

Sexually Transmitted Diseases

STDs may be a difficult topic to discuss, but they remain a major public health problem: nearly 20 million people are infected every year, and treatments for infection cost billions of dollars annually, to say nothing of the cost to infected individuals.

There are many types of STDs out there, and infections display few or no symptoms at first, or may cause conditions that are

normally attributed to other illnesses, so [know the signs](#).

While STDs can affect everyone and anyone, some groups are more vulnerable to certain infections than others. It's important to know your likelihood for disease based on your background.

Women, especially those who are young and non-white, are at higher risk for contracting gonorrhea and chlamydia. Black women in particular are the hardest hit.

Blacks account for the majority of gonorrhea cases, and are far more likely to get chlamydia and syphilis than whites; Hispanics also have higher rates of these three diseases compared to non-Hispanic whites, while men who have sex with men (MSM) have seen rapidly growing rates of syphilis cases, accounting for 62% of all new infections as of 2009.

Children born to infected mothers may contract some types of STDs, such as syphilis, or be born with vari-



ous health problems, many of them longterm.

What to Do

Getting informed and practicing preventative measures are the best ways to address any kind STD. If you think or already know you're infected, get regular screenings with a healthcare provider, and make sure your partner does the same.

Abstain from any sexual intercourse, including oral and anal. This will be the surest method.

Maintain a long-term, mutually monogamous relationship with an uninfected partner. Avoiding having multiple sexual partners, especially simultaneously or with people whose infection status is unknown.

Latex male condoms, when used consistently and correctly, can reduce the risk of transmission of chlamydia, gonorrhea, and trichomoniasis. Be sure to use a new condom for each sexual act.

Always get tested regularly to detect

any infections, even if you have no symptoms (make sure your partner does the same).

Many STDs are easily treated if caught early, but can become severe or even incurable if unaddressed. Ask a new sex partner if he or she has an STD, has been exposed to one, or has any unexplained physical symptoms. Do not have unprotected sex if your partner has signs or symptoms of STDs. If he or she recently had unprotected sex, there is a chance of infection. Learn more at <http://www.cdc.gov/std/>

HIGHLIGHTS

The Miami-Dade STD Control and Prevention Program
The Miami-Dade County Health Department has a division that works to reduce the incidence of sexually transmitted diseases. Services include screening, testing, diagnosis, counseling and treatment for infected individuals and partners. For assistance or questions, contact the following clinics:

Downtown: Mon- Fri, 7:30 AM - 3:00 PM – (305) 575-3800

West Perrine: Mon – Tues - Thurs, 8:00 AM - 11:00 AM / 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM – (305) 256-6315

Miami Beach: Mon, Wed, Fri, 8:00 AM - 11:00 AM / 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM – (305) 535-5540 Ext. 4107

For more health topics, visit www.dadehealth.org/atoz/atoz.asp