

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS (STI)



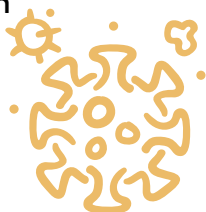
A STEP AHEAD
— CHATTANOOGA —

A Step Ahead Chattanooga's mission is to remove barriers to contraception by providing education, outreach, and access to free birth control.

Call to make an appointment
423-265-7837

Quick Facts

- STIs are spread through sexual contact or by blood contact with an infected individual
- Often people with a STI will not have any symptoms which is why testing is so important
- You cannot get an STI from a toilet seat, a swimming pool, or from eating food someone with an STI has cooked.



Viral Infections

Viral infections are caused by viruses. These infections cannot be cured. However, individuals can take medications to help manage symptoms associated with these infections.

Viral STIs include:

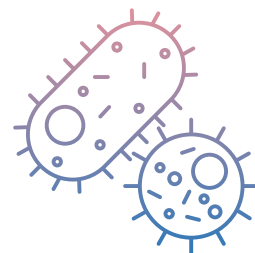
- Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)
- Human Papillomavirus (HPV)
- Herpes (Herpes Simplex Type 1 & 2)
- Hepatitis (some strains)

Bacterial Infections

Bacterial infections are caused by bacteria being spread from one individual to another. Bacteria infections can be treated and cured. However a person can get a bacterial infection repeatedly if they are exposed again.

Bacterial STIs include:

- Chlamydia
- Gonorrhea
- Syphilis

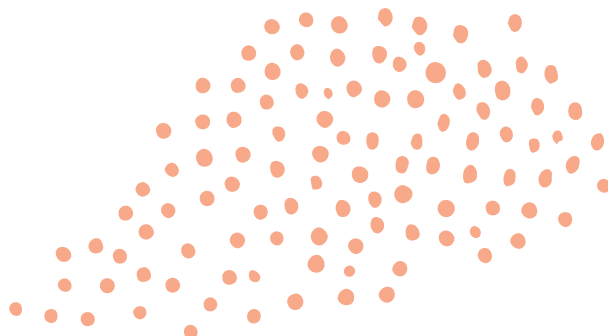


Parasitic Infections

Parasitic Infections are caused by parasites being passed from one person to another. Parasitic infections can be treated and cured.

Parasitic STIs include:

- Public lice (crabs)
- Trichomoniasis



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Testing and Testing Centers

Testing can be done via swab, urine screen, or blood draw depending on the STI you would like to be tested for.

Testing is free for most individuals at the health departments in TN. All counties in TN have a health department which can perform STI testing; the Hamilton County HD has multiple locations throughout the county which individuals may go to for testing.

Testing can also be done at most PCP offices, urgent cares, and walk-in clinics.

CEMPA Community Cares is an excellent resource for testing and education in Hamilton County and they also serve the surrounding TN counties. They can be reached at 423-265-2273.

Reducing STI Stigma

Testing positive for a STI can make some individuals feel depressed or hopeless, largely due to societal stigma surrounding STIs. Ways we can reduce the stigma are:

- Remembering that anyone can get a STI even if it is the first time you engage in sexual activity
- Not call people "clean" or "nasty" based on their testing status
- Don't make jokes about individuals who have tested positive or who you assumed have been positive in the past
- Reminding others that STIs are common and you should not feel shame if you test positive
- Learn medically accurate information about STIs and their transmission.



Prevention

The only 100% effective way to prevent STIs is abstinence. However if abstinence isn't for you, other ways to prevent STIs include:

- Using condoms and/or dental dams
- Reducing number of partners
- Talking with partners about STI status and recent testing
- Regular testing
- Getting vaccinated (HPV and Hepatitis)
- Taking PrEP if you are at risk for contracting HIV

Stopping the Spread

STIs are spread through sexual contact. Therefore if you test positive for an STI, seek treatment and notify your past partners. In TN, the Department of Health has workers who can help with the notification.

If you have slept with someone who is positive for an STI, get yourself tested to find out your STI status and see if you need treatment.

BY THE NUMBERS

- More than 2.6 million cases of new STIs were reported in 2019 (CDC, 2021) and case numbers have been consistently trending up
- Tennessee ranks 10th in the nation for gonorrhea, 12th for chlamydia, and 21 for primary and secondary syphilis rates. (CDC, 2021)
- Gonorrhea and chlamydia rates in TN are higher than the US rates of these infections (TN DoH, 2021)
- STIs cost the US healthcare system about \$16 billion annually in direct medical costs (CDC, 2021)