



INFORMATION SHEET

Bulletin on sexually transmitted infections

Sexually transmitted Infection (STIs, Eng. for sexually transmitted infections) can be transmitted easily, some even from close skin contact. There is no 100% effective protection. The worst part is that they can remain symptom-free for a long time and therefore often stay undetected. It is therefore all the more important to detect and treat such infections early. Untreated infections can lead to severe illnesses.

Among the most common sexually transmitted infections are **chlamydia, HPV (human Papilloma virus), gonorrhoea (clap), syphilis (lues), HIV and hepatitis.**

If you frequently change sexual partners you should have yourself examined at least twice a year– if you have complaints more often. The counselling office offers you an **anonymous** examination that is **free of charge** except for urgent tests.

The counsellors are all subject to **mandatory confidentiality** and guarantee your **anonymity** and absolute **secrecy**.

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Centrum für
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For further information, see:

www.sexuelle-gesundheit-mv.de

Chlamydia

Chlamydia is caused by highly contagious bacteria that are transferred during sexual contact. They are among the most common pathogens causing STIs world-wide.



Transfer and progression

Chlamydia can be transferred through **blood, sperm and vagina fluid** in **vaginal-, oral-, or anal sex without a condom** or even through **contact between infectious bodily fluid with the eye** (smear infection). Left untreated, the chlamydia infection can lead to **sterility** in women and in men to **inflammations of the epididymus and prostate**, urethral **narrowing** as well as impotence. A consequence of the acute infection can also lead to **joint inflammations and tenosynovitis**.



Possible symptoms

Lower abdomen: pain, tightness

Vagina: purulent excretion, later increasing inflammations

Penis: pressure, pain and burning sensation when urinating

Throat: very red spots, coating, sore throat

Rectum: Discharge, pain, itching, diarrhoea, eczema

Eyes: reddening of conjunctiva, swollen eyelids

In 50-80% of the cases there are **no** or only **slight symptoms**. The infection is therefore often unrecognised.



Diagnosis

Chlamydia infections are diagnosed from **swab material or urine**.



Treatment

Chlamydia infections can be treated with **antibiotics**. Unprotected sex is prohibited until recovery is complete. Partners must also be treated.



Protection

- Condom
- Female condom
- Dental dam

Gynaecologists, urologists or the Public Health Office of Rostock will be glad to provide you with competent information, consulting and medical examinations if needed.

Human Papilloma Virus (HPV)

The HPV- infection is one of the most common sexually transmitted infections. More than 100 types of HP-virus have been identified.



Transmission and progression

The main form of transmission is through **unprotected vaginal-, anal- and oral sex**. Transfer via **mouth / finger / dildos / sex toys** is also possible. Some HPV-types can cause **pre-cancerous developments or cancer of the cervix, vagina, penis or anus as well as in the mucous membranes in the mouth, throat and larynx**, in some cases **genital warts (condyloma)**. Months or years can pass before genital warts appear. Only 1 % of infected persons have visible warts. They can appear on the inner and outer vaginal tissues, the urethra and on the anus. The warts a highly infections. The smallest injuries (e.g. from genital shaving) can create favourable conditions for an HPV infection.



Possible symptoms

- Frequently there are no indications of the disease
- Single or clusters of warts on the vagina, penis or anus
- Changes in tissues on cervix



Diagnosis

Genetic material from the HPV is detected by a **swab** or a **tissue sample**.



Treatment

HPV- infections are viral and therefore they **cannot** be treated **with antibiotics**. An **examination to detect HPV** is however a sensible supplemental examination in a **cancer screening**, if the screening turns up suspicious findings. If an HPV- infection is detected, cancer screening can be intensified.



Protection

- Absolutely avoid contact with visible warts
- Condoms, female condoms and dental dams admittedly cannot prevent contagious but they can considerably reduce the risk of infection
- Vaccination against some types of HPV is possible (you can get further information in your public health office)

Gynaecologists and urologists can offer you competent information, consultation and if needed a medical examination.

The clap (Gonorrhoea)

Gonorrhoea is transmitted by bacteria (gonococci).



Transmission and progression

The infection is spread through **contact of mucous membranes with infectious bodily fluids** (e.g. during sexual intercourse or during childbirth). The bacteria can also be transferred by **unprotected sex** and by **fingers/ dildos / sex toys** (smear infection). As a rule, inflammation and suppuration on the mucous membrane a few days after infection. But it is also possible that **no** or only **slight indications of disease** will appear. If one has gonorrhoea, the risk that one can spread or contract HIV through unprotected sex is increased. A case of clap that is detected and treated too late can lead to **sterility**.



Possible symptoms

Lower abdomen: pain, tightness, cramps

Vagina: Purulent discharge, redness of the vagina, burning sensation and pain during urination

Penis: Purulent discharge, tightness

Throat: Very red areas, coating, sore throat

Anus: Itching, burning, painful stools, pain during anal sex, slime/pus in faeces

Eyes: Redness in conjunctiva, swollen eyelids



Diagnosis

Gonorrhoea is diagnosed by a **genital swab examination**. Since this disease is often accompanied by a chlamydia infection, this diagnostic should also be included.



Treatment

Like chlamydia infections, gonorrhoea can be cured by treatment with **antibiotics**. This is however becoming increasingly difficult since several antibiotics have in the meantime become ineffective. Refrain from sex until gonorrhoea is completely cured, since the infection can be transmitted. Sexual partners should also be examined and treated, if necessary.



Protection

- Condom
- Female condom
- Dental dam

Gynaecologists, urologists or the public health office in Rostock offers you competent information, consultation as well as medical examination if needed.

Syphilis (Lues)

Syphilis is caused by bacteria.



Transmission of syphilis

It is mainly transmitted by **sex with an infected person**. Here even slightly **injured skin or mucous membrane that comes into contact with the bacteria** plays the biggest role. It can however be transmitted by **petting / kissing / blood contact** or through **fingers / dildos / sex toys**. Infected mothers can transmit syphilis to their unborn babies.



Progression and possible symptoms

Untreated syphilis normally proceeds in three stages:

1. Stage (ca. 3 Weeks after infection)

A **node or a painless sore** will develop at the point where the pathogenic organism entered the body.

This sign of the disease will appear after a while even without treatment although the disease will continue and can severely compromise the victim's health.

2. Stage (ca. 8 weeks to 2 years after infection)

Fever, headaches and pain in the limbs appear, swelling at the lymph nodes and skin rashes. Hair loss can occur. These symptoms also vanish after a while.

3. Stage (several years after infection)

The **nerves, cardio-vascular system and other organs** are attacked. Very severe illness that can end in death is the result.

In ca. 50% of all cases, the disease proceeds without symptoms. This means that the victim has no medical complaints and is still infectious.



Diagnosis

Syphilis is diagnosed **by a blood test**.



Treatment

Syphilis is cured when treated **with antibiotics**.

Untreated syphilis increases the risk that unprotected sex will lead to contraction of other sexually transmitted infections.



Protection

- Condoms limit the risk of infection
- Female condoms limit the risk of infection
- Dental dams limit the risk of infection
- Do not touch sores

Dermatologists, gynaecologists, urologists or the public health office offer competent information, consultation and if needed examinations / anonymous tests.

HIV

The HI-virus weakens the body's own defence system against pathogenic organisms, damages organs and can cause full-blown AIDS. AIDS is a very severe weakening of the immune system which is fatal if left untreated.



Transfer of HIV and progression

HIV can be transmitted by **blood, sperm** and **vaginal secretions** in **vaginal and anal sex without condom**, shortly **before and during childbirth** from the mother to the child as well as through mother's milk. Infections can also be transmitted through **oral sex**. Another frequent path of transmission is **trading needles among intravenous drug users**. Untreated, HIV-infections lead to AIDS.



Possible symptoms

Once a person is infected with HIV, **acute symptoms such as fever and skin rashes** can appear for a short time. After that, the body is mostly or generally **free of medical complaints for years**. Nevertheless, the infection progresses and it becomes more and more defenceless against the pathogenic organisms that healthy people can easily fight off.



Diagnosis

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



Treatment

HIV and AIDS **can be treated with medications but not cured**. A protective vaccine is not yet available.



Protection

- Condom
- Female condom
- Dental dam
- PEP (post-exposure prophylaxis)
- PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis)

The public health office as well as the counselling offices for sexual health (AIDS-assistance centres) offer competent advice as well as free, anonymous tests (except for rapid tests, these are not free of charge).

Hepatitis A, B, C

Hepatitis is an inflammation caused by viruses.



Transmission and progression

Hepatitis A

Hepatitis A is mainly transmitted by **contaminated foods, contaminated drinking water and faeces (in oral-anal sex)**. Hepatitis A almost always heals by itself. In rare cases with certain pre-existing conditions, it can suddenly develop into a rapidly progressing and severe, possibly fatal, case. After one recovers from it one is immune from re-infection for the rest of one's life.

Hepatitis B

Hepatitis B can be transmitted through **all bodily fluids and mainly during sex, but also through intravenous drug use or other contact with blood**. In 5 - 10 % of all cases, the infection takes on a chronic character. Chronic Hepatitis B can cause shrinkage of the liver or liver cancer. The infection can be treated and cured. After one recovers from Hepatitis B, one can never be re-infected.

Hepatitis C

Hepatitis C can mainly be transmitted **via blood but much more rarely by unprotected sexual intercourse (most of all between men who have sex with other men) and from the mother to the child**. It becomes chronic in around 80 % of all cases and can also lead to shrinkage of the liver and liver cancer. The infection can be treated. In the meantime, there are now new treatment options which cure the chronic forms in more than 90 % of all cases. Unlike Hepatitis A and B, one can become re-infected by Hepatitis C even after one has fully recovered from a previous infection.



Possible symptoms

- Flu-like complaints, mild fever, loss of appetite, headache, nausea on consuming fatty foods or alcohol, bright-coloured faeces, dark urine, jaundice in the eyes and skin
- Also, acute Hepatitis C frequently progresses without any symptoms



Diagnosis

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



Treatment

Hepatitis A almost always heals by itself. **Hepatitis B and C can be treated with medications**.



Protection

- Condom
- Female condom
- Dental dam
- Vaccination as protection against Hepatitis A and B
- No exchange of needles (Hepatitis B and C)

You can check your vaccination status in the public health office and if needed have yourself vaccinated against Hepatitis A and B. To date there is no vaccination against Hepatitis C.