



Love Bugs

### Some STIs are;

- Anal-genital warts
- Candidiasis (*Thrush, Balanitis*)
- Chlamydia (*Kla-MID-ee-aa*)
- Genital Herpes Simplex (*Cold Sores*)
- Gonorrhoea (*The Clap*)
- Hepatitis A, B and C
- Lymphogranuloma Venereum (*LGV*)
- Molluscum Contagiosum
- Non-Specific Urethritis (*NSU*)
- Pediculosis Pubis (*Crabs*)
- Scabies
- Syphilis (*The Pox*)

Quick reference chart page 10 to 13

*Having enjoyable and healthy sex is an important part of life for many gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men.*

This booklet provides you with up to date information on Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), *other than HIV*, that are common among gay and bisexual men.

It covers information on the symptoms and prevention of STIs, the importance of a regular check-up at a Sexually Transmitted Infection or Genito-Urinary Medicine (STI/GUM) clinic and what steps to take if you think you have caught an STI. Most STIs are easily treated and cured if diagnosed early.

For HIV transmission details see other GHN publications or go to [www.gayhealthnetwork.ie](http://www.gayhealthnetwork.ie)

## What are STIs?

*STIs are a range of infections easily passed on during sexual contact.*

They are caused by bacteria and viruses present in blood, cum (semen), vaginal fluids, saliva or on the skin. STIs can be passed from; the penis, anus, vagina or mouth, through skin to skin contact or sharing fingers, hands or sex toys.

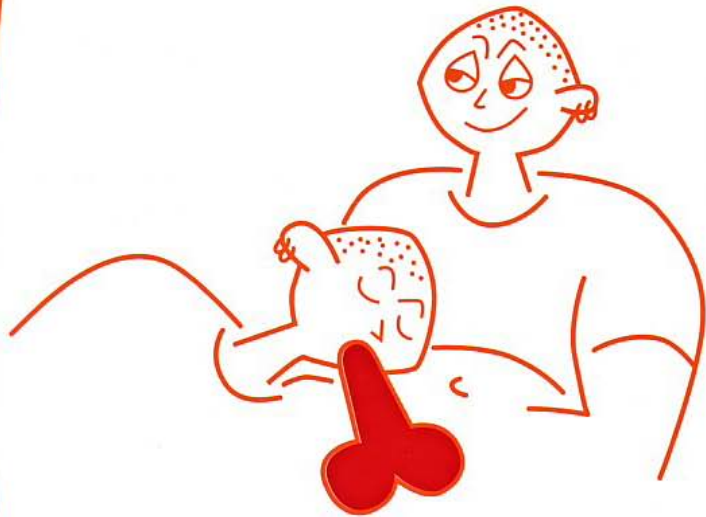
*If infections are not diagnosed early and treated they can cause serious and permanent damage to your health, and in rare circumstances may be life threatening.*

## Who is at risk?

If you are sexually active you are at risk of getting an STI. The more sex partners you have the higher the risk of coming into contact with someone who is infected with an STI. All gay and bisexual men who are sexually active are advised to have a regular STI check-up every six months.

## What puts me at risk?

Most STIs are much more easily spread than HIV. Some sexual practices, which may be described as 'safer' in terms of HIV transmission, might still be risky for catching other STI's. STIs are mainly passed on through unprotected genital contact (penis to penis; penis to anus; penis to vagina; oral sex – penis to mouth, mouth to vagina; and rimming - mouth to anus). Sharing fingers, hands or sex toys can also pass on certain STIs.



## What are the symptoms of STIs?

*Remember, if you are infected with an STI you may not develop any symptoms at all.*

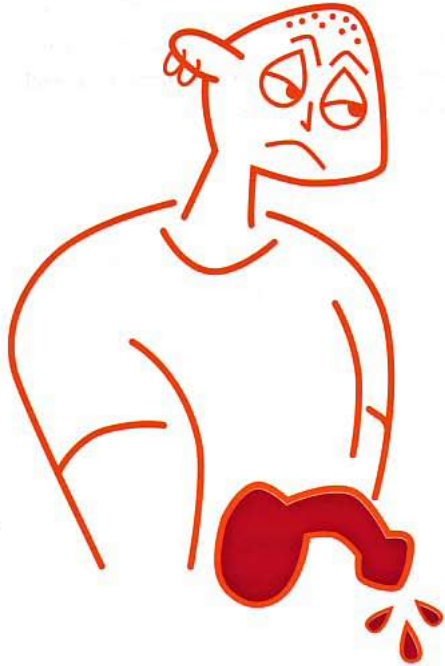
An STI screening is the only way to diagnose any of these infections. *However STIs can produce a wide range of symptoms including:*

- Discharge from your penis or anus
- Pain when peeing
- Discomfort or pain in the anus/ rectum
- Blood in piss or shit
- Swollen balls (testicles)
- Sores (ulcers/blisters) or growths on or around your penis or anus
- Rashes
- Itching or irritation in the penis or anus

- Sores/ulcers/blisters in or around the mouth
- Inflamed and swollen lymph glands in the groin
- Swollen lymph glands in the armpit or neck
- Sore Throat
- Fever and feeling ill

If you notice any of these symptoms or you feel you may have been infected you should contact your STI/GUM clinic or doctor immediately.

*The sooner the infections are treated the less chance there is of infecting others or of serious health problems later in life.*



## How can I avoid infection?

If you are sexually active there is no guaranteed way of avoiding an STI. However the following points will help to reduce the chances of getting an STI.

- Using a condom during anal or vaginal sex will significantly reduce the risk of infection (particularly for Syphilis, Gonorrhoea, Chlamydia, LGV, NSU and Hepatitis).
- Always use a water or silicon based lubricant (such as Wet Stuff, ID Glide, KY Gel) as oil based lubricants (eg. Vaseline) will damage the condom.
- Using a flavoured condom for oral sex will reduce the risk of infection (particularly for Syphilis, Gonorrhoea, Chlamydia, LGV, NSU and Hepatitis)  
Note: Lip gloss / balm are oil based which can damage condoms.

- Using dental dams as a barrier for rimming.
- (a dental dam is simply a square of latex).
- Try to avoid contact with body fluids such as cum, pre-cum, shit, blood, piss or sores during sexual contact.
- Do not share fingers, hands or sex toys, dildos etc. (use latex gloves or condoms).
- Get vaccinated against Hepatitis A + B; vaccinations should be available free of charge from your STI / GUM clinic, or from your GP through the medical card or payment.

*Note: Using alcohol or other drugs can affect your decision-making capacity and may lead you to take risks you would not take when sober.*

What is it?	How did I get it?	When will it show?	How is it detected?	What to watch out for	Treatment
Genital and Perianal Warts (Human Papilloma Virus, HPV)	Any sexual or skin contact with warts	14 days to 600 days	Visual inspection	Small bumpy cluster of lumps (fleshy growths) around cock, shaft of cock, around or inside arse/rectum. HPV can also be a "silent" invisible infection	Warts may be removed by applying solution to burn/dry off, or freezing off. They can return as always infected with the HPV virus
Candida (Thrush/Balaniti) (Yeast Infection)	Reaction to antibiotics.	2 days to 21 days.	Visual inspection, swab	In men: called Balanitis: redness, soreness of the head of the cock, discharge under the foreskin, inflamed foreskin, itching around the arse.	Special cream
Chlamydia (Kla-MID-ee-aa) (bacteria)	Fucking, sucking, rimming, close genital contact, fucking between legs etc.	2 to 30 days (doesn't always show up in 50% of men infected)	Urine sample and / or swab from cock, arse and mouth	Burning sensation when pissing. A clear to grey discharge from cock, a need to piss more often, swollen balls, Inflammation of the arse and possible inflammation of the eyes ("pink eye"). If untreated causes epididymitis/pelvic infections in men.	Antibiotics: a follow up test to see if effective.
Herpes: Herpes Simplex Virus (HSV) Type 1 and HSV Type 2.	Kissing, fucking, sucking, rimming, close genital contact.	1 to 100 days	Visual inspection, sample from open sore.	Herpes is mainly a silent (invisible) infection, but some people have outbreaks of sores, blisters and ulcers on mouth, genital areas and arse. Once infected it remains for life. However, it can be transmitted without sign of infection.	No cure. First attack worse. Goes away but still infected with virus. Treatment available to reduce attacks. Herpes is a significant co-factor for increased risk of HIV
Gonorrhoea (clap) (Bacteria)	Fucking, sucking, fingering, fisting, sharing sex toys, rimming, close genital contact, fucking between legs etc.	5-7 days, up to 30 days. (doesn't always show up in 50% of men infected)	Swab from cock, arse and mouth	Burning sensation when pissing. A yellowish discharge from cock, a need to piss more often, swollen balls, discharge from arse and fresh blood on the feces (shit), itching. Sore throat. Possible eye infection if eyes touched.	Antibiotics: a follow up test to see if effective.
Hepatitis: A. (Virus)	Rimming, fingering arse, handling used condoms or dildos.	14 days to 200 days	Blood Test	Hepatitis A: attacks the liver. Can cause nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite, yellow skin/eyeballs, aches and pains, dark piss, and pale shit. There is no chronic (long-term) infection.	Preventative Vaccine for Hepatitis A. (May have immunity from previous infection).
Hepatitis: B. (Virus)	Fucking, sucking, rimming, sharing drug equipment, tooth brushes or razors.	14 days to 200 days	Blood Test	Hepatitis B: attacks the liver. Can cause nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite, yellow skin/eyeballs, aches and pains, dark piss, and pale shit. It can be a chronic long-term infection.	Preventative Vaccine for Hepatitis B. (May have immunity from previous infection).
Hepatitis: C. (Virus)	From Blood: Sharing drug equipment (snorting or injecting equipment) or fisting, sharing sex toys. Possible also by unprotected fucking.	10 days	Blood test	Hepatitis C: attacks the liver. Can cause nausea, vomiting loss of appetite and can be a chronic (long-term) infection.	No vaccine. Certain Cancer Treatment Drugs

What is it?	How did I get it?	When will it show?	How is it detected?	What to watch out for	Treatment
(LGV) lymphogranuloma venereum (associated with Chlamydia)	Fucking, sucking, fisting, sharing sex toys, rim- ming, close genital contact, fucking between the legs etc.	3 days to 30 days	Sometimes swabs. Sample from Lymph Nodes. Blood tests.	1st stage: 3-21 days small painless sore in the mouth, cock or arse, inflammation of the urethra, discharge or pain when pissing. 2nd stage: 10-30 days or even longer-painfully swollen lymph glands, in the groin, which may drain and bleed, or swollen lymph glands in the throat or armpit, fever, feeling unwell. Inflammation may develop-pus or blood discharge or pain, sores inside the rectum(Proctitis) . 3rd stage: Inflammation, scarring and tissue damage around the genitals or inside the anus. Hemorrhoid like growths in the anus or swollen genitals.	Certain antibiotics
Molluscum Contagiosum (Virus)	Close physical contact also towels and clothing.	14 days to 100 days.	Visual Inspection.	Pearly, spots on the skin, may look white and have a dip in the centre and are hard when touched. Usually inner thigh, genital area.	Will disappear without treatment, between 2 weeks and 2 years. Other-wise freezing treatment.
Non Specific Urethritis (bacteria)	Fucking, sucking, rimming, close genital contact, fucking between legs etc.	2 to 100 days	Swab from cock, arse	Burning sensation when pissing. A clear to grey discharge from cock, a need to piss more often, swollen balls, inflammation of the arse and possible inflammation of the eyes ("pink eye"). If untreated causes epididymitis/pelvic infections in men.	Treatment with Antibiotics
Pubic Lice (crabs or butter- flies of love)	Close body contact	14 to 21 days	Visual Inspection	Crab lice live in course hair, pubic, underarm, hairy legs and chest. Itching especially at night or when hot: small crab like creatures and nits in pubic hair	A lotion is applied all over the hair on the body (not face or head). (There is a special shampoo for head lice)
Scabies (small mite)	Close body contact especially during sex. Clothes, bedding etc.	14 to 42 days	Visual Inspection	The mite buries itself under the skin causing a rash. Itching, worse in heat and at night, on genitals or arse, between fingers, and wrist and legs.	Lotion applied all over body (not head or face).
Syphilis (Pox) (Bacteria)	Fucking, sucking, rimming, fingering, fisting, and if you come in contact with single sore on either the mouth, cock, balls, vagina.	9 to 90 days (average 21 days)	Always through a blood test for syphilis anti-bodies or through inspection of infectious sores (Syphilis can imi- tate other infections)	1st stage (primary): small reddish brown sore/chancere (shan-ker), firm/round and usually painless, stays visible for up to 42 days; 2nd Stage (secondary): A rash any- where on the body usually copper-penny spots on the soles of feet and palms of hands; flu-like feelings; 3rd Stage (latent/hidden): after two years not infec- tious; 4th stage (tertiary) but can cause damage to heart, brain, nervous system, eyes, mental health, death.	Antibiotics easily cure. (stage 3). So early detection is essential. Follow up blood test will monitor effect of treatment.

Remember you do not always show signs of an infection

## *What about HIV and STIs?*

Avoiding an STI infection is important for all men who are sexually active. For HIV Positive men the importance is much greater. As HIV may have already damaged your immune system thus making the impact of some STI's more severe, and more difficult to treat. If you are HIV negative there is strong evidence, which suggests that if you have an untreated STI, it can be easier for you to contract HIV from a sex partner.

### *Hepatitis A, B and C.*

These are viruses that can cause damage to the liver, the symptoms can be difficult to detect and can range from no symptoms to mild flu-like symptoms to exhaustion and jaundice. Fortunately Hepatitis A & B infection can be prevented through vaccination, which you can get for free at the GMHP clinic or your local

STI/GUM clinic. Remember, you must complete the course of injections to gain complete protection.

Hepatitis C is more associated with blood and can be got through sharing; all injecting drug equipment, snorting equipment (straws), unsterile equipment used for tattoos, body piercing, or skin penetration and sharing razors or toothbrushes.

Transmission of Hepatitis C through sex only occurs if blood is present. This can include activities such as rough sex, sharing sex toys, hands/fists. It can be transmitted through penetrative anal or vaginal sex, but is less common this way. Having HIV or other STI's increases the risk of contracting Hepatitis C.

### *What do I do if I become infected with an STI?*

First of all, don't panic! Most STIs can be easily and effectively treated and cured. The sooner you get treatment the less chance of complications. We recommend that you get tested at your nearest STI/GUM clinic or at a doctor who can do the tests.

### *What happens at a clinic?*

Sexually Transmitted Infection or Genito-Urinary Medicine (STI/GUM Clinics) offer a free and confidential service. Some clinics operate an appointment system while others are on a drop-in basis. Check which system the clinic operates before you call in to them. After you register at the clinic a doctor or health care worker will talk to you about your risk of infection and any symptoms you may have. The doctor will then arrange any necessary tests.

### *What type of tests takes place for STIs?*

Swabs will be taken from the penis, anus and mouth to test for bacterial infections such as Gonorrhoea and NSU. A blood sample will be taken from your arm to test for Syphilis and Hepatitis. You will be asked to provide a urine sample to test for Chlamydia. Swabs can also be taken from sores to check for Herpes, Syphilis or LGV.

(Most clinics offer a HIV test as part of their routine screening. We recommend you speak to a counsellor beforehand. If you do not wish to take the HIV test, you should make this clear to the doctor).

Read the "IN THE KNOW" booklet on HIV testing. Available to download at [www.gayhealthnetwork.ie](http://www.gayhealthnetwork.ie)



### *What happens if I have an STI?*

If you test positive for an STI infection (Syphilis, Gonorrhoea, Chlamydia, NSU or LGV) you will be given a course of antibiotics. Creams and other treatment are available for Herpes, Balanitis or Warts, (If you test positive for Hepatitis or HIV you are referred to a medical consultant for follow up care.)

A Health Advisor or Doctor will also encourage you to inform any current or recent sexual partner/s of your infection. So they may get tested and treated if necessary. Remember they could have an infection without knowing it. If you have tested for an STI it is advisable to abstain from sex until the infection has cleared. For certain infections and treatments the doctor will arrange a follow-up visit to determine if it has cleared completely.



### *Who has access to information about me at the clinic?*

All information about you is kept confidential at the clinic and can only be accessed by the clinic staff.  
(If you are treated by your own GP the information may be used on an insurance form).

Certain STI's are notifiable, if you have an infection, ask what procedures are used to report it.

For more information on HIV testing, transmission and other health issues affecting gay and bisexual men please see the range of other Gay Health Network publications, widely available at various clinics or from the network directly or on the web

[www.gayhealthnetwork.ie](http://www.gayhealthnetwork.ie)

or other websites listed.



## LISTINGS

### Gay & Bisexual Men's Health Support Services in Ireland

**Gay Health Network Ireland**  
C/O Outhouse, 105 Capel Street,  
Dublin 1  
[www.gayhealthnetwork.ie](http://www.gayhealthnetwork.ie)

**The Rainbow Project**  
2 Union St., Belfast  
028 9031 9030 (048 from Rol)  
E: [manager@rainbow-project.org](mailto:manager@rainbow-project.org)  
[www.rainbow-project.org](http://www.rainbow-project.org)

**The Rainbow Project**  
37 Clarendon St., Derry  
028 7128 3030 (048 from Rol)  
E: [manager@rainbow-project.org](mailto:manager@rainbow-project.org)  
[www.rainbow-project.org](http://www.rainbow-project.org)

**Southern  
Gay Men's Health Project**  
8 South Main Street, Cork.

021 427 8470  
E: [info@gayhealthproject.com](mailto:info@gayhealthproject.com)  
[www.gayhealthproject.com](http://www.gayhealthproject.com)

**Gay Men's Health Project**  
Outhouse, 105 Capel St., Dublin 1  
01 8734952  
E: [gmp Outreach@eircom.net](mailto:gmp Outreach@eircom.net)  
[www.gaymensheathproject.ie](http://www.gaymensheathproject.ie)

**The First Tuesday Club**  
(HIV+ Gay and Bi-sexual Men's'  
Social Club) Open heart House,  
2 St Mary's Place, Dublin 7  
01 830 5000  
[www.openhearthouse.ie](http://www.openhearthouse.ie)  
E: [james@openhearthouse.ie](mailto:james@openhearthouse.ie)

*Sexual Health, Testing,  
Information and Support  
Listings:*

**Notes:** TFA=Telephone for  
Appointment, DI=Drop-in

## ULSTER

### STI/GUM Clinics

**Royal Victoria Hospital**  
Belfast (TFA)  
028 9063 4050 (048 from Rol)

**Altnagelvin Hospital**  
Derry (TFA)  
028 7161 1269 (048 from Rol)

**Causway Hospital**  
Colrairie, Co Derry (TFA)  
028 7034 6028 (048 from Rol)

**Daisy Hill Hospital**  
Newry, Co Down (TFA).  
028 3083 5050 (048 from Rol)

### Gay Health & LGBT Resource Centres & Telephone Helplines

**The Rainbow Project**  
2 Union St., Belfast  
028 9031 9030 (048 from Rol)  
www.rainbow-project.org  
E: manager@rainbow-project.org

**The Rainbow Project**  
37 Clarendon St., Derry  
028 7128 3030 (048 from Rol)  
E: manager@rainbow-project.org  
www.rainbow-project.org

**Queer Space**  
Cara Friend, Lower Donegal St.,  
Belfast  
www.queerspace.org.uk

**Belfast HelpLine**  
028 903 22023 (048 from Rol)

**Derry HelpLine**  
028 712 83030 (048 from Rol)

### HIV/Sexual Health Resource Centres & Telephone Help lines

**HIV Support Centre**  
The Warehouse,  
7 James Street South, Belfast  
028 902 49268 (048 from Rol)

**AIDS Help North West**  
Letterkenny, Donegal  
074 912 5500

**AIDS Line NI.**  
Freefone 0800 137 437(NOI)

**AIDS Help Line Donegal**  
074 912 5500

## MUNSTER

### STI/GUM Clinics

**Victoria Hospital,**  
Cork (TFA)  
021 496 6 844

**General Hospital,**  
Tralee, Co Kerry (TFA)  
021 496 6844

**Regional Hospital,**  
Waterford (TFA)  
051 842 646

**General Hospital,**  
Clonmel, Co Tipperary (TFA)  
051 842 646

**Regional Hospital,**  
Limerick (TFA)  
061 482 382

**General Hospital,**  
Ennis, Co Clare(TFA)  
061 482 382

**General Hospital,**  
Nenagh, Co Tipperary(TFA)  
061 482 382

### Gay Health & LGBT Resource Centres & Telephone Helplines

#### Southern

**Gay Men's Health Project**  
8 South Main Street, Cork.  
021 427 8470  
E:info@gayhealthproject.com  
www.gayhealthproject.com

#### The Other Place

8 South Main Street, Cork.  
021 427 8470  
E:info@gayhealthproject.com  
www.gayhealthproject.com

#### Rainbow Centre

29 Mallow Street, Limerick  
061 468 411  
www.pinkpages.org/limerick.html

#### Limerick Help Line

061 310101

#### Cork Help Line

021 427 1087

#### PRISM

Area Partnership,  
Tramore Road, Waterford  
087 9749306  
www.gaywaterford.com

### HIV/Sexual Health Resource Centres & Telephone Help lines

#### Sexual Health Centre

16 Peters Street, Cork  
021 427 5837

#### Red Ribbon Project

9 Cecil Street, Limerick  
061 314 354  
www.redribbonproject.com

#### Sexual Health Helpline Cork

021 427 6676

#### AIDS Helpline Limerick

061 316 661

## LEINSTER

### STI/GUM Clinics

#### GMHP Clinic

(Drop-In Tues and Weds pm)  
19 Haddington Road, Dublin 4  
01-669 9500  
E: gmhp1@eircom.net  
www.gaymenshealthproject.ie

#### St James's Hospital

Dublin 8 (TFA)  
01 416 2315/6

#### Mater Hospital

Dublin 7 (TFA)  
01 803 2063

#### General Hospital Carlow,

Co Carlow (TFA)  
051 842 646

### Gay Health & LGBT Resource Centres & Telephone Helplines

**Gay Men's Health Project**  
Outhouse,

105 Capel St, Dublin 1  
01 8734952  
www.gaymenshealthproject.ie  
E: gmhpoutreach@eircom.net

#### JOHNNY (Gay Peer Group)

C/O Outhouse,  
105 Capel Street, Dublin 1  
www.johnny.ie

#### Outhouse,

LGBT Community Centre  
105 Capel Street, Dublin 1  
01 8734932  
www.outhouse.ie  
E: info@outhouse.ie

#### Dundalk Outcomers

8 Roden Place, Dundalk  
042 932 9816  
www.outcomers.com

#### Dublin 01 872 1055

www.gayswitchboard.ie

**HIV/Sexual Health  
Resource Centres &  
Telephone Helplines**

**HIV/Drugs Helpline**  
FreePhone,  
1800 459 459 (ROI)

**Dublin AIDS Alliance**  
53 Parnell Street, Dublin 1  
01 873 3799  
[www.dublinaidsalliance.com](http://www.dublinaidsalliance.com)

**Open heart House,**  
2 St Mary's Place, Dublin 7  
01 830 5000  
[www.openhearthouse.ie](http://www.openhearthouse.ie)  
E: [james@openhearthouse.ie](mailto:james@openhearthouse.ie)

**CONNAUGHT**

**STI/GUM Clinics**

**Regional Hospital**  
Galway (TFA)  
091 525 200

**General Hospital**  
Ballinasloe, Co Galway (TFA)  
090 964 8200 (ex 676)

**General Hospital**  
Castlebar, Co Mayo (TFA)  
094 902 1733

**Regional Hospital**  
Sligo (TFA)  
071 917 0473

**Gay Telephone Help lines  
& Groups**

**Galway**  
091 566 134

**Castlebar "Outwest"**  
094 937 2479  
[www.outwestireland.ie](http://www.outwestireland.ie)

**HIV/Sexual Health Resource  
Centres & Telephone  
Help lines**

**AIDS Helpline Galway**  
091 562 213

**AIDS Help West**  
Augustine St., Galway.  
091 566 266  
[www.aidswest.ie](http://www.aidswest.ie)



Many thanks to all involved in this publication  
and the medical advisers for feedback.

Produced by Gay Health Network Ireland  
Updated June 2005  
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Design: Maurice Farrell  
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**Gay Health Network**

For further information contact GHN

c/o Outhouse, 105 Capel Street, Dublin 1 T 01 873 4952  
[www.gayhealthnetwork.ie](http://www.gayhealthnetwork.ie)

