

Sexually Transmitted Infections

Ooohs..... I had sex with someone without using a condom and now I am freaking out and want to be tested for EVERY *THING*. There are two problems: what is EVERY *THING* and should or could you be tested for *IT*? This article is a quick summary of the “love bugs” you need to be on the look out for and when you should be tested for them.

What kind of infections am I at risk for?

There are two major types of STIs (sexually transmitted infections): bacterial and viral. Bacterial are cured with antibiotic treatment. Viral infections don't get better with antibiotics but sometimes can be controlled with anti-viral medication or your body may get over the infection on its own. STI's are equal opportunity – they affect heterosexuals, MSM (men who have sex with men) and WSW (women who have sex with women). Condoms help prevent STIs but *are not* 100% effective. Some infections are on the skin that the condom doesn't cover or they can break.

Chlamydia: this is a bacterial infection that can be cured with antibiotics. There may or may not be symptoms like burning when you pee, discharge from your penis or vagina. Women should be tested yearly and after each new partner. Men should be tested after each new partner. A urine test is usually all that is needed, but if you have receptive anal intercourse a rectal culture should be done. An accurate urine test can be performed 7 days after you might have been exposed.

WSW should be tested if they have had male partners.

Gonorrhea: this is a bacterial infection that can be cured with antibiotics. You may or may not have symptoms similar to Chlamydia.

You should be tested if you have a new partner. MSM should have all receptive sites cultured.

Syphilis: this oldie is resurfacing in some populations. This is a bacterial infection that is treated with antibiotics. If you are MSM or a female who has MSM partners – you need a blood test for syphilis. You may or may not have a *painless* ulcer on your genitals.

HIV/AIDS: All persons should be tested at least once. You should also be tested after having sex with a new partner or engaging in high risk behaviors (unprotected sex, needle sharing). MSM, intravenous (IV) drug users and their partners should be tested every year. An accurate blood test can be done 3 months after possible exposure.

HPV: There are more than 100 types of HPV (human papilloma virus). Thirty of these types affect the genitals (possibly causing genital warts), 5 of these types are associated with developing cancer of the cervix. There is no routine screening available. Women should have annual PAP smears; if the PAP is abnormal it will be tested for HPV. If you have any warts or sores on you genitals, you should come to the Student Health and

Psychological Services to be checked. There is a vaccine available for females between the ages of 9-26 that can prevent HPV types 6, 11, 16 and 18.

HSV: There are two types of HSV (herpes simplex virus): 1 and 2. Type 2 more commonly causes genital herpes. Routine screening is not recommended. If you have recurrent painful sores on your genitals, have a partner with herpes, MSM, or have HIV you should be tested. The best way to be tested is to have a swab culture of the sore before the blister breaks. If you are not able to get to your health care provider during this time a blood test can be performed.

Hepatitis A: This virus is transmitted by fecal-oral route. It is not transmitted by saliva, semen, blood, semen or vaginal secretions. Hepatitis A can be prevented by vaccinations and washing your hands after using the bathroom or changing diapers. Routine testing is not recommended.

Hepatitis B: This virus is transmitted by blood and other body fluids. This is a serious infection that can become chronic and lead to liver cancer. Hepatitis B is also prevented by vaccination. MSM, IV drug users, persons born in countries with high incidence of Hep B and partner's of persons with Hep B or whose partner engages in high risk activities should be tested.

Hepatitis C: Hepatitis C is passed by blood only. It is not clear yet if it can be sexually transmitted. You should be tested if you are an IV drug user or have a partner who is an IV drug user. There is no vaccine for Hepatitis C.

What can SHPS do for me?

If you have any questions please call or come into Ventura College Student Health and Psychological Services. Routine testing usually costs about \$45 in our office. We can refer you to clinics that offer low or no cost testing. Hepatitis B vaccinations are also available in our office. It is a series of 3 shots at a cost of \$32 each and Hepatitis A are \$35 each (series of two)

Free condoms and free advice are available during our office hours!