



STI/Condom Fact Sheet for Clinicians

What are Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)?

Sexually Transmitted infections (STIs) are infections that are spread from one person to the other during unprotected sexual intercourse which can either be vaginal, anal or oral sex. STIs can also be transmitted from mother to child, during pregnancy and during birth.

STIs remain a public health burden with an estimated **1,144,003** new episodes of STIs that were treated amongst males and females 15 years and older in public health facilities during the 2015/16 financial year (DHIS 2015). Respectively, **303, 000** new episodes of Male Urethritis Syndrome (MUS) have as well been treated during the same financial year.

STIs are a marker of unprotected sex and contribute to the transmission of HIV. A person can have an STI without having noticeable symptoms of disease. The term sexually transmitted infection (STI) is therefore a broader term than sexually transmitted disease (STD).

What are the most common symptoms of STIs?

A person with an STI can have one of these symptoms:

- abnormal vaginal or penile discharge
- burning urine
- genital ulcer
- painful Intercourse
- lower abdominal pain
- scrotal swelling



Risk Factors of getting infected with an STI

- inconsistent or lack of condom use
- use of hormonal contraceptive without condom use
- history of diagnosed and untreated STI
- if you have a partner who has an STI or who once had an STI in the last 8 weeks
- periodic separation of partners (Partner not always available e.g travelling partner)
- uncircumcised males

How to manage a patient with an STI

South Africa (SA) adopted a syndromic approach for the control and management of STIs since 1996.

What is Syndromic Management approach?

The approach is based on Identification of consistent groups of symptoms, easily recognised signs or syndromes and the provision of treatment that will deal with the most serious organisms responsible for producing such syndromes.

Guided by the protocol for the management of a person with STI (Sexually Transmitted Infections Management Guidelines 2015) which is the first line comprehensive management and control of STIs; healthcare workers are able to treat the STI patients using the syndromic management approach.

STIs are preventable and many are treatable. **STI screening** at all health care visits can promote STI prevention and management; it further provides an opportunity for additional health promotion and education. This fact sheet highlights the STI syndromes and educational measures to consider when managing the STI patient. For medicinal treatment refer to the (Sexually Transmitted Infections Management Guidelines 2015) which is also available in the NDoH website (<http://www.health.gov.za/>).

STI Syndromes according to the Syndromic Management approach

The syndromes are caused by different disease pathogens. It is possible that more than one pathogen can cause the same symptoms. It is therefore important for a health care worker to know the signs (which can only be discovered during physical examination) and the appropriate management.



The table below summarises the common syndromes, symptoms, and the complications which they can cause if left untreated.

Syndrome	Type of STI / Causative organism	Symptoms	Example Picture	Complications
Male Urethritis Syndrome (MUS)	Gonorrhoea (drop), Chlamydia in males	Urethral (Penile) Discharge Burning Urine Frequent urination		Involvement of other body parts, mainly anus, throat, eye; urethral stricture, cystitis, Scrotal Swelling and infertility
Vaginal Discharge Syndrome (VDS)	Gonorrhoea, Chlamydia, Trachomoniasis, Candidiasis in females	Unusual Vaginal Discharge Burning Urine Painful Intercourse Vaginal Itching		Involvement of other body parts mainly anus, throat, eye; Cervicitis, Endometritis, Salpingitis. In pregnancy: premature membrane rupture, pre-term delivery. In neonates: conjunctivitis
Lower Abdominal Pain (LAP)	Gonorrhoea, Chlamydia in females	Lower abdominal pain Painful Intercourse (It is also possible not to see the vaginal discharge, and it can be discovered by a health care provider on examination)		Chronic or recurrent salpingitis, ectopic pregnancy, infertility, acute peritonitis, death.

Syndrome	Type of STI / Causative organism	Symptoms	Example Picture	Complications
Genital Ulcer (GUS)	Chancroid (Haemophilus Ducreyi), Genital Herpes	Genital ulcer (sore)		Involvement of other body parts, mainly anus, mouth, eye; general body pain and lymph node swelling, rashes, Neurosyphilis, scars, fistula, strictures, elephantiasis of genitals. In pregnancy: miscarriage, stillbirth, premature delivery In neonates: low birth weight, congenital syphilis
	Syphilis (Treponema Pallidum)	Genital ulcer (painless)		
Scrotal Swelling (SSW)	Gonorrhea , Chlamydia in males	Scrotal swelling Scrotal pain		Chronic and recurrent scrotal swelling, Infertility

Comprehensive management of a patient with STI

- history taking
- physical examination
- correct diagnosis (identification of the syndrome)
- treatment using the syndromic approach
- health education
- HIV counselling and testing
- partner notification and treatment

General Measures on STI prevention and treatment adherence

- counselling and education, including HIV testing
- condom promotion, provision and demonstration to reduce the risk of STIs
- compliance / adherence to treatment
- contact treatment/partner notification
- circumcision
- contraception and conception counselling

Patient education on STI prevention:

How can I protect myself from STIs?

- Reporting early any STI symptoms at the clinic for management
- Visiting a health care facility regularly for STIs and HIV screening.
 - NB: a person with an STI is at greater risk of HIV acquisition and transmission
- Abstaining from penetrative sexual intercourse
- Delaying sexual debut
- **Consistent and correct use of condoms**
- Pregnant women to attend the antenatal care early and be screened for both HIV and STIs which includes Syphilis
- **Partner notification, tracing and treatment** to avoid re-infection

What to expect at the clinic

- Private and confidential consultation
- Full history including sexual history will be taken
- Full examination and diagnosis of STI will be done
- STI treatment will be provided
- HIV test will be offered
- Condom provision and demonstration
- **Partner notification** slip (s) will be offered
 - **Partner notification** is the process of identifying sexual partner(s) of a client with an STI and ensuring that they are aware of their exposure and they should also be treated.
 - Relevant partner(s) include those with whom the client with an STI has had sexual intercourse in the last 8 weeks even if they have no symptoms.

What are the benefits of Condom Use?

- Used correctly and consistently; **condoms** can be used as a dual protection method; for protection against STIs including HIV and prevention of unwanted pregnancy.