



Key Stage 3

Infection Prevention and Control (IPC): Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)

Teacher Guidance

Background Information

STIs are infections contracted by having close sexual contact with someone who is already infected. Some STIs can be treated and cured with antibiotic medicine whereas others cannot. Many symptoms of incurable STIs can be treated to make them easier to live with. There are over 25 different STIs.

Bacterial STIs are caused when bacteria are spread through vaginal, oral or anal sexual contact with an infected person. These infections include chlamydia, gonorrhoea and syphilis and are generally cured through antibiotic therapy prescribed by a Doctor.

Viral infections can be spread via the same routes as bacterial infections but can also be spread through direct contact with infected skin, or bodily fluids such as blood, semen or saliva (depending on the viral infection) from an infected person entering into the bloodstream of an uninfected person. Viral infections include genital warts, hepatitis B, herpes and HIV which although they can be treated, are NOT curable.

Although most STIs are generally transmitted through sexual encounters, some STIs can be spread to others by sharing needles and syringes, through skin to skin contact (in the same way that bacteria can spread from one person's hand to another) or are transferred from mother to unborn baby during pregnancy and childbirth. HIV can also be spread through breast milk. It is important to note that an HIV positive person who is on treatment and their viral load is undetectable cannot transmit HIV to another person.

Details of the most common STIs are available in the MS PowerPoint presentation on the e-Bug web page. It is important to note that people can have an STI but have NO obvious symptoms; they themselves may not know they are infected.

Anyone can contract an STI. It has nothing to do with how 'clean' someone is or how the person dresses and acts. Most people who contract an STI do not know that the person they had sexual contact with was infected.

When discussing sexual health with students, it is important everyone feels comfortable, safe, and heard. Here are some suggested ground rules to follow:

- No one (teacher or student) will have to answer a personal question
- No one will be forced to take part in a discussion
- Only the correct names for body parts will be used (you may wish to ask pupils to use the correct word if they can but if not, to use the word they know and then provide them with the more appropriate word)
- Meanings of words will be explained in a sensible and factual way
- Others (as agreed by class)

Chlamydia

Chlamydia is a sexually transmitted infection (STI) caused by bacteria called *Chlamydia trachomatis*. The highest incidence of chlamydia is amongst 16-24-year olds. Of this group approximately one in ten is thought to be infected. About 70% of females and 50% of males with chlamydia don't experience any symptoms at all which means that many infected people don't realise they carry the infection. For women who do experience symptoms these might include abnormal discharge, pain and/or bleeding during sex and pain when urinating. In men these include a cloudy or watery discharge from the tip of the penis, pain when urinating and testicular pain.

Diagnosis can be made using a sample of urine (males and females) or vaginal swab (females only). Infection is treatable with a one-week course of antibiotics. Untreated chlamydia is a well-established cause of pelvic inflammatory disease (serious inflammation of the ovaries and fallopian tubes), ectopic pregnancy (when a foetus grows in a fallopian tube) and infertility in women. In men infection can cause prostate and testicular problems, and a growing body of evidence also links chlamydia to infertility in men.

Although chlamydia is a serious and growing public health problem, there are a number of characteristics of this infection which may mean that young people may not find it particularly threatening. In making a decision about whether to use condoms, young people most likely weigh up the consequences. Some of these will be positive such as protecting against STIs but there are likely to be many more negative ones (such as "it interrupts the mood"). Often the negative consequences can outweigh the positive ones, so that motivations to use condoms are not particularly strong.

To counteract this and bolster intentions to use condoms, it is very important that young people have accurate perceptions of the threat caused by sexually transmitted infections. This lesson has been designed to encourage strong and realistic perceptions of the threat caused by chlamydia and to provide students with the opportunity to explore the issues around negotiating safer sex.

SW1 Spread of STI Test Tube Experiment Worksheet

Section A

How many people in the class contracted the infection?

Consider how many of the test tube samples turned black when tested with iodine

Section B

How many people in the class contracted the infection?

Note, this is likely to be lower than in part A due to the reduced number of encounters

Section C

What does the cotton balls / cling film represent?

A condom to prevent the exchange of bodily fluids

Can you think of a reason why some of the people didn't get infected even though they had a sexual encounter with someone who had an STI?

These persons may have been wearing a 'condom' (cotton balls). Also note, transmission rates are not always 100%

SW2 STI Quiz

How can sexually transmitted infections spread?

- Vaginal sex
- Anal sex
- Oral sex

Who can contract an STI?

- Anyone who has unprotected sex

Do sexually transmitted infections have symptoms?

- It depends on the infection

The BEST way to prevent transmission of sexually transmitted infections when having sex is?

- Condoms (note: you may want to highlight that while condoms are the best way to prevent transmission of STIs if having sex, abstinence remains the most effective way to avoid an STI overall)

Which of the following are STIs?

- Chlamydia
- Gonorrhoea