Homosexual men can develop gonorrhoea in the rectum. This varies from being symptom-free to involving the painful discharge of bloody pus from the rectum.

In women, the symptoms tend to be more limited, normally consisting of painful urination and an increasing amount of discharge from the vagina.

In both sexes, a throat infection can occur as a result of oral sex with an infected partner. In most cases there are no further symptoms but sometimes a sore throat is accompanied by fever.

Diagnosis is made by examination of the vagina or the penis and swabs are taken. Treatment is easy and essential. You will be given antibiotics in tablet, liquid or injection form.

## **GENITAL HERPES**

Genital herpes is a highly contagious sexually transmitted disease. The cause is a strain of the herpes simplex virus (HSV). This virus enters your body through small breaks in your skin or mucous membranes. Genital herpes is common. In Ireland, genital herpes simplex is most common in younger age groups: 20-29 year olds represented 55% of all cases in 2004.

### **Symptoms:**

- Itching, tingling or a burning sensation in the genital or anal area.
- Pain in the legs, buttocks or genital area.
- Vaginal discharge.
- Blisters near where the infection entered the body. These develop into painful open sores, which may take a few weeks to heal. The blisters may occur in, on or around the vagina, anus, penis, scrotum, buttocks, urinary passage and mouth.
- Influenza-like symptoms (fever, headache, muscle pains).
- Burning on urination.

### **Herpes is spread by direct contact including:**

- Sexual contact
- Anal sex
- Oral sex
- Vaginal sex
- Kissing
- Skin-to-skin contact, which transmits HSV-1 and HSV-2

There is no treatment that can cure herpes, but antiviral medications can shorten and prevent outbreaks during the period of time the person takes the medication.

## **GENITAL WARTS**

Genital warts are one of the most common viral STI's. The human papilloma virus causes them. Many people carry the wart virus on their penis, in and around the vagina, or in and around the anus/rectum. Only a small number of these people develop warts that can be seen. It is passed with skin-to-skin contact during anal or vaginal sex. The wart virus is very common in adults who are sexually active. Treatment involves putting a cold liquid chemical on the warts to remove them.

### **Symptoms:**

- Small hard lumps. These can appear any time up to 6 months after sexual contact. However they may take several years before they show.
- The lumps can occur in groups.
- The lumps can sometimes go unnoticed.
- In Women, the warts may appear on the lips of the vagina, inside the vagina, on the cervix or around the anus.

- In Men, the warts may appear on the tip or shaft of the penis, on the scrotum or around the anus. If untreated the warts may begin to look like small cauliflower shaped lumps.

### **Strategies for Preventing STDs**

- Abstain from sex or delay sex
- Choose outer-course versus intercourse
  - Monogamy
- Use Condoms and other barriers
- Know that some methods of birth control, like birth control pills, Implants, or diaphragms, will not protect you from STDs.
  - Reduce the number of sexual partners
- Do not have sex with "higher-risk" people
  - Do not share needles
  - Stay sober

### **Safer Sex**

- Only condoms have been demonstrated to prevent the spread of STIs during sexual contact.
- You need to make sure that you use a new latex condom correctly every time you have oral, anal, or vaginal sex. If you are allergic to latex, use a polyurethane male or female condom.
- Along with a condom, you should also use a water-based lubricant to keep the condom from breaking.
- Never use lubricants that contain oil or fat, like petroleum jelly or cooking oil. These products weaken latex and can cause the condom to break. Some STDs can't be cured, so you should always practice safer sex.
- Ensure the condoms carry the British Standard Kite Mark or the EEC Standard Mark (CE).

### **What to do if you have STD symptoms?**

Contact your Gp/Student Health Service for advice right away.

- Avoid having any sexual activity while you have any symptoms of an outbreak.
- You can't correctly test and diagnose yourself with a STD.
- Only your health care provider can do that. Most STDs can be treated.
- The earlier you get treatment, the better. More serious problems can develop if you wait.
- Whenever possible, treatment is given in a single dose, but sometimes, you need to take medication over a period of time.
- Be sure to tell your sexual partners, so they can be tested

## **Sexually Transmitted Disease Clinics**

### **DCU Student Health Centre**

Henry Grattan Building

Phone:7005766

### **St. James's Hospital, Dublin 8**

Free Service

The Department of Genitourinary Medicine and Infectious Diseases (GUIDE) Clinic

Tel: (01) 4162315 / 4162316

Appointments / Emergency Walk-in Service

### **Gay Men's Health Project**

19 Haddington Road,

Dublin 4

01 - 672 6164

### **Mater Misericordiae Hospital, Eccles St., Dublin 7**

Tel: (01) 830 1122

Free Service

Monday - Thursday (STI Clinic) - 2.00pm - 4.00pm

Thursday (HIV Testing) - 10.30am - 12.30pm

Tuesday (Follow up medical monitoring for patients with chronic infectious diseases, including HIV) - 9.30am - 1.