

ASK



SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS

Welcome to your whistle-stop tour of STI'S (Sexually Transmitted Infections). Now don't panic boys, it's not the end of the world. Whether we are active little bunnies or saving ourselves for that special guy, the chances are that at some point in our dating and sexual career we are going to have to ask ourselves that terrifying question... "Have I got an STI?" If you're sexually active, STI's are an unfortunate reality but nothing to be ashamed of! If dealt with quickly and safely, there need not be any long-term damage to either yourself or anyone else and you can go on doing the horny little things you were doing before... except this time remember to play it safe and be aware that people don't always tell the truth! Whilst this guide will give you a brief idea about what to look for and how to recognise the symptoms, it should be noted that not all STI's come with symptoms (sly little buggers) and if you have any major concerns or doubts then your best bet is to get yourself down to your nearest G.U.M Clinic and let the professionals give you a once over. Whilst a visit to the clinic can initially be a slightly anxiety provoking experience, once inside it's all over very quickly and the staff are more than helpful and very non-judgemental ... so fear not. Plus, after reading the potential consequences of not getting yourself checked out, a visit to the G.U.M will become as exciting and appealing as gay cruise around the Bahamas with free Champagne and gorgeous hunky things for everyone... 'Ello Sailor, SHIPS AHOY!

So, without further a do, let's get you guys educated on what little beasts like to invade our body during sex and how we can annihilate them before they body-snatch us and take over our bodies and planet... ooh, it's all very Sci-Fi isn't it?!

CHLAMYDIA

This is one of those sly buggers mentioned before which doesn't always have symptoms until the actual infection spreads. You'll know when it does because it's not unusual to experience pain or stinging when having a slash. Also be mindful of discharge emanating from your penis or anus, with the latter sometimes feeling inflamed and painful. It can also sometimes affect the eyes and throat too, so be careful. If you have got Chlamydia then fear not, it can be successfully treated with a course of antibiotics, prescribed by your doctor. Failure to treat it can result in swollen joints and the possibility of infertility. Whether you want kids or not, get it sorted ASAP to prevent the risk of passing it on to someone else. As Chlamydia is a germ that infects the genital area, and sometimes the eyes and throat, the best way to reduce the risk of infection is to wear a condom... or shut yourself in the cupboard under the stairs and pray that Jack Nicholson doesn't come at you with an axe. I'd personally advise you to take the condom advice!



GENITAL WARTS

Hubble, bubble, toil and trouble... yes it's true, it's not only Macbeth's hags that get warts on the end of their protruding bits! Sadly, as sexually active men, there is the chance that we too could contract these pink little lumps varying in size on our penis, anus or both... and it has nothing to do with licking or stroking a toad (although I wouldn't recommend that either). In the case of genital warts, they are caused by a virus, which can be spread via genital-anal contact, oral-genital contact and oral-anal contact. The warts can be spread by touch and may develop in to small, white cauliflower shaped lumps, which can become itchy and generally uncomfortable. A trip to the G.U.M Clinic will be able to enlighten you as to how these can be treated at home or removed at the clinic... early treatment is advised! They are highly contagious and can re-occur so the best way for prevention is to always wear a condom and keep your eyes open... if you see anything that looks unusual on or around your partner's/shag's penis or anus then make your excuses and avoid contact with those specific areas otherwise you too could be landing the role of a cackling crone at the Globe Theatre.



GONORRHOEA

Now, you don't have to be a genius to realise that this isn't gonna be a nice one...the name itself sounds like a slug throwing up. Any how, enough about poorly molluscs and back to the job in hand. Gonorrhoea is a germ that can be passed on through sexual intercourse, both orally and anally. The delightful symptoms include a pus-like discharge from the penis and/or anus and can be yellowy green in colour, pain when having a slash or a shit, a sore throat, and if it's feeling particularly nasty and vindictive it may not present with any symptoms at all until it spreads further. If left untreated you're likely to experience problems with your prostate gland (FYI, that's the gland that feels all yummy and orgasmic when you're getting shagged), which you will of course want to keep in full working order for those hot steamy nights ahead. Other problems that may develop are inflamed and painful testes (these need no introduction I'm sure), and aching joints. A quick trip to the doctor or the G.U.M clinic and a course of antibiotics will have you cured in no time. But prevention is better than cure so always use a condom and your nose...if it doesn't look or smell quite right down there then avoid it like Tutankhamun's Tomb during Egypt's treasure hunting season (I'm sure that exists...maybe?).



HEPATITIS B

No jokes when it comes to this one boys because this is a seriously dangerous and highly infectious STI. Hep B is a very serious liver disease, which can make you very ill, take months to recover from and in some cases can be fatal. Hep B doesn't always have symptoms but can be detected by a blood test. Some classic symptoms though are tiredness, flu-like symptoms, dark urine and jaundice (you could end up looking like one of those blokes from The Simpsons. Yeah, ok in a cartoon but not the most appealing to kiss in real-life). This tricky virus is very infectious and lives in all of our bodily fluids (especially blood, cum and faeces), which makes it very easy to catch through sexual intercourse. Again, prevention is better than cure so you can get yourself vaccinated against it for free at any G.U.M clinic... but remember, the best way to keep STI free is to wear a condom on your w... (well, you get the message).



HERPES

Hmmm, another one that sounds like trouble... and yes, you would be right. Despite being similar in name, Herpes is not the plural for those terrifying winged siren-esque women from Greek mythology who lured men to their death with beautiful songs and were perceived as angels of death carrying away the souls of men (they would be the Harpies and I wouldn't recommend having one of them on the end of your penis either... oh the carnage). Herpes however can strike fear into the heart of any intrepid voyager or sexual gladiator as it is a virus that can be passed on through sexual contact both orally and anally resulting in small painful blisters (cold sores) developing around our mouths genitals and anus... sometimes discharge from the anus is thrown in just for good measure. If this wasn't bad enough, pain when having a slash can develop as well as flu-like symptoms as the infection spreads. Now I'm sure you're panicking like David when he faced by Goliath but if that story should tell us anything, it's that no matter how ghastly a situation may appear, there is always a simple way of solving it and it's never as bad as we initially thought. In the case of Herpes, the above symptoms may not develop if treated early with tablets and cream from the G.U.M Clinic as they can reduce the potentially painful, itchy irritation around the mouth and genitals and can treat further outbreaks. Unfortunately the virus once contacted cannot be cured but can be suppressed. This does not mean that your sex life is over boys so fear not! Whilst using condoms will reduce the risk of infection, be kind to yourself and others by waiting until the sores have completely healed before having your wicked way with anyone else.

NSU (NON-SPECIFIC URETHRITIS)

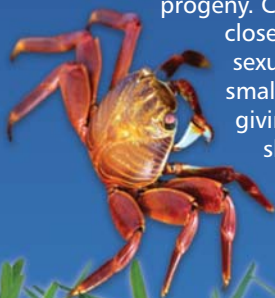
NSU is a pretty common STI and probably best epitomises the expression of pissing razor blades. Oh for goodness sake, don't take it all so literally... obviously razor blades couldn't fit out of the end of your urethra and in order to do so one would have to have consumed some razor blades orally (despite maybe wanting to orally ingest some of the yummy guys from Gillette adverts, I'm not sure the same can be said about eating their products). Anyway, I digress with these silly fables of common sense... back to the main focus of NSU. Aside from the burning and stinging sensations when urinating, you may experience inflammation around your genital area, abnormal discharge from the penis or anus, a desire to urinate more frequently or flu-like symptoms. Of course you may be one of the lucky ones who experiences no symptoms at all but this dangerous little relief means that we may be ignorant to the fact that there's anything wrong. As it is passed on through oral and anal sex, please always be careful and use a condom so no-one else feels like they've got a penis like Mount Vesuvius erupting burning lava (or urine) from our ever so delicate bits. Ouch!!!



PUBIC LICE (AKA CRABS)

Yikes, how on earth did these sea shore beasts come to inhabit and infest our down below areas and how the hell did we not notice those giant claws snapping at our faces?! Fear not though, these are not the type of crabs you'd go fishing for on a warm summer's day in Skeggy... imagine how dangerous one of those little buggers would be scampering round your bollocks.... Hello orchidectomy! No, these little creatures are much much smaller than their sea dwelling counterparts and are closely related to head lice... second cousins maybe. They are however visible to the naked eye and tend to dwell around our genitals, within our pubic and body hair whilst laying eggs and generally making an itchy nuisance of themselves. Treatment is pretty simple so don't worry, get yourself some special lotion from your nearest chemist and apply to the affected areas. The little buggers will soon drop off in the shower... don't try and keep them as pets please! Re-apply the following week to ensure you've also disposed of their

progeny. Crabs can be passed through close bodily contact, not necessarily sexual, so keep your eyes open for small roaming creatures when you're giving head, especially if your shag's/ partner's hand keeps making frequent visits to his crotch!



SCABIES

Boooo, hisss! In the Christmas panto these little guys would definitely get the thumbs down and maybe even some rotten vegetables thrown at them... if we could see them of course! Scabies (shudder) are tiny little mites that like to burrow under your skin to live and consequently cause an eczema like rash and itchy red patches to appear all over the body. Tell-tale signs are the little red tracks that appear on your hands and in between the fingers where these little Herberts have entered the body. Night times can be a nightmare so try not to scratch. Luckily there is a magical lotion that can be used to destroy these uninvited guests and is available from the chemist or G.U.M clinic. Follow the instructions carefully and leave on for 24 hours lest they return to smite your days and nights again. Scabies can easily be passed on through close contact, including sharing towels, clothing or sleeping in the same bed. This can often be misdiagnosed and missed so make sure you properly douse yourself in the lotion and get your partner to do the same. If you've seen Beautiful Thing you'll know how sensuous and arousing applying lotion (particularly the peppermint variety) on to someone else can be... if you've not seen Beautiful Thing however, then shame on you!



SYPHILIS

Unfortunately this insidious little terror has made more come-backs than Madonna and Cher combined and if left untreated it can lead to extreme damage to our brain, heart, liver and bones, potentially culminating in paralysis, mental health problems, blindness, deafness, heart failure and.... DEATH (clearly nothing to worry about then COUGH COUGH!). The symptoms for Syph appear in four stages with the primary one being a skin sore which will appear on either your penis, scrotum anus or the inside of your mouth. Between 4 and 12 weeks after exposure the secondary symptoms comprise of a generalised skin rash, and possibly fever, swollen glands, weight loss and headaches. During the latent stage there are usually no symptoms until many years later when the tertiary stage kicks in and all the horrors as described earlier can creep out of the dark. If you do suspect that you have Syph then get yourself checked out straight away... just one quick trip to the G.U.M Clinic will get you a quick blood test, a course of antibiotics and a sense of well-being. You can't be too careful with this one boys... just because you can't see it, it doesn't mean it's not there wreaking havoc with your organs (and not in that good way). Syphilis is present in blood and any other bodily fluids, which makes it very easy to contract through sexual intercourse both oral and anal. Therefore always wear a condom to reduce the risk of infection... you know the score by now.



THRUSH

Tweet-tweet-tweet sings this delightful garden dwelling bird. Itch-itch-sting sings the STI. As you've probably guessed, Thrush can cause itching, rash or inflammation on the penis, anus, mouth or throat. There can be pain when urinating (very NSU like), pain during sex and sometimes sticky white patches on your skin... hmmm, that last symptom sounds like a regular Saturday night for most of you horny little minxes. Any how, all that excitement aside, Thrush is a yeast infection which can be present on the skin and is therefore very easy to pass on through close contact with someone else... it doesn't always have to be sexual. If you do suspect you've got Thrush then creams and tablets are available from local pharmacies and clinics. Again, prevention is better than cure so treat your body to the same amount of pampering and hygiene TLC as you would if you were preparing for a night on the town. In doing so your body remains squeaky clean and fresh and smelling of roses... a delight for not only yourself but the also for the lucky men you charm in to your bedroom.



HIV (HUMAN IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS)

This is where the laughter stops boys and we have to get serious... this one is certainly not funny and can't be cured by a quick trip to the G.U.M or a few cleverly placed words of wisdom and humour... in fact there is still no vaccine for H.I.V.

If infected with the H.I.V virus there can be some pretty serious health consequences, one of which being the development of AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome). HIV is a retrovirus, specifically named because once infected HIV hijacks our white blood cells (cells that help co-ordinate our immune system and keep us safe from infections and diseases) and reverses their usual reproduction order. Instead of producing more white blood cells, the HIV turns the mother cells in to little HIV cell producing factories, which attack and destroy our immune system (thereby making it less effective) and replaces it with more copies of itself.

Blood and semen will contain the highest concentration of HIV but it is also present in urine, saliva and faeces. Thereby unprotected sex (oral and especially anal) carries a huge risk of contracting HIV so always wear a condom boys and never take any chances... it can take up to 3 months post exposure to show up in a blood test so your next shag may not even be aware they've contracted it. Never assume that you know someone's HIV status just by looking at them... HIV can affect anyone regardless of age, colour, or build (it's not something you can see). Whilst you may appreciate someone telling you their H.I.V status if they are positive, they are under no obligation to do so. Therefore, remember that it is your responsibility and yours alone to make sure that both you and your partner play safe during sex to prevent any possible risk of exposing yourself to the virus.

HIV is a tricky one to gauge as it often presents with little or no symptoms so you can stay fit and healthy for many years and not even know that you've been infected with the virus. This of course makes it all the more problematic. However, some symptoms may consist of night sweats, swollen lymph glands, flu-like symptoms, and re-occurring infections. If you do experience these after you have engaged in unprotected sex (whether deliberately or by accident), it does not necessarily mean that you are Positive as our body can sometimes present with psychosomatic symptoms, especially if you are in shock or concerned that you may have contracted the virus. It should also be noted here that if you have contracted HIV, your immune system will be significantly less effective, thereby making you more susceptible to contracting other STI's that you may be exposed to. ALWAYS WEAR A CONDOM... I WILL have you saying this in your sleep because it is so very important and potentially life saving if you want to reduce the risk of infection!!!

However, if you strongly feel that you have been exposed to the HIV Virus then a drug therapy called PEP (Post Exposure Prophylaxis) is available from various clinics but must be taken within 72 hours of potentially being exposed to the virus. PEP is a treatment designed to prevent you becoming infected with HIV after it has entered your body but it should be noted here that it can have some pretty nasty side-effects, it is not guaranteed to work, and is not terribly easy to get hold of. If you require more information or have further concerns then contact your local G.U.M clinic or Healthy Gay Nottingham.

Healthy Gay Nottingham

Testing, advice and support regarding sexual health and emotional well-being. **Telephone:** 0115 947 6868

Email: healthygaynottingham@nottinghamcity.nhs.uk

Website: www.healthygaynottingham.org.uk

The Health Shop

Telephone: 0115 947 5414

Email: healthshop@nottinghamcity.nhs.uk

G.U.M clinic:

Telephone: 0115 962 7745 (male reception)

0115 962 7747 (female reception)

C-Card

Website: www.ccardnottingham.co.uk

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Telephone: 0115 912 3320

Email: pals@nottinghamcity.nhs.uk





CitiHealth NHS Nottingham

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