

Factors that affect transmission

- *Type of fluid (amount of virus/bacteria in fluid)*
For example, blood has a higher concentration of HIV than semen and vaginal fluid.
- *Amount of fluid*
For example, pulling out before ejaculating may result in less semen being exchanged.
- *How easily fluid can get in the body*
For example, a virus or bacteria can enter the body more easily when there is a sore or other opening in the skin.
- *Health status of individual*
For example, having an STD may reduce the body's ability to fight off a new infection, thereby increasing a person's chances of acquiring HIV infection or another STD. Having an STD also makes it much more likely to transmit HIV infection if you're HIV-positive.

Getting tested

While some routine medical visits may include a sexual health interview and examination, testing for HIV and most STDs requires specific tests and cannot be done without your consent or cooperation. Most tests involve collecting samples from the urethra, cervix, anus or throat with a swab, or testing a urine or blood sample.

Many STDs occur without any signs or symptoms. If you are sexually active, see a health care provider regularly and ask to be tested for HIV and STDs.

In Massachusetts, anyone can be tested and treated confidentially at an STD clinic regardless of their ability to pay or their immigration status, and without a parent's consent if over the age of 13.

Reducing your risk of getting an STD

1. Abstain from or reduce sexual behaviors that put you at risk for STDs.
2. Reduce the number of sex partners that you have.
3. Use condoms when you have sex.
4. Choose sexual behaviors that have little or no risk of STDs (e.g. kissing, hugging, petting, mutual masturbation).
5. Know your status by getting tested for HIV and STDs. Ask your partner(s) if they have ever had an STD or symptoms of an STD. Encourage your partners to get tested too.
6. Be aware that using alcohol and other drugs may make it more difficult to make informed decisions about having sex.
7. Educate yourself by learning all you can about STDs and other sexual health issues.

To find out more about STDs or for information about where you can go to get tested, call (617) 983-6940 or visit www.mass.gov/dph/cdc/std

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES (STDs)

Massachusetts Department of Public Health,
Bureau of Communicable Disease Control

Division of STD Prevention
305 South Street, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130
(617) 983-6940
www.mass.gov/dph/cdc/std

DISEASE	TRANSMISSION	TYPES OF SEXUAL CONTACT THAT MAY PRESENT A RISK OF CONTRACTING THE DISEASE	COMMON SYMPTOMS	POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS	TREATMENT
CHLAMYDIA (Bacteria)	Semen, pre-ejaculate (pre-cum), vaginal fluid.	Oral sex (mouth-penis, mouth-vagina) Vaginal sex (vagina-penis) Anal sex (anus-penis)	Often no noticeable symptoms. Potential for itching, discharge or burning during urination or ejaculation, pain in the lower abdomen or back, pain during intercourse, discharge from the vagina, bleeding between menstrual periods, nausea, or fever.	If left untreated, may lead to infection of the testicles or pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) in women, a serious medical condition that can lead to infertility. May cause infertility even without symptoms. Can be transmitted from mother to newborn during childbirth.	Curable with antibiotics.
GENITAL HERPES (Virus)	Skin-to-skin contact (usually genital), saliva may transmit virus from the mouth or lips. Transmission is possible even without an outbreak of sores.	Oral sex (mouth-penis, mouth-vagina, mouth-anus) Vaginal sex (vagina-penis) Anal sex (anus-penis)	Often no noticeable symptoms. May cause one or more sores, blisters, pimples, bumps, or a rash around mouth, genitals or anus, itching, burning, or tingling in either the genital area or the mouth, a fever, swollen glands or stiff neck and headache. May have repeated outbreaks that are generally less severe than the original.	May result in chronic painful condition particularly for people who have a weakened immune system. Can be transmitted from mother to newborn during childbirth.	No cure but medications can reduce the frequency and duration of outbreaks.
GENITAL WARTS (HPV) (Human-papilloma Virus)	Skin-to-skin contact (usually genital). Transmission is possible even without visible warts.	Oral sex (mouth-penis, mouth-vagina, mouth-anus) Vaginal sex (vagina-penis) Anal sex (anus-penis)	Often no noticeable symptoms but may cause raised or flat growths around genitals or anus that are usually flesh colored or whitish in appearance.	Certain strains of HPV are considered risk factors for cervical cancer. In very rare cases, it can be transmitted from mother to newborn during childbirth.	No cure but warts can be removed using creams, surgery, cryosurgery (freezing), or laser treatment. There is now a vaccine to prevent certain types of HPV infection, including types that cause cervical cancer.
GONORRHEA (Bacteria)	Semen, pre-ejaculate (pre-cum), vaginal fluid.	Oral sex (mouth-penis, mouth-vagina) Vaginal sex (vagina-penis) Anal sex (anus-penis)	May have discharge or burning during urination or ejaculation, pain in the lower abdomen or back, pain during intercourse, discharge from the vagina, bleeding between menstrual periods, nausea, or fever. For women, there are often no noticeable symptoms.	If left untreated, may lead to infection of the testicles or pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) in women, a serious medical condition that can lead to infertility. Can be transmitted from mother to newborn during childbirth.	Curable with antibiotics.
HEPATITIS A (Virus)	Feces.	Oral sex (mouth-penis, mouth-vagina, mouth-anus)	Often no noticeable symptoms but may cause fever, tiredness, aches, loss of appetite, nausea, abdominal pain, dark urine, and jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyeballs).	In rare cases, may lead to severe liver infection and death.	Nearly all infections resolve on their own. There are vaccines to prevent hepatitis A.
HEPATITIS B (Virus)	Blood, semen, pre-ejaculate (pre-cum), vaginal fluid.	Oral sex (mouth-penis, mouth-vagina) Vaginal sex (vagina-penis) Anal sex (anus-penis)	Often no noticeable symptoms but may cause mild flu-like symptoms including fever, tiredness, aches, loss of appetite, nausea, abdominal pain, dark urine, and jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyeballs).	Can lead to chronic infection, cirrhosis (scarring of liver tissue) and cancer of the liver. Can be transmitted from mother to newborn during childbirth.	Nearly all infections resolve on their own but medications may be used to treat chronic illness. Alcohol and certain medicines should be avoided to prevent further liver damage. There are vaccines to prevent hepatitis B.
HIV/AIDS (Human Immunodeficiency Virus)	Blood, semen, pre-ejaculate (pre-cum), vaginal fluid, breast milk.	Oral sex (mouth-penis, mouth-vagina) Vaginal sex (vagina-penis) Anal sex (anus-penis)	Often no symptoms for years but may cause fever, chills and sweats, fatigue, appetite loss, weight loss, muscle and joint pain, long-lasting sore throat, swollen lymph nodes, diarrhea, yeast infections, and skin sores.	Over time, can lead to acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), which can leave a body vulnerable to other infections or cancers normally controlled by a healthy immune system. Can be transmitted from mother to newborn during childbirth.	No cure or vaccine for HIV or AIDS. There are medications that allow people to live with HIV or AIDS for longer periods of time.
SCABIES & PUBIC LICE or CRABS (Parasite)	Skin-to-skin contact (usually prolonged sexual contact), although in rare cases, can spread by contact with clothes, towels, bedding, and other personal items that were recently in contact with an infected person.	Oral sex (mouth-penis, mouth-vagina) Vaginal sex (vagina-penis) Anal sex (anus-penis)	Intense itching usually in genital area, visible crab eggs (small, oval-shaped, beads) attached to the base of hair, may have dark or bluish spots on skin in the infested area as a result of bites.	Scratching area may lead to secondary bacterial infections.	Medicated shampoos and creams will kill mites/lice on the body. In addition, need to thoroughly clean all clothing, towels and bedding to prevent reinfection.
SYPHILIS (Bacteria)	Skin-to-skin contact (between syphilis sore and penis, vagina, anus or mouth).	Oral sex (mouth-penis, mouth-vagina) Vaginal sex (vagina-penis) Anal sex (anus-penis)	Painless sore on or around penis, vagina, mouth or anus; rash over the entire body or on the hands and soles of the feet, fever, swollen lymph glands, patchy hair loss, headaches, weight loss, muscle aches, and tiredness.	If left untreated, may damage heart, eyes, central nervous system and other organs. Can be transmitted from mother to fetus prior to birth.	Curable with antibiotics.
TRICH-OMONIASIS (Parasite)	Semen, pre-ejaculate (pre-cum), vaginal fluid.	Vaginal Sex (vagina-penis, vagina-vagina)	Women may experience frothy, yellow-green vaginal discharge, discomfort during intercourse and urination, irritation and itching in the genital area and in rare cases, lower abdominal pain. Most men do not experience symptoms but may have irritation inside the penis, mild discharge, or slight burning during urination or ejaculation.	If left untreated, on rare occasions, leads to pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) in women, a serious medical condition that can lead to infertility.	Curable with antibiotics.