Love STINGS

A Beginner’s Guide to Sexually Transmitted Infections
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.

STIs are also known as STDs (sexually transmitted diseases). Some of them used to be called VD (venereal disease) – named after Venus, the Goddess of Love.

**Steve**'s got the sting.

**HOW did he get it?**

**WHAT has he got?**

**WHO gave it to him?**

Was it **Anita**?

Or maybe **Dawn**?

Or even **Calvin**?

**Whodunnit?**

And who was it they dunnit with?
You've fancied Steve since forever
Now's your chance, 'NITA!
I hear his girlfriend just dumped him

Never!
Word.
Poor Steve
'Poor'?

Girl, have you got it bad!

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

OK.

*giggle*

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

Are we gonna...?
No, that's my...

Wait a...

I hope she doesn't mention condoms...
I hate 'em

But maybe she won't let me...

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...

Wish I hadn't drunk so...

Oh no I'm gonna...

Uh oh, what was?

BANG! BANG! BANG!

Just Coming!

Snigger...

SNZZZ

DRIIING

*
Come ON

BLAA

What’s

Why
does

How
did

WHO?
Hey Sexy

Mydick's gonna drop off!
I'll never be able to have sex again!
I've got AIDS!

Ow!

Oh sh...

I'm gonna die!!

Pull yourself together!
It doesn't have to be...

Please don't let it be.
BURNING QUESTIONS

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 two to 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 between three weeks and three months 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 catch an STI?
The usual way is through
• Sex.

Semen, vaginal fluid and blood can all carry an infection. The 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 just as 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?"

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

"Dawn... sigh... we must've been going out what nearly 2 years!"
Seems like only yesterday we were mucking about in the photo-booth at the station.

...with Calvin stetch-

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!
Ooh, I need the toilet, but what if I don't want to?

Oh, don't be such a big

Drip!

Whassup, Stevo?

Steven? What's wrong?

Ow

...Shit

Condemned
There are more than 25 STIs. These are some of the most common:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STI</th>
<th>Number of Causes</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>TV (Trichomonas vaginalis)</td>
<td>protozoan</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>

Less common (but not rare) are:

Some infections that affect the genital area, such as Thrush (candidiasis) and Bacterial vaginosis, can be spread through sex. But you can suffer from 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?

Yes, I, er, I rang ahead. It’s for 3.15.

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.
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.

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.

O.K.

Do you have a regular partner...

Errr...

or have you had sex with someone other than your regular partner?

Well, er, yes. Sort of both.

Can you be more specific?

Did you have oral sex? Anal sex?

No, no, just...uh, just sex

Safer sex?

...we were both pretty drunk.

We only meant to have a snog but ended up going...uh...further.
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 [some text not legible]
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 can be diagnosed by sight e.g. pubic lice, genital warts. 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). If you want an HIV test, ask. An HIV test is not automatic and will only be done after you have had a chance to discuss it with a health adviser or other health professional.

Treatment
Most STIs can be completely cured if found early enough. Treatments can include:

- **Antibiotics** for bacterial infections such as chlamydia. Be sure to take ALL the tablets.

- **Viruses** such as HIV never leave the body, but treatment can relieve some 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.
You have a bacterial infection known as CHLAMYDIA.

As long as you complete a course of antibiotics, it should soon clear up.

Don't have sex again until it has.

Meanwhile, any sexual partners you've had recently should get a check-up. We can help you tell them.

Come back next week for the follow-up.

As if I didn't have enough on my plate!

Hi. It's Anita! From the yes. I know.

I was just about to call you.

YAAAAH! STEVE!

REALLY!?
Let's go for a walk, before anyone sees you.

There's something I have to tell you.

At the party, wasn't it just...

I've fancied you for ages. Say it!

And I wanted to give you this!

I think you've given me enough already, don't you?!

I've just come from the CLAP clinic!

...
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 GAVE IT TO YOU, AND NOT THE OTHER WAY AROUND!

And now maybe I've got...

oh no!

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 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

AARGH

OK then. 7:30 in the 'IVY'

Judy?

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

uh huh

Ha ha no of course I don't.

well, maybe
STEVE! What are you doing sat all the way over here?
Have a seat. Dawn
C'mon, I fancy a game of pool!
I think you'd better sit down.

Just to be sure
You should get yourself checked out.

You think that I... You shag some stranger at a party, and you take her word over mine?!
Here’s the number of the local GUM 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-

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

SLAM
You’ve lost that loving feeling—woah. That loving feeling.

You’ve completed the course of antibiotics, Anita.

Whee!
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). This can cause difficult pregnancies. It may even mean they cannot have a baby.

Pregnancy

If a pregnant woman has an untreated STI, this may be passed on to her baby either in the womb or during birth. Most STIs can be treated during pregnancy without harming mother or baby.
Ahh er... hello!
Funny running into you here!
Not really

Fancy going for a drink then?

Orange Juice, maybe
OK!
SO YOU THINK YOU KNOW WHODUNNIT?

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.

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**HPV vaccine** All girls aged 12–13 years are offered an injection against HPV which will help to protect them from cervical cancer. It doesn’t protect against genital warts. Soon a catch-up scheme will offer the injection to all girls up to the age of 18. 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.

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**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:

- **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 male or female condom, or a dam to cover the anus or female genitals. A dam is a soft latex or polyurethane (plastic) square.
- **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**.

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**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.
How fpa can help you

sexual health direct is a nationwide service run by fpa. It provides:
• confidential information and advice and a wide range of booklets on individual methods of contraception, common sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy choices, abortion and planning a pregnancy
• details of contraception clinics, sexual health clinics and genitourinary medicine (GUM) clinics.

fpa helplines

England
50 Featherstone Street
London EC1Y 8QU
0845 122 8690
Mon–Fri 9am–6pm

Northern Ireland
0845 122 8687
Mon–Thurs 9am–5pm
Fri 9am–4.30pm

www.fpa.org.uk

SEXWISE
tel 0800 282 930
www.ruthinking.co.uk
For advice about sex and personal relationships for 12–18-year-olds

LONDON LESBIAN AND GAY SWITCHBOARD
tel 020 7837 7324
For information and advice on being gay, lesbian or bisexual

SEXUAL HEALTH LINE
tel 0800 567 123
24-hour advice on all aspects of STIs (including HIV)

FRANK
tel 0800 776 600
www.talktofrank.com
For information and support on drugs

YOUTH ACCESS
tel 020 8772 9900
www.youthaccess.org.uk
For your nearest young people’s confidential counselling service

All of these Helplines are CONFIDENTIAL