

## STIs and HIV

Level: Seconde

General Objectives:

Students should be aware of the symptoms and treatments of different types of STIs, including HIV, and ways to protect against infection.

Expected Behaviours:

- To decrease chances of contracting an STI, students should use a condom each time they have sex
- Be tested for STIs and HIV each time they have a new partner and every three months
- Reduce the number of sexual partners they have
- Students should consult a doctor or health worker if they experience any suspicious symptoms or receive a positive HIV or STI test

Information:

All information students should know about each STI is included in the chart below, which can be used for teaching.

STI	Symptoms	Curable	Treatment	Complications
Chlamydia	Most people with chlamydia have no symptoms, but for people who do, they include painful urination, unusual discharge from penis or vagina, and women may have bleeding between periods or during or after sex. Men may have pain and swelling in the testes.	Yes	Antibiotics	If left untreated, chlamydia can cause infertility in both men and women
Gonorrhoea	Like chlamydia, most people with gonorrhoea have no symptoms. For women, there may be pain during sex, or vaginal discharge. For men, there may be discharge from the penis or pain when urinating.	Yes	Antibiotics	If left untreated, can lead to infertility especially in women
Syphilis	There are four stages of syphilis. In the first stage, the infection causes a small, round, painless sore around the genitals or mouth. In the second stage, there is usually a non-itchy rash, often on the bottoms of the feet or the palms of the hands. People	Yes	Antibiotics	Increases risk of contracting HIV, mothers may pass syphilis to baby during childbirth, untreated syphilis will eventually cause damage to the brain, eyes, liver, nerves, and can cause paralysis and even death.

	may experience a sore throat, fever, headaches, joint pain, or enlarged lymph nodes during this stage.			
Herpes	Painful red blisters that may crust over and scab. First outbreak may also include headache, fever, swollen lymph nodes and painful urination. Subsequent outbreaks are usually less severe and heal faster than the first outbreak.	No	Medication may help manage outbreaks but will not cure the infection.	Increases risk of contracting HIV and is very contagious
HIV	Many people experience no symptoms from HIV. For some, symptoms appear 2-4 weeks after infection. These include fever, chills, sore throat, swollen lymph nodes, ulcers in the mouth, muscle aches, night sweats, or rash.	No	There is no cure for HIV, but taking antiretroviral medication can reduce the chances that the virus will develop into AIDS.	If left untreated, HIV will progress to AIDS. AIDS can cause rapid weight loss, night sweats, fatigue, diarrhoea, sores in the mouth, anus, or genitals, pneumonia, neurological disorders, and death.
Trichomoniasis	Women may have no symptoms, but sometimes have a yellow-green vaginal discharge. In men, symptoms are usually not present.	Yes	Antibiotics	Can cause inflammation that increases the risk of contracting another STI or HIV

Summary and Key Messages:

It is important to get tested, to ask sexual partners to get tested, and to use a condom every time sexual intercourse occurs. Many STIs show no symptoms, so regular testing is the only way to know if an infection has been contracted. If a test is positive, most STIs are curable. If an STI is diagnosed that is not treatable, there are treatments available to decrease symptoms in order to lead a happy and healthy life.

Students are able to access testing services at hospitals and health centres. Medical treatments are dispensed at pharmacies, but self-treatment is strongly discouraged without first consulting a doctor and obtaining an official diagnosis of an STI or HIV.

## **STIs and HIV**

Level: Premiere

### Objectives:

To equip students with the skills and confidence to negotiate for condom use, get tested for STIs, ask a partner to get tested for STIs, and communicate results with each other.

### Expected Behaviours:

Students should get tested regularly for STIs and HIV, confidently ask partners to get tested and to use a condom, be open and honest with sexual partners about test results, and finish all appropriate medications and treatment if a test is positive.

### Information:

For a review of types of STIs including symptoms and treatment, the chart included in the Seconde curriculum may be used. After students have this refresher on STIs, the teacher can present the information below, which will help equip students with the skills to protect themselves from contracting an STI or passing an infection onto their partner(s).

#### **Negotiating for Condom Use**

Students should begin the conversation before the moment when they are about to have sex; for example, on a walk together. Agree to terms that both people feel comfortable with, such as “we will use a condom every time we have sex.” Sometimes people can feel like their partner does not trust them if they want to use a condom. If a partner feels this way, it is important to assure them that it is not about trust, but about making healthy choices to avoid unintended pregnancy and STIs. Remember, desire to use a condom does not matter any less than a partner’s desire not to use one. It is the students right to refuse sex without a condom at any time.

#### **Getting Tested**

When attending a health clinic, the student should ask to be tested for STIs and HIV. Before getting tested, a nurse, peer educator, or other health care worker will counsel the student to make sure they understand exactly what will happen, help them feel comfortable, and make sure they know the test results are confidential.

The doctor should perform the actual test. Once the test is completed, counselling will be conducted regardless of the results. If the test is negative, the doctor will encourage the student to keep making healthy sexual choices such as using a condom. If the test is positive, the doctor will discuss treatment options and encourage behaviours that decrease the chances of passing the infection to a partner. Remember that whether the tests are positive or negative, the health workers at the clinic are not allowed to tell anyone the results.

### **Asking a Partner to Get Tested**

The best time to discuss being tested for an STI with a partner is before engaging in sexual activity. This can decrease anxiety about contracting an STI for both partners. It may be scary to bring up testing with a new partner, but it helps to remember that by having this conversation, the student is taking control of their health and protecting the health of their partner. When asking a partner to get tested, it often helps to volunteer to get tested first. This can help a partner feel more comfortable with the request. The students should assure their partner that they are not asking because they do not trust them, but because they want to make the healthiest and most responsible choices possible.

### **If a Test is Positive**

If a test is positive for contracting an STI, it is important to finish all medication prescribed by the doctor. It is also important to not have sex for at least 7 days, even with a condom. During this time, the infection can still be passed on to a partner even while taking medication.

It is important that the student notifies anyone they have had sex with in the past six months. This might feel like an awkward conversation to have, but it is very important so that they are able to get tested and treatment if necessary. The student may feel more comfortable if they ask them to meet in a place where they will have the privacy to talk without interruption. They should be honest about the situation and remember that they should not be blamed or feel ashamed. Having an STI does not mean that they are a bad or dirty person. A partner may have questions that they do not know how to answer, and that is okay. They can refer him or her to the same place they were tested and the doctor at that location will be able to answer any questions the partner may have.

Remember that although not every STI is curable, every STI can be treatable. This means that even if the student contracts something that they may have forever, there are medicines and treatments that can decrease the symptoms.

### **Summary and Key Messages:**

Open and honest communication with sexual partners is one of the most effective ways to keep healthy. Starting this communication might feel difficult or intimidating, but is extremely important. By discussing condom use, testing, and treatment for STIs, the student and their partner can become closer to each other and show they are invested in protecting one another's health.

## STIs, HIV, and Non-Sexually Transmitted Genital Infections

Level: Terminal

### Objectives:

- Students should be aware of the symptoms and treatments of different types of STIs and the means to protect against infection
- Students should acquire the skills to prevent genital diseases

### Expected Behaviour:

- In the case of suspicious symptoms the students should consult a doctor or health worker

### Information:

Students should receive refresher lessons using the Seconde and Premiere curriculum, and also learn about the non-sexually transmitted genital infections included below. Wearing clean, dry underwear, washing genitals with clean water and no soap, and (girls) wiping their genitals from front to back after using the restroom can prevent bacteria from spreading from the anus into vagina or the urinary tract.

#### **Urinary Tract Infection:**

Symptoms: Feeling the need to urinate more often than usual, pain during urination, blood in urine, feeling unable to fully empty your bladder, pain or achiness in lower stomach.

Curable: Yes

Prevention: Urinating after sex can help prevent urinary tract infections and keeping well hydrated

Treatment: Antibiotics

Complications: Infection can spread to the kidneys and become more serious. Symptoms of a kidney infection are fever, pain in sides or back, chills, confusion, and agitation or restlessness.

#### **Bacterial Vaginosis:**

Symptoms: Grey-ish white, fishy smelling discharge, vaginal itching and painful urination may also be present.

Curable: Yes

Treatment: Antibiotics

Complications: Bacterial vaginosis can sometimes cause Pelvic Inflammatory Disease, which can cause infertility and severe abdominal pain.

**Thrush or Candidiasis:**

Symptoms: In women, vaginal itching plus a thick, white discharge. In men, itching on the penis, red rash on the head of the penis, and possibly discharge under the foreskin.

Curable: Yes

Treatment: Cream (can be purchased from a pharmacy)

Complications: If the infection is severe, it can cause the skin to crack and possibly bleed. The infection can be extremely uncomfortable, there are no known complications.

**Summary and Key Messages:**

Not all genital infections are caused by an STI, but students should always see a doctor if they are having genital itching, pain, discomfort, abnormal discharge, sores, or any other symptoms. Condoms should be used every time students have sex, and get tested (and finish full treatment if the test is positive) every time they have a new sexual partner.

**Sources for all levels:**

<https://www.healthed.govt.nz/resource-table/table-sexual-health-sti-chart>

<http://www.ashasexualhealth.org/stdsstis/herpes/signs-symptoms/>

<https://www.cdc.gov/std/hpv/stdfact-hpv.htm>

<https://www.aids.gov/hiv-aids-basics/hiv-aids-101/signs-and-symptoms/>

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Urinary-tract-infection-adults/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/bacterial-vaginosis/symptoms-causes/dxc-20198414>