Sexually Transmitted Diseases

PURPOSE

Participating in an activity that shows how quickly STDs can spread will help motivate students to practice abstinence or use condoms regularly when sexually active. Students are better equipped to make healthy decisions when they have the facts about HIV and STDs, including signs and symptoms, how they are transmitted and how to get tested and treated.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

1. Understand how easily STDs can spread when having unprotected sex.
2. Debunk common myths about STDs and how they are transmitted.
3. Identify common STDs, including HIV, their symptoms and modes of transmission.
4. Understand the importance of regular STD and HIV testing.
5. Identify local resources for testing and treatment.

LESSON SUMMARY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Minutes</th>
<th>Materials and Preparation Checklist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| A What Have You Heard? | 15 | □ Read through the activity.  
□ Notecards (one per student)  
□ On the backs of the cards write in small print: D on one card; U on four or five; and on the remaining cards, an even number of B, A, and O.  
□ Ask a student to be the person with the D notecard.  
□ If possible, music to play during the game. |
| B STD Myths and Facts | 15 | □ Preview and make sure you have access to the STD Myths video from www.SexEtc.org. If it is blocked, talk with your IT staff person to unblock it (if possible).  
□ Copy the STD Myth or Fact Quiz for each student. |
| C More STD Facts | 30 | □ Internet access and student devices for doing research or make copies of the STD factsheets.  
□ Copy STD Facts Worksheet for each student.  
□ Preview www.maineteenhealth.org STD web page. |

View Maine STD statistics by visiting:

Lesson 4 – Sexually Transmitted Diseases
INTRODUCE THE LESSON

Ask the students,

What did we learn in the last lesson about ways to communicate our personal boundaries? Have students share answers. In order to make informed decisions, it's important to know the facts about STDs and how you can avoid them.

ACTIVITY 4A: WHAT HAVE YOU HEARD?

FACILITATOR NOTE

Ask a student ahead of time if they are willing to be the person with the D (disease) on their card, so no student is surprised by being the person with the STD.

• Distribute the prepared notecards (with D on one card; U on four or five; and on the remaining cards, an even number of B, A, and O), one to each student. Do not mention the letters on the backs of the cards.

• Tell students that they will all get up, mingle around the room, find a partner and ask each other: What is one STD you've heard of? They will then sign their name on each other’s cards. If possible, play upbeat music while the students mingle and collect signatures.

• Tell students to repeat this activity a few more times collecting signatures from other students.

• Ask students to take their seats. Ask your volunteer with the D to stand. Explain that for the purpose of the game, this person has an STD.

• Say, Anyone who has this person’s signature on your card, please stand up. You have had contact with a person who has an STD.

• Now if you have the signature of any of these people standing, you get to stand up too. Repeat this process until most of the class is standing.

• Look at the back of your card. Who has an A on their card? Can anyone guess what the A stands for? The A means you’ve been abstinent or did not have sexual contact. You are not at risk for an STD so you may sit down.

• Anyone with a B? What do you think the B stands for? The B means that even though you had sexual contact, you used a barrier, like a condom or dental dam. Using a barrier method reduced your risk of an STD. You may sit down.
Lesson 4 – Sexually Transmitted Diseases

DEBRIEF THE ACTIVITY

Ask the following questions:

1. How did it feel to find out that _______________ had an STD?
   Student with the D

2. Ask the student with the D: How did it feel to know you had exposed others to an STD?

3. For those of you who were able to sit down because you had an A, B, or O, how did it feel to be able to sit down again?
   Possible answers:
   • Relieved to not get an STD
   • Glad that the card had a behavior that prevented STDs

4. What was it like to remain standing, knowing you may have an STD?
   Possible answers:
   • Feeling afraid, not sure what to do next
   • Worried that you may have possibly spread it to others

5. What can you learn from this activity?
   Possible answers:
   • Being abstinent means not having to worry about getting an STD
   • Always use condoms or dental dams when having sex
   • Regular testing is important especially before you have a new partner

Remind students: This was of course just a fictional scenario showing how quickly an STD can spread among a group of people. So, let’s thank _______ for being willing to be the person with the STD!
In this activity, students debunk some of the common myths around STDs. You can either:

- Have your students complete the STD Myth or Fact Quiz.
- Or both—watch the movie then have your students take the quiz and review the answers together using the facilitator key. You can also hand out the quiz prior to watching the video so they can answer the questions as the myths and facts are reviewed.

DEBRIEF THE VIDEO

Ask the following debriefing questions after viewing the video or taking the quiz.

1. Have you heard of any of these myths before?

   Possible answers:
   - The only people that get an STD are the people that ‘sleep around’
   - If you take a bath or shower after sex, it will wash away any STDs

2. What other STD myths could put people at risk of getting or passing along an STD?

3. Why is it important to separate the myths from the facts about STDs?

   Possible answers:
   - Myths can give you a false sense of security of being STD free when you aren’t
   - You may think that your behavior doesn’t put you at risk
   - You may not realize you can prevent STDs by using condoms
   - You may pass an STD along to someone else without even knowing
STD MYTH OR FACT QUIZ

There are many common myths about STDs. Test your knowledge by taking this quiz. Are these statements MYTH or FACT? Circle the correct answer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>MYTH</th>
<th>FACT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Using two condoms together gives you extra protection from STDs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>You know you have an STD when the symptoms are obvious.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>You can’t get HIV from sharing cups or glasses.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Herpes can only be spread if sores are visible.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>You can get STDs from oral sex.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Most STD testing is easy, pain-free and affordable.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>You can’t get an STD if you use a condom.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>You can catch STDs from using a public toilet.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>If you have an STD and get it treated you can’t get that STD again.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Abstinence (not having oral, anal or vaginal sex) is the safest way to prevent STDs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>If you are on the pill, you don’t have to worry about STDs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Some STDs stay in the body forever.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>When you go to the doctor or family planning they always check you for STDs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Polyurethane condoms are a good substitute for people who are allergic or sensitive to latex.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### STD MYTH OR FACT QUIZ

There are many common myths about STDs. Test your knowledge by taking this quiz. Are these statements MYTH or FACT? Circle the correct answer.

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.</strong> Using two condoms together gives you extra protection from STDs. One condom is all you need.</td>
<td>[MYTH]</td>
<td>[FACT]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.</strong> You know you have an STD when the symptoms are obvious. Most STDs have no symptoms, so the only way to know for sure is to get tested.</td>
<td>[MYTH]</td>
<td>[FACT]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.</strong> You can’t get HIV from sharing cups or glasses. HIV is spread through blood, semen and vaginal fluid.</td>
<td>[MYTH]</td>
<td>[FACT]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4.</strong> Herpes can only be spread if sores are visible. Herpes is most contagious when there are sores but herpes can still be spread when they aren’t noticeable on the skin.</td>
<td>[MYTH]</td>
<td>[FACT]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5.</strong> You can get STDs from oral sex. Many STDs like chlamydia, herpes, HPV and syphilis can be spread through unprotected oral sex.</td>
<td>[MYTH]</td>
<td>[FACT]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6.</strong> Most STD testing is easy, pain-free and affordable. Many standard STD tests are simply a urine test or a cheek swab. Sometimes it’s a blood test. Testing is easy and affordable.</td>
<td>[MYTH]</td>
<td>[FACT]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7.</strong> You can’t get an STD if you use a condom. Although condoms provide excellent protection, some STDs can also be spread through skin-to-skin contact where a condom isn’t covering.</td>
<td>[MYTH]</td>
<td>[FACT]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8.</strong> You can catch STDs from using a public toilet. STDs are spread through the exchange of bodily fluids and skin-to-skin contact.</td>
<td>[MYTH]</td>
<td>[FACT]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9.</strong> If you have an STD and get it treated you can’t get that STD again. A person can get re-infected, even if they’ve had an STD and have been treated, if they have sex again with someone infected.</td>
<td>[MYTH]</td>
<td>[FACT]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>10.</strong> Abstinence (not having oral, anal or vaginal sex) is the safest way to prevent STDs. Not having sex may be the safest way, but condoms also provide good STD protection.</td>
<td>[MYTH]</td>
<td>[FACT]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>11.</strong> If you are on the pill, you don’t have to worry about STDs. The pill does not provide a barrier, so bodily fluids are still exchanged during sex.</td>
<td>[MYTH]</td>
<td>[FACT]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>12.</strong> Some STDs stay in the body forever. Some STDs are viruses that cannot be cured. However, they can be treated and managed.</td>
<td>[MYTH]</td>
<td>[FACT]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>13.</strong> When you go to the doctor or family planning they always check you for STDs. You will need to ask your medical provider for STD testing. It is not something they do automatically.</td>
<td>[MYTH]</td>
<td>[FACT]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>14.</strong> Polyurethane condoms are a good substitute for people who are allergic or sensitive to latex. Polyurethane condoms are just as effective as latex condoms. However, natural or lambskin condoms are only for pregnancy prevention because they are porous. Sperm can’t pass through, but some STDs can.</td>
<td>[MYTH]</td>
<td>[FACT]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACTIVITY 4C: MORE STD FACTS

Say,

As you can see, there is a lot of misinformation about STDs. That’s why it’s important to know the facts so you can make informed decisions and stay healthy.

• Hand out a copy of the STD Facts Worksheet to each student. Note: Alternatively, you can assign this activity as homework.

• Ask students to get into groups of 2-4. Assign each group one STD that they will research using www.maineteenhealth.org, http://www.cdc.gov/std/ or the STD Factsheets included in this lesson. Each group will create a poster about their assigned STD that includes all of the categories listed on the STD Facts Worksheet.

• Give them 10-15 minutes to do their research and create their posters.

• Have each group report out on their STD. As the students report out, the rest of the class will fill in the information about each STD on their STD Facts Worksheet. Alternatively, hang up all of the posters and have students walk around to gather information about each STD.

FACILITATOR NOTE

Although there are other STDs, this lesson covers the STDs most commonly diagnosed. If you’d like to share the latest STD statistics for Maine with your students, visit the Maine CDC, Division of Infectious Disease, HIV, STD and Viral Hepatitis Program website: http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/hiv-std/data/std.shtml

ALTERNATIVE ACTIVITY

Ask students to create a 30-second commercial or public service announcement (PSA) about their STD. Be sure to include information in all categories found on the STD Facts Worksheet.

DEBRIEF THE ACTIVITY

1. What are some of the differences between the STDs?
   Possible answers: some are curable, some not; kinds of symptoms; some are spread skin-to-skin, others only by body fluids.

2. What are the similarities?
   Possible answers: Many do not have symptoms; can spread through oral, anal or vaginal sex; can be diagnosed & treated (there is treatment for viral STDs like HIV, even if there is no cure.)

3. What are the common ways to prevent the different STDs?
   Possible answers: Abstinence & condoms; getting the HPV vaccine; limiting the number of partners.

4. Where can you get tested?
   Possible answers: Family Planning, STD clinic or a doctor’s office
CLOSURE

As closure, be sure to make these key points:

• Remember, many STDs have no symptoms so you can’t tell if someone has an STD.
• The only way to know if you have an STD is to get tested.
• Testing is easy and affordable at any family planning, STD clinic or doctor’s office.
• The best way to prevent STDs is by practicing abstinence or using condoms if you choose to have sex.
• In the next lesson, we will look at behaviors that put people at risk for STDs and HIV.
## STD Facts Worksheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of STD</th>
<th>Is it bacterial or viral?</th>
<th>How does a person get it?</th>
<th>How does a person know they have it?</th>
<th>How is it passed from one person to another?</th>
<th>What are the most common symptoms?</th>
<th>How does a person get tested or treated for it?</th>
<th>What are at least two things someone can do to protect themselves from getting this STD?</th>
<th>What’s the worst that could happen if this STD is not treated?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chlamydia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gonorrhea</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HPV/Genital Warts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herpes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of STD</td>
<td>Is it bacterial or viral?</td>
<td>How does a person get it?</td>
<td>How does a person know they have it?</td>
<td>What are the most common symptoms?</td>
<td>How does a person get tested or treated for it?</td>
<td>What are at least two things someone can do to protect themselves from getting this STD?</td>
<td>What’s the worst that could happen if this STD is not treated?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syphilis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trichomoniasis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pubic Lice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
STD Factsheets —from Maineteenhealth.org

CHLAMYDIA

What is it?
Chlamydia is a bacterial infection that often infects a woman’s cervix, but can also infect the urethra, throat, rectum and eyes in both men and women.

Who has it?
It’s estimated that 3 million cases of chlamydia occur every year in the US, but only half of those cases are reported and treated. Chlamydia is the most common bacterial STD in the United States. Both men and women are at risk, and as many as 1 in 15 sexually active 14-19 year olds test positive for chlamydia. Maine had 3,531 cases in 2014.

How do you get it?
Like most STDs, chlamydia is transmitted through any type of unprotected sex — meaning sex without a condom or dental dam. The bacteria that cause chlamydia are drawn to the tissues that line the openings of your body; like the vagina, the rectum, the urethra and the throat. Usually chlamydia is passed through vaginal and anal sex, and though it’s not as common, it’s possible to get chlamydia from oral sex.

How do you know you have it?
This is where chlamydia gets serious: most people infected don’t even know they have it! 50% of men and 75% of women with chlamydia don’t show symptoms. However, sometimes people show symptoms like burning when they pee, thick yellow or clear discharge from the penis or vagina or pain and/or bleeding during sex.

How do you test for it? Where can you get tested?
One way is a simple and totally painless urine test. The other is by collecting a swab sample from the vagina or cervix for females or from the urethra for males. You can get tested at a family planning clinic or a doctor’s office.

Can you get rid of it?
Chlamydia infections can be cured quickly and easily with antibiotics.

How do you keep from getting it?
Abstinence is the only 100% certain way to avoid chlamydia. However, if you are sexually active, a good way to avoid chlamydia is to use condoms and by being mutually monogamous with a partner who is not infected. If you test positive for chlamydia and are treated, you should get tested again in three months to be sure you have not been reinfected. To play it safe, you should get tested for chlamydia every year if you’re under 25 and sexually active.

What’s the worst that could happen?
If it goes untreated, chlamydia infection can spread to the uterus or fallopian tubes in women, and may cause pelvic inflammatory disease (PID). PID can cause serious permanent damage to the body, which can lead to infertility, chronic pelvic pain and potentially fatal ectopic pregnancy (which is when a pregnancy happens outside the uterus). For men, complications from infection are less common and less serious, but can still cause fever, pain, and sometimes, sterility.
STD Factsheets — from Maineteenhealth.org

GONORRHEA

What is it?
Gonorrhea is an infection caused by the bacteria *neisseria gonorrhoeae*.

Who has it?
Gonorrhea is common, but often goes unreported and untreated. Less than half of the 820,000 yearly gonorrhea infections are reported and treated. There were 237 reported cases in Maine in 2014.

How do you get it?
Moist areas of the body — like the penis, vagina, throat, rectum and eyes — are where the gonorrhea bacteria live. Gonorrhea is contracted through contact with any of these body parts that are infected. This means any type of sex — vaginal, anal and oral — with someone who is infected will put you at risk.

How do you know you have it?
Many people who are infected don’t even know they have gonorrhea because it often doesn’t cause symptoms. Men, who are more likely to have symptoms than women, may feel a burning when they pee; painful, swollen testicles; or a yellow, white or green discharge from their penis. The few women who do have symptoms may have pain in their lower abdomen or pain when they pee.

How do you test for it? Where can you get tested?
Gonorrhea can be detected by a urine test, though your medical provider may collect a swab sample from the urethra, cervix, vagina, rectum or throat. You can get tested at a family planning clinic or a doctor’s office.

Can you get rid of it?
Gonorrhea can be cured with antibiotics. You may need to have an antibiotic injection combined with other medicine, or you may be prescribed pills. Unfortunately, antibiotic resistant strains of gonorrhea are an increased concern.

How do you keep from getting it?
Abstinence is the only 100% certain way to avoid gonorrhea. However, if you are sexually active, a good way to avoid gonorrhea is by using condoms or dental dams and being mutually monogamous with a partner who is not infected. If you test positive for gonorrhea and are treated, you should get tested again in three months to be sure you have not been reinfected. You should get tested for gonorrhea every year if you’re under 25 and sexually active.

What’s the worst that could happen?
Gonorrhea can lead to Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID) in women. PID is an infection of parts of the reproductive system, like the ovaries, uterus and fallopian tubes, and may prevent you from getting pregnant. If a woman has gonorrhea during pregnancy, the infection may harm the child’s eyes during birth. For men, untreated gonorrhea may cause an infection that causes scarring in the tubes that carry sperm. This happens rarely, but if it does, he may not be able to have children.
STD Factsheets —from Maineteenhealth.org

SYphilis

What is it?
Syphilis is a bacterial disease. In its early stages syphilis causes chancres (painless sores) or rashes, and over time can become one of the most dangerous STDs if left untreated. Along with gonorrhea, syphilis is one of the oldest known STDs.

Who has it?
As of 2013, there were over 56,500 reported cases of syphilis in the US, with the majority of those from men who have sex with men. There were 21 reported cases in Maine in 2014.

How do you get it?
Syphilis can be passed through sexual contact (oral, vaginal or anal), or by kissing someone with syphilis sores or other symptoms.

How do you know you have it?
Chancres (painless sores) will be the first sign of syphilis, developing around or on the penis, vagina, anus or mouth. Even if they aren’t treated, these sores will heal by themselves, but the syphilis will still progress. In the next stages of untreated syphilis, you may develop rashes on the soles of your feet, palms of your hands and/or on your chest or back. You may experience joint pain, swollen glands, fever, sore throat, headaches or hair loss. Again, these symptoms may disappear without treatment, but the disease will not.

How do you test for it? Where can you get tested?
If you have sores or other symptoms, you can ask your medical provider to take a look at them to check if they are syphilis. A blood sample may be taken to test for syphilis if you are not showing symptoms. You can get tested at a family planning clinic or a doctor’s office.

Can you get rid of it?
If you have had syphilis less than a year, it can be cured by a single antibiotic injection. For someone who has been infected for more than a year, additional doses of antibiotics will be needed.

How do you keep from getting it?
The only sure-fire way to keep from getting STDs is abstinence. However, if you are sexually active, a good way to avoid syphilis is by being mutually monogamous with a partner who is not infected with syphilis. The bacteria are passed by touching the syphilis chancres (sores), so although condoms can reduce the risk of contracting syphilis, they aren’t 100% effective.

What’s the worst that could happen?
Untreated syphilis is very dangerous, potentially causing brain damage, blindness, heart disease or death. Syphilis can be passed to sexual partners even when you have no apparent symptoms, and an infected mother can pass the infection on to her baby. Like many STDs, syphilis infection increases your chances of contracting HIV.
TRICHOMONIASIS

What is it?
Trichomoniasis is an infection caused by a parasite that infects a man’s urethra or a woman’s vagina.

Who has it?
Regarded as the most common curable STD, it’s estimated that 3.7 million people in the US have trichomoniasis, but only 30% are likely to develop symptoms. Infection is more common in women than in men, and older women are more likely to be infected than younger women.

How do you get it?
Trichomoniasis is contracted through exposure to bodily fluids during unprotected anal or vaginal sex, meaning sex without a condom.

How do you know you have it?
Most people with trichomoniasis never develop any symptoms, but some women may experience burning when they pee, pain or bleeding during sex, vaginal irritation or a frothy white vaginal discharge. Sometimes, there can be an odor present.

How do you test for it? Where can you get tested?
Testing for men is not common, but for women, a medical professional can perform a painless swab test. You can get tested at a family planning clinic or a doctor’s office.

Can you get rid of it?
Trichomoniasis is cured by antibiotic pills. You should refrain from having sex until you’ve finished your treatment, so you don’t risk infecting your partners. Similar to chlamydia, gonorrhea and syphilis, having it once does not protect a person from getting it again.

How do you keep from getting it?
Abstinence is the only absolute way to prevent STDs. However, being mutually monogamous with a partner who is not infected with trichomoniasis, and using condoms are two effective ways to avoid infection.

What’s the worst that could happen?
Trichomoniasis increases your risk of contracting HIV and other STDs, and pregnant women who are infected are at greater risk of giving birth prematurely (before their due date).
STD Factsheets — from Maineteenhealth.org

HERPES

What is it?
Genital herpes is an infection most often caused by the herpes simplex virus-2 (HSV-2), and less frequently by the herpes simplex virus-1 (HSV-1) which is also responsible for cold sores.

Who has it?
About 1 in 6 Americans ages 14-49 are infected with genital herpes. It’s more common among females, infecting nearly 1 in 5 women ages 14-49, as opposed to 1 in 9 men in the same age range. Women are more at risk because the virus is more easily transmitted from an infected male to a female partner during sex.

How do you get it?
Herpes can be passed through vaginal, anal and oral sex, or any other skin-to-skin contact with infected areas. Once you’ve been infected with herpes, the virus will always be in your body, and can be transmitted even when there aren’t any sores or symptoms.

How do you know you have it?
Many people infected by herpes get sores or blisters on their penis, vagina, buttocks or thighs, but some people won’t show any symptoms. For those who do show symptoms, an outbreak may only happen once, or many times, but the infection is always there.

How do you test for it? Where can you get tested?
If you’re not showing any symptoms, but are concerned you may have herpes, your medical provider can perform a blood test, though the results may not be totally accurate. If you do have blisters or sores, ask your doctor or nurse practitioner to take a look at them — they may need to take a sample. You can get tested at a family planning clinic or a doctor’s office.

Can you get rid of it?
Unfortunately, once the herpes virus is in your body it will stay with you for the rest of your life. On the plus side, there are medications which can decrease your partners’ risk of contracting the virus, and will help sores heal more quickly. Making sure to take your medication everyday — not only during symptom outbreaks — can help outbreaks occur less often.

How do you keep from getting it?
Like all STDs, the only sure-fire way to keep from getting herpes is abstinence. However if you are sexually active, you can avoid herpes by being mutually monogamous with a partner who is not infected with the herpes virus. Herpes can be passed by touching, so although condoms can reduce the risk of contracting herpes, they aren’t 100% effective.

What’s the worst that could happen?
Even when you’re not showing symptoms, herpes can be passed to you partners. Pregnant women infected with herpes may pass the virus to their babies during childbirth. Herpes infection increases your chances of getting HIV. Very rarely, the herpes virus may spread to the brain and spinal cord.
STD Factsheets — from Maineteenhealth.org

HPV & GENITAL WARTS

What is it?
Human papillomavirus (HPV) is a group of viruses that infect the skin. There are more than 150 different kinds of HPV, with over 40 types that can infect the genital areas of males and females. In most cases, HPV goes away on its own and does not cause any health problems. When it does not go away, genital warts and cancer (of the cervix, vagina, anus, penis or back of the throat) can occur.

Who has it?
About 75% of men and women who are sexually active will get HPV at some point during their lives, making HPV the most common STD in the US. Nearly 360,000 people get genital warts each year. About 12,000 women with untreated HPV will develop cervical cancer each year.

How do you get it?
HPV can be passed through anal, vaginal and oral sex, or through other close skin-to-skin touching during sexual activity.

How do you know you have it?
The majority of people who have HPV — even those with the types that cause genital warts — may not know they have it, because they don’t have any symptoms. Those who do have symptoms may develop little bumps in or around the penis, anus or vagina.

How do you test for it? Where can you get tested?
Right now there isn’t a test for HPV, but for women an abnormal pap smear may be an indication of infection. If you think you may have warts, your health care provider can use a bright light to look for any visible warts. You can get tested at a family planning clinic or a doctor’s office.

Can you get rid of it?
Usually HPV will go away on its own. Sometimes genital warts caused by HPV may go away on their own, but if they don’t your health care provider can remove them or give you a medication that will cause them to go away.

How do you keep from getting it?
Get vaccinated. HPV vaccines are safe and effective. Ideally, you should be vaccinated before you ever have sex. Condoms can help reduce the spread of HPV, but since condoms don’t cover all the areas that the virus can infect, they may not fully protect against infection. Being in a mutually monogamous relationship with a partner who does not have HPV is another key way for protection.

What’s the worst that could happen?
When HPV does not go away, genital warts and cancer (of the cervix, vagina, anus, penis or back of the throat) can occur. Pregnant women may pass genital warts onto their baby.
STD Factsheets — from Maineteenhealth.org

HIV

What is it?
Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is the virus which can lead to Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS). HIV searches out and destroys a type of white blood cell called T-cells, weakening the body against infections and other diseases.

Who has it?
It’s likely that you’ve heard HIV described as a “gay disease”, but that isn’t accurate. Over 1.1 million Americans are currently living with HIV/AIDS. In 2014, there were 58 reported new cases of HIV in Maine with the majority of new cases in people reporting to be heterosexual (straight). As of 2013, 1,706 Mainers were living with HIV.

How do you get it?
HIV is transmitted through contact with infected body fluids like blood, semen, pre-cum, vaginal fluids and breast milk. People who share needles are at a high risk of infection.

How do you know you have it?
Some people who have HIV may go a long period of time — months or even years — without knowing they have it, because they haven’t had any serious symptoms. Even when an infected person doesn’t have any symptoms, they can still pass the virus to others. Those who do show symptoms may experience fever, diarrhea, rapid weight loss, extreme fatigue or night sweats. You should definitely get tested if you think you may be at risk of having HIV. It may take several months after exposure for HIV to show up in test results.

How do you test for it? Where can you get tested?
Individuals can choose anonymous (not available at all testing sites) or confidential testing. Rapid testing by using either a small finger prick that gives results in 10 minutes or a sample from a cheek swab with results in 20 minutes are the usual preliminary screening tests. Individuals who test positive are then given a blood test to confirm the diagnosis. Test results are most accurate 3 months after the exposure to HIV because the test indicates your body’s immune response to the virus. Regular testing is recommended. You can get tested at a family planning clinic, local hospital or a doctor’s office.

Can you get rid of it?
There is no cure for HIV, so the aim of treatment is to keep the amount of HIV in the body at a low level to slow down the weakening of the immune system and reduce the risk of giving HIV to other people. It’s important to start treatment as soon as possible. Although people are living much longer with HIV, all of the medications have serious side effects and must be taken the rest of the person’s life.

How do you keep from getting HIV?
Make sure you use a condom every time you have anal or vaginal sex, which will hugely reduce your risk of getting HIV. If you’re sexually active try to get tested regularly, or be mutually monogamous with a partner who has also been tested. Also, do not share needles.

What’s the worst that could happen?
HIV and AIDS attack your immune system, putting your body at greater risk for serious infections and diseases. HIV can be passed from a mother to her child during childbirth, through breast milk and even before the child is born. The virus can lead to cancer, blindness, severe weight loss, mental problems and death.
STD Factsheets —from Maineteenhealth.org

**PUBIC LICE (CRABS)**

**What is it?**
Pubic lice are tiny parasitic insects that can be passed from one person to another during sexual contact. Pubic lice are generally found in the genital area but may occasionally be found on other body hair, such as hair on legs, armpits, facial hair, etc. Lice found on the head are generally head lice and are not spread through sexual contact. Animals do not get or spread pubic lice.

**Who has it?**
Anyone can get pubic lice if they have sexual contact with another person who has been infected. Pubic lice are found on the outside of the body, so sexual intercourse is not necessary to contract pubic lice. There are an estimated 3 million new cases annually in the US.

**How do you get it?**
Pubic lice are usually spread through sexual contact. Occasionally, pubic lice may be spread by close personal contact or contact with articles such as clothing, bed linens or towels that have been used by an affected person. A common misunderstanding is that pubic lice are spread by sitting on a toilet seat. This isn’t likely since lice cannot live long away from a warm body and do not have legs designed to hold on to smooth surfaces such as toilet seats.

**How do you know you have it?**
Pubic lice can cause intense itching. A person who has been exposed to pubic lice may notice tiny tan to grayish-white insects crawling in their pubic hair. You may also see tiny oval-shaped, yellow to white blobs, called nits, clinging to the pubic hair. Although visible by the naked eye, it may require a magnifying lens to find the lice or nits.

**How do you test for it? Where can you get tested?**
A health care provider can determine by a visual exam and/or using a comb that is made for trapping nits or adult lice. People infested with pubic lice should also be tested for other sexually transmitted infections.

**Can you get rid of it?**
If a health care provider diagnoses pubic lice, they may prescribe medication or recommend an over-the-counter medicine that kills the lice and their eggs. The treatment you use may need to be repeated after 7 to 10 days to kill any lice you didn’t get the first time.

**How do you keep from getting pubic lice?**
Avoid sexual contact with someone who is infested. Do not have sexual contact until you or your partner has been treated and cured.

**What's the worst that could happen?**
It’s unusual for pubic lice to create any serious health problems, but the itching can be very uncomfortable, and it’s easy to transmit pubic lice to others. So it’s important to get properly diagnosed and treated as soon as possible.