

FOR NEWCOMER YOUTH:

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF FROM STIs!

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS (STIs) ARE VERY COMMON IN CANADA.

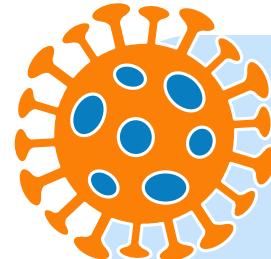
STIs are bacterial or viral infections that you can get through sexual contact with a partner who has an infection.

Sexual contact can include oral sex (kissing, licking or sucking someone's genitals), penis-vagina sex, penis-anal sex, sexual touching or sharing sex toys with a partner.

It is important to get the information you need to reduce your risk of getting or passing an STI.

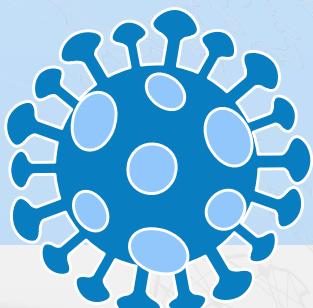
YOU CAN REDUCE THE CHANCE OF GETTING AN STI OR PASSING AN STI TO YOUR SEXUAL PARTNER(S).

This information sheet will give you information on four ways you can protect yourself from getting an STI or passing an STI to your partner (Using condoms, STI testing, Vaccines, and PrEP/PEP).



If you are sexually active (i.e., engaging in sexual contact with a partner), there is a chance you will get an STI.

Some STIs can cause serious damage to your health, including increasing your risk for some types of cancer. Some STIs harm your reproductive system, which may make it hard for you to have children.



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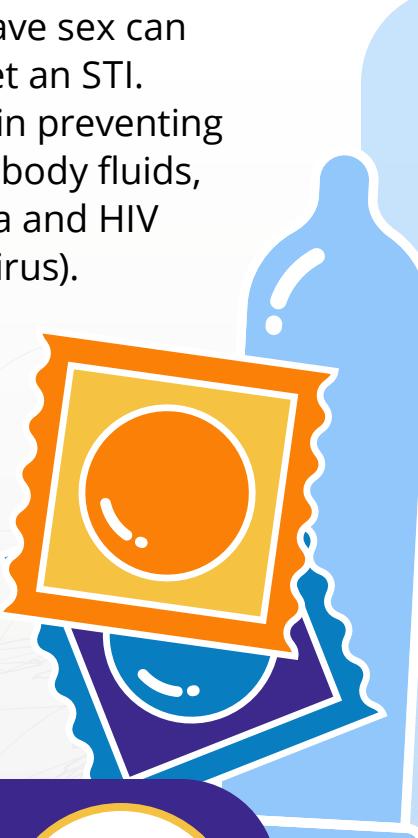
FOUR WAYS TO PROTECT YOURSELF FROM STIs

1

CONDOMS

Using a condom when you have sex can reduce the chance you will get an STI. Condoms are most effective in preventing STIs that are spread through body fluids, such as gonorrhea, chlamydia and HIV (Human immunodeficiency virus).

Condoms are less effective against STIs that are spread through skin-to-skin contact, such as genital herpes and syphilis but they can still reduce your risk.



See Condoms and Dental Dams ([Public Health Agency of Canada](#)) for more information.



Experiment with different condoms to find one that fits and feels right for you.

Practice talking to your sex partners about using condoms.

Practice putting a condom on and taking it off correctly.

Use a water-based or silicone lube to increase pleasure and help prevent the condom from breaking.

FOR NEWCOMER YOUTH: FOUR WAYS TO PROTECT YOURSELF FROM STIs

TALKING TO YOUR PARTNER(S) ABOUT CONDOMS

Here are some ways to start the conversation:

I always use condoms, it helps me feel safe and relaxed.

Let's make sure we have condoms before we do anything.

Using a condom means we both care about each other's health.

Do you want to try a different kind of condom or lube together?

CONDOM TYPES



External condoms are worn on a penis



Internal condoms go inside the vagina or anus

DENTAL DAMS

A dental dam is a thin sheet made of latex or plastic.

You can place it over the vagina or anus during oral sex (mouth-to-genital contact).



For more information:
[Using Condoms](#) and
[How to Use a Dental Dam.](#)



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2

STI TESTING

Often, if you or your partner have an STI there are no physical symptoms. Getting tested is the only way to know for sure if you have an STI.

If you are sexually active, regular STI testing will help you and your partner(s) to stay healthy.

To learn more about when and how to get tested, check out SIECCAN's [STI Testing Factsheet](#) for simple steps on how to get tested and where to go for confidential, free, or low-cost testing.



TALKING TO YOUR PARTNER(S) ABOUT GETTING TESTED FOR STIs

Here are some ways to start the conversation:

When was the last time you got tested for STIs?

I care about my health and your health. Can we both get tested?

I think it's important for both partners to get STI tests before starting a relationship.

Can we share our test results with each other? I am happy to share mine because it can help us feel safe.

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3 VACCINES

HPV VACCINE:

Human papillomavirus (HPV) is a very common STI. If you are sexually active there is a high chance that you will get HPV if you have not had the HPV vaccine. In most cases, HPV does not cause you any harm. But sometimes the virus does not go away and can lead to certain types of cancer.

Learn more about HPV prevention from SIECCAN's [HPV Resources](#).



HBV VACCINE:

Hepatitis B virus (HBV) is a virus that can spread through blood and sexual contact, but it is preventable with a safe and effective vaccine. If your partner has hepatitis B, get the vaccine and use condoms until your doctor says you are protected.

See [Hepatitis B vaccines](#) (Public Health Agency of Canada) for more information.



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4

PREP/PEP FOR HIV PREVENTION

If you have had sex without a condom and might be at risk of HIV, there are effective medications that can help you:

PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis) is a pill you take before sex to help prevent HIV. PrEP works best when taken daily or as prescribed by your healthcare provider.

Check out PrEP to Prevent HIV: Your Questions Answered for more information.



PEP (Post-Exposure Prophylaxis) is taken after a possible exposure to HIV or hepatitis B, like if a condom breaks or you have unprotected sex. PEP must be started within 72 hours (3 days) to be effective.

Check out Preventing HIV after a potential exposure for more information.



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PrEP and PEP are available to anyone at risk of HIV regardless of gender, sexual orientation, or relationship status.

You can talk to a doctor, nurse practitioner, or visit a sexual health clinic to find out if these options are right for you, learn how to start and take the medication, and get follow-up care.

For newcomers who have questions about access, like costs or insurance, many clinics are ready to help you understand what services are available, even if you are unsure about your health coverage.

Sexual health clinics and community organizations can share information about affordable or free services and ways to reduce medication costs.



To find services near you, you can use
[Action Canada's sexual health clinic finder](#)
or [CATIE's service provider directory](#).