



STI FAQ

Sexually Transmitted Infections: What are they?

Muslims, like most people, have sex. But like many faith-based communities, we tend to not discuss sex at all. Stigmatizing sex and conversations around sex doesn't mean that people stop having sex, it just means that we leave people of all ages clueless and at an increased risk of infection.

[Sexually transmitted infections](#) (STIs) are infections transmitted through sexual contact, caused by bacteria, viruses, or parasites. While STIs may often manifest with specific symptoms, it is possible for one to be infected without showing symptoms. Having an STI doesn't make you a "dirty" person with poor morals or ethics, it just means that you caught an infection. Thanks to medical advances, most STIs are curable or can be well managed through medication.

STIs are most commonly contracted through:

- Anal, vaginal, or oral sex
- Sharing of unwashed sex toys
- Genital contact without penetration, orgasm, or ejaculation
- Infected semen or vaginal fluid getting into one's eye
- Pregnancy, from mother to baby

STIs are increasing, especially amongst youth, with the most common infections being [chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis](#).* [Half of all new STI cases](#) are acquired by young people age 15-24.*

SYMPTOMS

Most STIs are asymptomatic. In fact, [70% of girls and women and 50% of boys and men](#) who have chlamydia, the most common STI, will not show symptoms until it's too late.**

This could lead to serious long-term reproductive health consequences, especially for girls and women, such as:

- [Pelvic Inflammatory Disease](#)
- Increased risk of [ectopic pregnancy](#)
- [Infertility](#)
- Blocked fallopian tubes
- Pregnancy complications
- Increased risk for HIV transmission
- Infant stillbirth

However, when symptoms do show in people, they include:

- Lower abdominal pain
- Discharge from the vagina or penis
- Pain in the scrotum or testicles
- Pain or bleeding during and after sex or between periods
- Lumps on the genital area
- Pain when passing urine
- Genital rash and itching

PREVENTION

While birth control is effective in preventing pregnancies for those who can get pregnant, **it will not protect from STIs; only barrier methods such as condoms can offer that protection.** It is important to practice safe sex by using condoms with every sex partner, and incorporating regular STI screenings into your wellness routine. Ultimately [abstinence](#) is the only way to 100% prevent any kind of STI. [Comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education](#) is also empowering and can support STI prevention.

TREATMENT

STIs are treated through the use of antibiotics, but recently there has been a surge of antibiotic resistance. If you're sexually active you should be tested for STIs annually, but this will vary based on whether you have a new partner or multiple partners, have had unprotected sex, or may have been exposed to an STI in any other way. You might even be able to get tested for free.

Getting testes is a part of taking control of your health!

* <https://www.cdc.gov/std/stats17/adolescents.htm>

** <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4142582/>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Here are some websites to check out for further information:

- **What are STIs?**
 - <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/stds-hiv-safer-sex>
 - <http://www.ashasexualhealth.org/stdsstis/>
- **Types of STIs:**
 - <https://smartsexresource.com/about-stis/types-stis>
- **STI Screening Guidelines:**
 - <https://www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/aap-health-initiatives/adolescent-sexual-health/Pages/STI-Screening-Guidelines.aspx>
- **Dealing with an STI:**
 - <https://thestipproject.com/std-what-now-your-ultimate-reference-guide-living-with-an-std/>

