

# Bulletin on Sexually Transmitted Infections

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) can be easily transferred some through close skin contact. There is no 100% protection. The difficult thing is that they can be symptom-free and often remain undiagnosed. It is therefore even more important to detect and treat infections early. Untreated infections can lead to very severe illnesses.

Among the most common sexually transmitted infections are **HIV, Hepatitis, Syphilis, Gonorrhoea (Tripper), Chlamydia** and **HPV (Human Papilloma viruses)**.

If you frequently change sexual partners, you should be examined at least twice annually – if you have complaints more often. The consulting office will offer you examinations **anonymously** and **free of charge**.

We are subject to an **obligation of confidentiality** and guarantee you **anonymity** and absolute **confidentiality**.

## HIV and AIDS

The HI-Virus weakens the body's internal defence mechanisms against pathogens, damages organs and can cause AIDS. AIDS is a severe weakening of the immune system which can lead to death if left untreated.

### ➤ **Transmission of HIV and course:**

HIV is transmitted via **blood, sperm** and **vaginal fluids** during **vaginal- and anal sex** without condoms. It can also be transmitted by **oral sex!** Untreated the HIV-infection leads to AIDS.

### ➤ **Possible symptoms:**

Once a person is infected with HIV, acute symptoms such as fever and skin rashes can appear for short periods. Generally the body is then **symptom free for years** after this. Nevertheless as the infection progresses the body is rendered defenceless against many pathogens that a healthy person can easily fight off.

### ➤ **Diagnosis:**

An HIV-Infection is diagnosed by a **blood test**.

➤ **treatment:**

HIV and AIDS are **treatable with medications and other treatments but not curable!** No protective vaccine is available yet.

➤ **Protection from HIV:**

- **condom**
- **IUD**
- **Dental dam**

**Your responsible public health office offers comprehensive consultation as well as free, anonymous tests.**

## **Hepatitis A, B, C**

Hepatitis is a liver infection caused by viruses.

➤ **Transmission and Course:**

### **Hepatitis A**

Hepatitis A is primarily transmitted by **contaminated foodstuffs, contaminated drinking water and faecal matter (in oral or anal sex)**. Hepatitis A almost always heals naturally. In rare cases and if certain diseases are already present it can progress suddenly, rapidly and severely and lead to death. Once one has recovered from it one is immune to re-infection for the rest of one's life.

### **Hepatitis B**

Hepatitis B is transmitted by **all bodily fluids and primarily by sex but also i.v. drug use or contact with blood or blood products by other means**. In 5-10 % of cases the infection becomes chronic. Chronic hepatitis B can lead to cirrhosis and liver cancer. The infection can be treated and cured. After recovery from hepatitis B one cannot be re-infected.

### **Hepatitis C**

Hepatitis C is primarily transmitted **through blood** and takes a chronic turn in around 80% of the cases and can also lead to cirrhosis and liver cancer. The infection can be treated. The treatment is admittedly difficult and only partly effective. Unlike hepatitis A and B, one can be re-infected after recovering from hepatitis C.

➤ **Possible symptoms:**

- Flu-like symptoms, slight fever, loss of appetite, headache, nausea when consuming fats or alcohol, bright faecal material, dark urine, jaundiced eyes and skin.
- Frequently even acute hepatitis can progress without symptoms.

➤ **Diagnosis:**

The disease is diagnosed through a **blood test**.

➤ **Treatment:**

**Hepatitis A** almost always heals by itself. Hepatitis B and C can be treated with medication but can also become chronic and can even lead to death.

➤ **Protection:**

- **Condom**
- **IUD**
- **Dental dam**
- **Vaccine** as protection against hepatitis A and B

**There is no vaccine against hepatitis C yet!**

**You can check your immunization status at the Health Office in Rostock and get vaccinated against Hepatitis A and B.**

## **Syphilis (Lues)**

Syphilis is caused by bacteria.

➤ **Transmission of syphilis:**

It is primarily transmitted via **sex with an infected person**. Here **injured skin or mucous membranes that come into contact with the bacteria** play the greatest role. It can however also be transmitted via **petting / kissing / blood contact** or by **fingers / dildos / sex toys**.

➤ **Course and possible symptoms:**

Untreated syphilis normally progresses through three stages:

### **1st Stage** (ca. 3 Weeks after the Infection)

**A knot or painless sore** develops at the entry point of the pathogen. These signs of the disease will disappear after some time without treatment even though the disease is progressing and can severely compromise one's health.

### **2nd Stage** (ca. 8 Weeks to 2 years after infection)

**Fever, headaches, pain in the limbs, swelling of the lymph nodes and skin rashes** appear. **Hairloss** can occur. These symptoms also disappear after some time.

### **3rd Stage** (several years after the Infection )

The **nerves, cardio-vascular system and other organs** are attacked. The worst cases can lead to death.

**In ca. 50% of cases however the disease progresses without producing symptoms!** This means that one is infectious even without any symptoms!

#### ➤ **Diagnosis:**

Syphilis is diagnosed **by blood test**.

#### ➤ **Treatment:**

Syphilis is cured by treatment with **antibiotics**.

Untreated syphilis increases the risk that unprotected sex will result in other sexually transmitted infections.

#### ➤ **Protection:**

- **Condom** reduces the risk of infection
- **IUD** reduces the risk of infection
- **Dental Dam**
- **Do not touch sores!**

**Your responsible public health office provides competent consultation as well as free, anonymous tests.**

## Trippler (Gonorrhoea)

Gonorrhoea is likewise transferred by bacteria (gonococcus).

### ➤ **Transmission and course:**

The infection is transferred by **contact of mucous membranes with infectious bodily fluids** (saliva, blood, faecal material, urine). The bacteria can also be transmitted by **unprotected sex** and also by **fingers / dildos / sex toys**.

As a rule, the mucous membrane will become **inflamed and develop pustules** a few days after infection. It is also possible that **none** or only **slight indications of disease** will appear.

With gonorrhoea the risk that one might contract HIV or transmit HIV through unprotected sex is increased. A case that is recognised and treated too late can lead to **sterility!**

### ➤ **Possible symptoms :**

Abdomen:	pain, contractions, cramps
Vagina:	pustulent discharge, reddened vagina, burning sensation and pain during urination
Penis:	pustulent discharge, contraction
Throat:	very red areas, coating, sore throat
Rectum:	itching, burning, pain on excretion, pain during anal intercourse, slime/pus in stool
Eyes:	red conjunctiva, swollen eyelids

### ➤ **Diagnosis:**

Gonorrhoea is diagnosed through a swab test of the genitals. Since this infection is often accompanied by chlamydia infections, this should be taken into account in diagnostics.

### ➤ **Treatment:**

Gonorrhoea can also be cured by treatment **with antibiotics! This is becoming increasingly difficult because many antibiotics have become ineffective over time.**

Until gonorrhoea is cured, sex should be avoided since the infection can be transmitted. Sexual partners should be tested.

- **Protection:**
  - **Condom**
  - **IUD**
  - **Dental dam**

Your gynaecologist, your urologist or the public health office in Rostock can offer you detailed information, consultation and medical examinations.

## Chlamydia

Chlamydia is also transmitted by bacteria and is highly infectious.

### ➤ **Transmission and Course:**

Chlamydia can be transmitted by **blood, sperm and vaginal secretions** during **vaginal, oral, or anal intercourse without a condom** or even by **eye contact with infected bodily fluids** (smear infections).

Untreated chlamydia can lead to **sterility** in women and in men to **inflammations of the epididymus and prostate, narrowing of the urethra and sterility**. Victims of the disease frequently suffer from arthritis and joint inflammations.

### ➤ **Possible symptoms :**

Abdomen:	pain, spasms
Vagina:	pustulent discharge, later rising inflammations
Penis:	pressure, pain and a burning sensations when urinating
Throat:	very red areas, coating, sore throat
Rectum:	discharge, pain, itching, diarrhoea, eczema
Eyes:	reddened conjunctiva, swollen eyelids

In 50-80% of cases **no** or only **slight symptoms** occur. The infection often remains unrecognised for this reason.

### ➤ **Diagnosis:**

Chlamydia infection is **diagnosed by swab material or urine test**.

### ➤ **Treatment:**

Chlamydia infections can be treated with **antibiotics!**

Until cured unprotected sex is taboo! Partners must seek treatment!

- **Protection :**
  - **Condom**
  - **IUD**
  - **Dental dam**

Your gynaecologist, your urologist or the public health office in Rostock can offer you detailed information, consultation and medical examinations.

## Humane Papilloma Viruses (HPV)

HPV-Infection is one of the most common sexually transmitted infections. There are more than 100 known types of HP-virus.

### ➤ **Transmission and Course:**

The main means of transmission is **unprotected vaginal, anal- and oralsex**. Transmission by **mouth / finger / vibrator / sex toy** is also possible. Some HPV-types can cause cervical, testicular and anal cancers, others **genital warts (condyloma)**. Months or years can pass before genital warts appear. Only 1 % of infected people have visible warts. These can develop on the inner or outer vagina, the urethra and on the anus. The warts are highly infectious. Even the smallest injuries (e.g. by shaving the genitals) can create conditions favourable to infection with HPV.

### ➤ **Possible symptoms :**

- Frequently there are not indications of disease
- Isolated or clustered warts on the uterus, vagina, penis or rectum

### ➤ **Diagnosis:**

HPV genetic material is detected by a swab or tissue sample.

### ➤ **Treatment:**

HPV-infection is a viral infection and therefore **cannot be treated with antibiotics**. **Testing for HPV** is however a reasonable complement to **cancer screening**, if there are conspicuous findings in such an exam. If an HPV-infection is detected, the cancer screening can be intensified.

➤ **Protection :**

- **Absolutely avoid direct contact** with visible warts
- **Condoms, IUDs and dental dams** cannot prevent an infection but **considerably reduce the risk of infection.**
- **Vaccination** against some HP-viruses (**your public health office will provide you with additional information**).

**Your gynaecologist or your urologist can offer you comprehensive information, consultation and medical examinations.**

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