A Beginner’s Guide to Sexually Transmitted Infections
With **Love from Me to You**

Some gifts a lover can give you, you may not appreciate

**SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS (STIs)**

You don’t need to have a lot of sexual partners to get a sexually transmitted infection (STI). Anybody who has sex – male, female, straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual – can get one.

**STEVE**’s got the sting… or has he? HOW did he get it? WHAT has he got? WHO gave it to him?

Was it **ANITA**?

Or maybe **DAWN**?

Or even **CALVIN**?

**You’ve fancied Steve since forever.**

Now’s your chance, NITA!

I hear his girlfriend just dumped him.

Never! Word.

Poor Steve.

Girl, have you got it bad!

Poor...

... need another drink...
Let's find somewhere quiet an' share this bottle. OK.

I giggle.

No, that's my...

Wait a...

OOF

I hope she doesn't mention condoms...

I hate 'em.

But maybe she won't let me...

It's all happening so fast but I don't wanna stop.

Are we gonna...?

GLOM

Doesn't look like he brought any condoms.

I think there's one in my bag - but I don't want him to think I'm easy... came here planning to get off with someone...

...and my bag's downstairs!
It'll be OK. We don't have to... ohh well, I just won't let him...

BANG! BANG!

Wish I hadn't drunk so...

BANG! BANG! BANG!

Just Coming!

BLEN

BLEN

Come ON!

... Who?

INCl

DRINiNG

INCl

INCl

INCl

WHAT'S

WHY DOES...

HOW DID I...

Ow
How do you know if you’ve got an STI?

For Steve, it was pretty obvious. But a lot of times it isn’t. You may show no symptoms at all. Women are less likely to show symptoms than men.

The most common signs in men or women are:

- any unusual or smelly discharge of liquid from the vagina or penis
- pain or burning when you urinate (pee)
- itching, rashes, lumps, ulcers, sores or blisters on or around the genitals
- pain in the genitals
- pain during sex
- pain in the testicles or lower abdomen (area above pubes).

For women, bleeding between periods or after sex, or pain in the lower abdomen (area above your pubes) can be a sign.

When do the symptoms show?

Symptoms usually appear within 2–14 days, but they can take up to four weeks (sometimes even longer). Many people infected with HIV do not have any signs or symptoms, or they may not be noticed. Some people who become infected have flu-like symptoms a few days or weeks after infection.

HIV may not show up on a test immediately. It can take one month after being infected for the test to show up positive.

Some common STIs, like chlamydia, often don’t have any symptoms (particularly in women). So you could be infected (and infectious), but not know it.

How do you get an STI?

The usual way is through sex.

Semen, vaginal fluid and blood can all carry an infection.

A man doesn’t have to ejaculate (cum) to infect a partner. A small amount of pre-cum can leave the penis before or without ejaculation, and can be infectious.

And you don’t even need to have full sex. Some STIs can be passed from person to person by genital contact alone (when the penis just touches the vulva, vagina or anus) or through sharing sex toys.

Some STIs (including herpes) can also be passed from person to person through oral sex (when you lick or kiss your partner's genitals).

For crabs and scabies (which are crawling insect-like creatures), skin contact alone is enough.
I gave him my number, but he's not called me since.

Get over yourself, girl. Call him!

perhaps too much chilli in that kebab from last night?

Seems like only yesterday we were mucking about in the photo-booth at the station.

...with Calvin ouch...

I only went to that stupid party in the first place because I'd just broken up with Dawn.

because I'd just broken up with Dawn.

Dawn ...sigh... we must've been going out what nearly 2 years!

Yo, Stevie Boy! Calvin's my best mate. Maybe I should talk to him.

Yo, Stevie Boy! Calvin's my best mate. Maybe I should talk to him.

...Tell him about the girl at the party. Ask him about my... my problem.

But I just can't!
There are more than 25 STIs. These are some of the most common:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infection</th>
<th>Cause</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Genital warts (human papilloma virus or HPV)</td>
<td>virus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSU (Non-specific urethritis)</td>
<td>number of causes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chlamydia</td>
<td>bacteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herpes</td>
<td>virus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gonorrhoea (clap, drip, sting)</td>
<td>bacteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less common (but not rare) are:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV (Trichomonas vaginalis)</td>
<td>protozoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pubic lice (crabs)</td>
<td>louse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scabies (itch)</td>
<td>mite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hepatitis B</td>
<td>virus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syphilis (pox)</td>
<td>bacteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV</td>
<td>virus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some infections that affect the genital area, such as thrush (candidiasis) and bacterial vaginosis, can be spread through sex. But you can get them even if you haven’t had sex. Cystitis (an infection of the bladder) can be triggered by sex, but you can’t pass it on to someone you have sex with.

What have you got? The only way to find out for sure is to get yourself checked out…
Hello, welcome to South Park Sexual Health Clinic.
Do you have an appointment?

Hi, I’m Christine, your health adviser.
First, we just need to fill in a registration card... what name would you like us to use?

OK, ‘Steven’, any information you give us will be kept completely confidential.
We won’t tell anyone.
Not your parents.
Not even your family doctor.

Good. Have you been here before?

No! NEVER!!
Uh, I mean... no.

OK, if you’ll just take a seat in the booth where you can have some privacy...

The health adviser will come and join you in a minute.

Now, what seems to be the problem?

Hm. The symptoms you describe could be a number of things.
We will have to do some tests.

But First...
I'm going to ask you some questions about your general and sexual health. I'd like you to answer as honestly as you can, to find out which tests you'll need.

Do you have a regular partner... Errr...

Errr...

Well, er, yes. Sort of both.

Can you be more specific?

You should always wear a condom with unprotected sex, you not only risk infection, but also an unplanned pregnancy.

O.K. I'll see you later to discuss your results and to answer any questions.

The doctor or nurse will call you shortly.

Let me show you to the waiting room.

If you're happy and you know it clap your hands - if you really wanna show it clap your hands.

... we were both pretty drunk we only meant to have a snog but ended up going... uh... further.

Did you have oral sex? Anal sex?

No, no. Just... uh... sex.

Safer sex?
Tests
The doctor or nurse at the clinic will normally give you a full sexual health check. This means looking at your genitals and checking other areas of your body, including your mouth.

Some STIs, such as pubic lice or genital warts, can be diagnosed by sight.

Tests are carried out on blood and urine samples, or swabs (cotton buds) are used to pick up samples of discharges or secretions.

Some tests can be completed while you wait. For others the results take longer.

You will probably be asked to phone for some results (while others may be given to you in person or sent by text).

Treatment
Most STIs can be completely cured. Treatments can include:

- **Antibiotics** for bacterial infections such as chlamydia. Be sure to take ALL the tablets.
- Some viruses including HIV never leave the body, but treatment can relieve the symptoms.
- **Lotions** are used to treat crabs and scabies.

Advice
Anyone can ask to see a health adviser at a clinic to talk about relationships, sexuality, sexual problems or STIs.
Let's go for a walk, before anyone sees you?

There's something I have to tell you.

At the party, wasn't just...

I've fancied you for ages...

SAY IT!

And I wanted to give you THIS!

'CHLAMYDIA'?

I DON'T HAVE CHLAMYDIA!

I've never even heard of it!

I feel fine.

AND WHAT MAKES YOU SO SURE IT WAS ME I GAVE IT TO YOU, AND NOT THE OTHER WAY AROUND?

And now maybe I've got...

oh no!

I THINK YOU'VE GIVEN ME ENOUGH ALREADY, DON'T YOU?!!!

I've just come from the STI CLINIC!

... WHAT?!

BECAUSE there was nothing wrong with me before last week!

BECAUSE I'm not the type who sleeps around!

Oh and I am I suppose! We were both equally up for it at that party!

I didn't do anything you weren't doing too!
Who's to say it wasn't your girlfriend gave it to you... and now you've given it to me!
Or maybe you're the one who's gone 'n' given it to both of us!
Yeah, RIGHT

Yeah, RIGHT!
Now if you'll excuse me, Casanova, I'd better go to this clinic and see if I've got this... clematis thingy

DAWN?
Dawn, it's me
We should meet up

No? Didn't I say I never wanted to see you again?

Nope
No way
Say please then
Pretty please
Still no

Who's to say it wasn't your girlfriend gave it to you? Your girlfriend!

Who's to say it wasn't your girlfriend gave it to you.

You'll never guess who just rang me...

AARGH
Ok then. 7:30 in the Ivy

Judy?
Ha ha no of course I don't well, maybe
STEVE! What are you doing sitting all the way over here? Have a seat. Dawn.

C'mon, I fancy a game of pool!

I think you'd better sit down.

WHAT?

Here’s the number of the local G.U.M. clinic.

There’s nothing wrong with my teeth!

G.U.M. Genito Urinary Medicine

URGH

OK, ANITA, if you’d take your jeans and pants off and hop on the couch so I can take some swabs—

Just to be sure.

You think that I…

You shag some stranger at a party, and you take her word over mine?!

I’ll use a small speculum to let me see high into your vagina, then I’ll use this swab to take a specimen.

It won’t hurt and will only take a moment.

HAVE YOU EVER HAD TO KNOCK ON WOOD—
Are you seeing anyone new?

No!

Dawn - it's important. You need to tell anyone you might be seeing or might have seen to get themselves checked out.

Especially anyone that you... that you might have seen while we were still, y'know, together.

That's it. I'm leaving. I didn't come here to take this!!!

I'm gone.

Dawn
LETTING PARTNERS KNOW

Let partners know you have an STI

Telling can be difficult. You may have lost touch. You may be scared. You may be really angry.

But it’s really important to let any sexual partner who could be infected know as soon as possible.

Encourage them to visit a clinic and get themselves checked out. (If you go to the clinic together, you will be seen separately.)

Sexual health clinics can help. The health adviser can arrange to send out ‘contact slips’ that ask the person to go to their general practice or sexual health clinic.

It won’t give your name and won’t necessarily say what the infection is.

But whatever happens, nothing will be done without your agreement.

If an STI is not treated

It doesn’t go away. As long as you have an STI, you can pass it on to somebody else – and perhaps cause permanent damage to your health, or your partner’s health.

In the long-term, men can experience pain and swelling in the testicles and penis, and in the joints and eyes. They may become less fertile.

Women are even more likely to suffer long-term damage, including pelvic pain and damage to the fallopian tubes – tiny tubes that carry the egg from a woman’s ovary to her uterus (womb).

Pregnancy

If a pregnant woman has an untreated STI, this may be passed on to her baby either in the uterus or during birth. Most STIs can be treated during pregnancy without harming mother or baby.
Well, maybe. As nice a bloke as he seems, at some time during this story **STEVE** might have told a lie. Perhaps **ANITA** is not thinking straight, or being totally honest with herself. **DAWN** certainly seems guilty about something. And that **CALVIN**, he gets around...
You could only be sure if you could trust everyone to always tell the truth. So you can never really say for certain who might have given what to whom.

### HPV vaccine
All girls aged 12–13 years are offered an injection against HPV which will help to protect them from cervical cancer. If you want more information look at [www.fpa.org.uk](http://www.fpa.org.uk) or speak to your school nurse.

Remember that you still need to use a condom to help protect against STIs and pregnancy.

### How to avoid getting and passing on STIs
Go in for **safer sex** – sex that makes it harder to pass on an infection. Here are some suggestions:

- You can make love **without penetration** (when the penis enters the vagina or anus) – kiss, hug, cuddle, lick, stroke, massage, bath, dance, snog, wrestle, romp, fondle, nibble, rub, shower, play...
- **Oral sex** is riskier if you or your partner have sores in or around the mouth, or inflamed gums.
- For oral sex use a **condom** to cover the penis, or a **latex or polyurethane** (soft plastic) **square** to cover the female genitals or male or female anus.
- Vaginal and anal sex is riskier if you have any **cuts** or **sores** on your genitals.
- **Anal sex** is especially risky for both partners, because the skin in the rectum is delicate and breaks easily.
- For vaginal and anal sex, use **condoms**.

### If you are concerned about pregnancy...
It’s important to get advice and have a pregnancy test done as soon as possible. You can have a free test done at:

- A young person’s clinic or Brook clinic
- Most contraceptive clinics
- Some general practices
- Some sexual health/GUM clinics
- Most NHS walk-in centres (England only)
- You can buy a pregnancy test from the pharmacy.
Where to get more information

For information on sexual health, sex and relationships visit www.fpa.org.uk or check out these FPA booklets.

These organisations can also give you confidential information and advice.

**BROOK**
www.brook.org.uk
For sexual health services and advice for young people.

**CHILDLINE**
0800 1111
www.childline.org.uk
24-hour helpline for young people with any problem.

**FRANK**
www.talktofrank.com
For information on drugs.

**GET CONNECTED**
www.getconnected.org.uk
0808 808 4994
Free, confidential helpline and advice service for young people.

**LONDON LESBIAN & GAY SWITCHBOARD**
www.llgs.org.uk
Support and information for gay men, lesbians, bisexuals and trans people.

**RAPE CRISIS**
www.rapecrisis.org.uk
For girls and women who have been raped or assaulted recently or in the past.

**SURVIVORS UK**
www.survivorsuk.org
For boys and men who’ve been raped or sexually abused.

**YOUTH ACCESS**
www.youthaccess.org.uk
For your nearest counselling service.