



Questions and Answers (STI)

Q. What is STI?

A. STI stands for sexually transmitted infection, sometimes also called STD, sexually transmitted disease. There are many different types of STIs, common types are syphilis, herpes, gonorrhea, and chlamydia.

Q. Are STIs related to HIV/AIDS?

A. HIV is a different virus, just as there are different types of STIs. However, STIs are considered to be a co-factor for HIV transmission. If a person has an STI there is a higher probability that they will be transmitted the virus in a sexual contact with a person who is living with HIV/AIDS. Studies show that people with an STI are two to five times more likely to be transmitted HIV in a sexual encounter with a person carrying HIV when compared to someone who has no STIs at all.

Q. Does it matter which STI a person has?

A. Yes, different STIs play different roles in relation to HIV transmission. Some types increase a person's probability of becoming infected with HIV. These types of STIs are types that cause breaks in the skin and offer new entry points for the virus, such as syphilis, herpes, and chancroids. Other STIs may not break the skin but can also increase transmission probability through an increase in secretion concentrations offering HIV more opportunity to infect.

Q. What about people with HIV, does it matter?

A. Yes. Studies show that people who have HIV and STI(s) have higher concentrations of HIV in their genital secretions. Thus, people living with HIV who also have STI(s) are more likely to pass the virus onto another person than a person with HIV who does not have STI(s).

Q. So, what do we do?

A. As individuals we first need to know our HIV status. If we have HIV or not we also need to treat any STIs that we might have. Treating STIs in people who do not have HIV will help reduce their probability of becoming infected. Treating STIs in people who carry HIV will help reduce the probability of transmissions, in which that person may have been the passing agent.

Q. Should HIV and STI education be separate?

A. No. Because HIV and STIs are both sexually transmitted and STIs are a cofactor for HIV transmission all educational programs, in either field, should include information about each other. All HIV educational efforts should include information about STIs. As individuals, as we talk to others about HIV we should also talk about STIs.