



PROTECT YOURSELF!

Information about sexually
transmitted infections





For the reader

This brochure gives you information about sexually transmitted infections and how to treat them.

You can get a sexually transmitted infection by having unprotected sex. Unprotected sex means having intercourse (sex where you insert a penis into someone or someone penetrates you with their penis) or oral sex (sex involving your mouth) without a condom. Condoms are a good way to protect yourself against sexually transmitted infections.

When you have sex, you do not always know that your partner is healthy. Many sexually transmitted infections do not show any symptoms. That means that you may not know that you have been infected. You might then spread the infection to other people.



If you suspect that you have a sexually transmitted infection, you must see a doctor and get tested. Sexually transmitted infections can only be diagnosed by testing. Also your sex partner needs to get tested.

If you have a sexually transmitted infection and do not get treated, it may harm your health. Sexually transmitted infections can cause serious complications if they are not treated.

Condoms protect against sexually transmitted infections

Condoms are a good way to protect yourself against sexually transmitted infections.

It is important that you find a condom that is suitable for you and your partner.

The only way to find the right one is by trying out different condoms. If a condom is too big, it may slip off easily. If a condom is too small, it breaks easily.

There are many different types of condoms. Condoms come in many sizes, shapes and tastes. Everybody can find a condom that fits them. Condoms can be bought in grocery stores, online stores and pharmacies.

A lubricant can be used with the condom. A lubricant is a liquid or gel that you can apply during sex to make the vagina, penis or anal area wetter. Lubricant protects against skin damage and reduces the risk of the condom breaking. It also makes sex more pleasurable.

How to use a condom:

1.

Check the use-by date.



2.

Open the condom package carefully as shown in the picture. Check that you are unrolling the condom in the correct direction.



3.

Pull the foreskin back. Squeeze any air bubbles out of the condom's tip using your fingers. Roll the condom onto the erect penis. Never use two condoms at a time.



4.

Use water or silicone-based lubricant if necessary. This is particularly important in anal intercourse.



5.

Wear the condom for the whole duration of intercourse and never reuse condoms.

6.

Pull the penis out immediately after ejaculation. Hold onto the condom when you are pulling out so that it will not slip off, causing semen to enter your partner.



7.

Dispose of the condom with household waste. Do not flush the condom down the toilet.



Condoms can also be used during oral sex

Protection against sexually transmitted infections is equally important during oral sex.

If you use your mouth to stimulate a penis, the condom provides good protection.

If you use your mouth to stimulate a vagina or an anus, use oral sex protection. You may also make a shield for oral sex from a condom.

Do as follows:

- 1) Use scissors to cut off the top of the condom.
- 2) Insert the scissors into the hole you made and cut the condom in half.

- 3) Spread the condom.
- 4) Place the spread condom on top of the vagina or anus before starting to stimulate it.

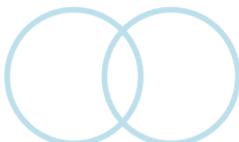
Do not stimulate them without protection.

What is HIV? What is AIDS?

HIV is a virus that attacks the immune system of the human body. The virus is called the human immunodeficiency virus. When someone gets infected with HIV, their body becomes less and less able to fight illnesses. The body no longer defends itself against illnesses.

A person who has been infected with HIV needs to take medication every day. Without medication, HIV can turn into AIDS.

AIDS is an illness caused by the HI virus. AIDS is the state where the immune system of a person is seriously damaged, and the person gets a serious infection because of that. These infections include pneumonia, meningitis, and other serious illnesses.



How do people get HIV?

People do not get infected with HIV easily.

It does not spread from person to person by air.

You cannot get it by shaking someone's hand or by hugging someone.

Normally, HIV spreads from mucous membrane to mucous membrane, that is, during unprotected sex.

HIV can spread for example in the following situations:

- When a person has unprotected sex with a person who has HIV.
- When a person has unprotected oral sex with a person who has HIV.
- In oral sex, the HIV virus can spread when a person gets another person's body liquids into their mouth.
- The body liquids that carry HIV are liquid from the vagina, and semen or pre-ejaculate fluid from the penis.
- When a person gets a blood transfusion from a person who has HIV..
- When a person gets an organ transplant from a person who has HIV.
- When a person injects a drug into their blood and uses the same needle as an HIV-infected person.
- A child can get HIV from their mother during pregnancy, childbirth or breastfeeding if the mother has HIV.

HIV infection can be tested for

An HIV test shows if a person has an HIV infection.

The test can be taken after 1 to 3 months from being exposed to infection. Health stations, Hivpoint and the Finnish Red Cross perform HIV tests.

In an HIV test, the patient gives a little bit of blood. In an instant blood test, a drop of blood is taken from the tip of a finger.

If you think that you may have a sexually transmitted infection, get HIV tested. If you start the treatment soon after getting infected, you can take better care of your health and protect other people from HIV.

In Finland, being HIV positive does not affect your residence permit.



How is HIV treated?

If you have an HIV infection, you need to see a nurse or a doctor at least twice a year. You also need to take your medication every day. There is no medication that can cure an HIV infection but there is effective medication for treating patients with HIV. The medication prevents the infection from getting worse.

HIV-infected persons must take medication all their lives. With the medication you can live a long, healthy life. For example, you can study, raise a family, work, and have sex.

Research has shown that when a person takes their HIV medication every day and the medication works, HIV does not spread in unprotected sex.





Other sexually transmitted infections

There are many other sexually transmitted infections in addition to HIV. Also they can spread through unprotected sex.

Condoms are a good way to protect yourself against other sexually transmitted infections, too.

CHLAMYDIA

How is it transmitted?

Chlamydia bacteria can spread if you have intercourse without a condom. Intercourse means either vaginal intercourse or anal intercourse. Anal intercourse means penetration into the anus. You can also get a Chlamydia infection in your throat if you have unprotected oral sex.



What are the symptoms?

The symptoms of chlamydia typically appear within 10 to 14 days from the infection.



However, often chlamydia shows no symptoms or the symptoms are very mild.

Symptoms in a woman:

- unusual discharge /flow from vagina
- burning when urinating
- feeling the need to urinate more often than usual
- pain in the lower stomach and lower back.

Symptoms in a man:

- burning when urinating
- grey discharge from the urethra
- lower stomach pain and testicle pain.

If you do not get treated for Chlamydia, it may cause arthritis and sometimes infertility.

For women, it may also cause infections in the sex organs. Women's sex organs are the uterus, the vagina and the ovaries.

If a person gets Chlamydia in their eye, it may cause an eye infection.

When can the test be taken?

The test should be taken 1 to 2 weeks after you had sex without a condom.

A urine sample is given in the test.

Chlamydia cannot be detected from a urine sample if the infection is in the anus or in the throat. If you have had anal sex or oral sex, the chlamydia test must be taken from your anus or throat. Anal sex means penetration into the anus.

How is it treated?

The treatment for Chlamydia is antibiotics.

After taking all the prescribed antibiotics,
a new urine sample is taken.

This is to check that the infection has been removed.

How can I protect myself against it?

To protect yourself against Chlamydia, use a condom and oral sex protection.

If you have anal sex, use a condom and lubricant.



GONORRHOEA

How is it transmitted?

Gonorrhoea can spread if you have intercourse without a condom. Intercourse means either vaginal intercourse or anal intercourse. Anal intercourse means penetration into the anus. You can also get a Chlamydia infection in your throat if you have unprotected oral sex.

What are the symptoms?

The symptoms of gonorrhoea appear within 2 to 14 days from getting infected.

Sometimes gonorrhoea shows no symptoms.

Symptoms in a woman:

- burning when urinating
- more vaginal discharge than usual and lower stomach pain

Symptoms in a man:

- burning when urinating
- the need to urinate more often than usual
- yellow discharge from the urethra
- painful erection

If gonorrhoea is not treated, it can cause infertility.

If a person gets gonorrhoea in their eye, it may cause an eye infection.

When can the test be taken?

The test should be taken 1 to 2 weeks after you had sex without a condom.

A urine sample is given in the test.

Gonorrhoea cannot be detected from a urine sample if the infection is in the anus or in the throat. If you have had anal sex or oral sex, the test must be taken from your anus or throat. Anal sex means penetration into the anus.

How is it treated?

The treatment for gonorrhoea is antibiotics.

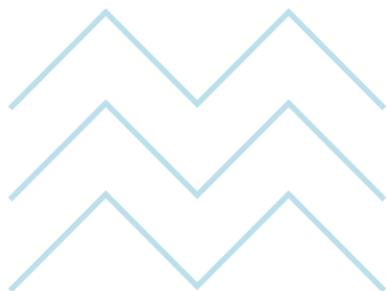
After taking all the prescribed antibiotics, a new urine sample is taken.

This is to check that the infection has been removed.

How can I protect myself against it?

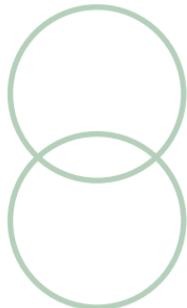
To protect yourself against gonorrhoea, use a condom and oral sex protection.

If you have anal sex, use a condom and lubricant.





SYPHILIS



How is it transmitted?

Syphilis can spread if you have intercourse without a condom. Intercourse means either vaginal intercourse or anal intercourse. Anal intercourse means penetration into the anus. You can also get a Chlamydia infection in your mouth if you have unprotected oral sex.

What are the symptoms?

The symptoms of syphilis appear in two phases. If you do not treat syphilis, you may develop additional symptoms later on.

First phase of syphilis:

The symptoms of syphilis appear within 3 to 6 weeks from getting infected.

One symptom is a sore with hard edges in the genitalia, mouth or anus. The lymph nodes may also become bigger. Not everyone gets symptoms.

All symptoms disappear on their own even if syphilis is not treated. However, the infection does not disappear from your body.

Second phase of syphilis:

The symptoms of the second phase appear 2 to 4 months from the end of the first phase. Symptoms in the second phase include fever, enlarged lymph nodes, headache, nausea and various skin symptoms.

Even if syphilis is not treated, all symptoms disappear within six months. After that, the syphilis becomes latent (hidden). It means that the infection still exists but it does not show any symptoms.

Late symptoms of syphilis

A person who has syphilis and does not get treated may develop tertiary syphilis. It may appear several years after the original infection. It may damage the central nervous system.

When can the test be taken?

You can get tested 3 to 6 weeks after you suspect you became infected.

How is it treated?

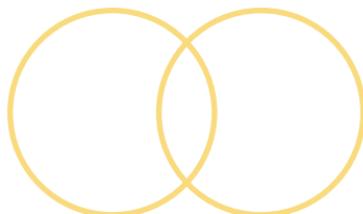
The treatment for syphilis is antibiotic injections.
When you have received all the injections, a new blood sample is taken.

This is to check that the infection has been removed.

How can I protect myself against it?

To protect yourself against syphilis, use a condom and oral sex protection.

If you have anal sex, use a condom and lubricant.



HEPATITIS B

Hepatitis B is a liver infection caused by the hepatitis B virus.

How is it transmitted?

Hepatitis B is transmitted through unprotected sex.

You can also get it through blood, for example by sharing a needle or syringe with someone when using drugs.

What are the symptoms?

Most recent hepatitis B infections do not show any symptoms.

However, some people do get one or several of the following symptoms:

- nausea
- diarrhoea
- vomiting or stomach pain
- yellow skin
- the white or the membrane of the eye turning yellow
- sometimes muscle pain or joint pain.

If symptoms appear, they usually disappear within a few weeks.

Most people who get infected with hepatitis B are cured but for some people it may be permanent. That means that the person has got chronic hepatitis B, which may cause serious liver damage.

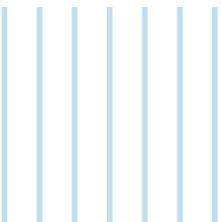
When can the test be taken?

The test can be taken earliest 8 to 12 weeks after you suspect you became infected.

Before that, hepatitis B cannot be diagnosed by a test.

How is it treated?

Hepatitis B usually gets better without any treatment. A person suffering from chronic hepatitis B can be treated with virus medication or interferon.



How can I protect myself against it?

There is a vaccine against hepatitis B.
Condoms protect against sexually
transmitted infections.

Clean needles and syringes protect against
drug-use related infections.





HEPATITIS C

Hepatitis C is a liver infection caused by the hepatitis C virus.

How is it transmitted?

Hepatitis C typically spreads by blood contact, for example when two people share a needle or syringe to inject a drug.

Hepatitis C also spreads through unprotected sex. The risk of getting hepatitis C is bigger in anal intercourse. Anal sex means penetration into the anus.

What are the symptoms?

Hepatitis C does not usually show many symptoms.

Only every fourth person has symptoms.

Possible symptoms are:

- yellowness
- nausea
- stomach pain.

Most people with hepatitis C carry the infection for the rest of their lives.

If hepatitis C is not treated, it may cause serious liver damage.

When can the test be taken?

You can get tested about 10 weeks after you suspect you became infected.

How is it treated?

Hepatitis C treatments are constantly improving.

How can I protect myself against it?

Protect yourself against hepatitis C by using a condom during sex.

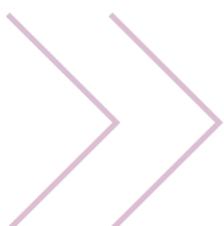
Use clean needles and syringes to prevent infections through drug use.

What is Hivpoint?

Hivpoint gives people information about the risks of an HIV infection and tries to prevent new HIV infections.

Hivpoint offers services to people living with HIV.

Help and support is also given to friends and family of people living with HIV and people who suspect they may have an HIV infection.





Hivpoint gives telephone and online

counselling and advice.

Hivpoint also offers rapid HIV tests.

You can get tested at any Hivpoint.

Book the test beforehand by telephone.

Hivpoint locations can be found in

Helsinki, Tampere and Oulu.



Hivpoint services:

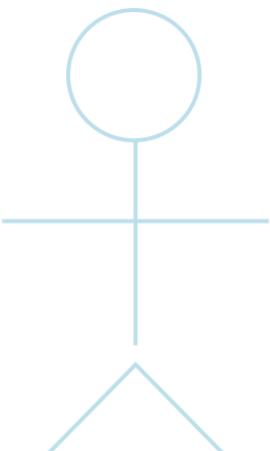
Helpline:

Mondays to Fridays from 10am to 3.30pm,
telephone number 0207 465 705.

Online services: www.hivpoint.fi

Crisis support and counselling

Peer support







Contact information:

HELSINKI
Unioninkatu 45 K,
00170 Helsinki

TAMPERE
Aleksanterinkatu 29 A 29,
33100 TAMPERE

OULU
Kumppanuuskeskus,
Kansankatu 53, 90100 OULU

Hivpoint counselling:
Telephone number 0207 465 705
(Mondays to Thursdays from 10am to 3.30pm)
online services: www.hivpoint.fi