



# PROJECT YOUTH WELLNESS

**WEEK 6: SEX AS A HEALTH BEHAVIOR**

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# SEX AS A HEALTH BEHAVIOR

Sex is a natural physical activity that involves sexual contact that includes vaginal, oral, or anal intercourse as well as other forms of sexual touch or stimulation. However, sex is not just an act. It is an emotional, relational, and cultural bond that requires consent, communication, safety, and respect on both sides. Often, due to a lack of communication and proper protection between partners, sex happens to be one of the easiest ways to spread transmitted diseases, which can cause long-term or short-term health problems. Before we dive into sex and how it affects your health, consider the questions below:

Why is it important to understand the significance of healthy sex?

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Does knowledge about STDs/STIs play a crucial role in exploring your sexuality in a healthy way?

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Throughout this unit, we will learn about the different factors that increase sexual awareness and healthy behavior. We will talk about how it can specifically impact young people.

# What do you know?

Write down things you already know about common STDs such as symptoms, commonalities, and treatment options.



Chlamydia

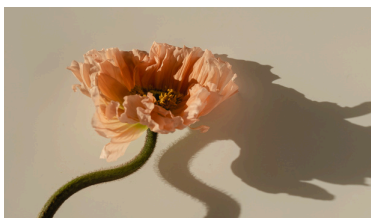
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Gonorrhea

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Syphilis

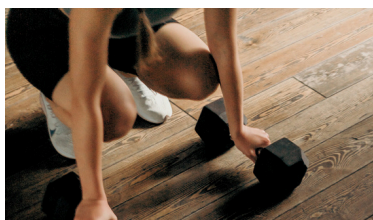
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Oral Herpes - HSV-1

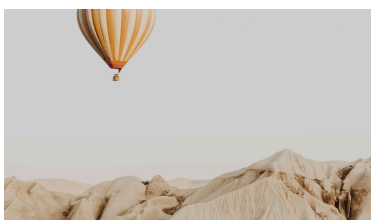
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Genital Herpes - HSV-2

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Human Papillomavirus-  
HPV

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Trichomoniasis

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HIV/AIDS

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Viral Hepatitis C

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# Curable STI's

(Treated effectively with antibiotics or antivirals — follow-up testing may be needed)

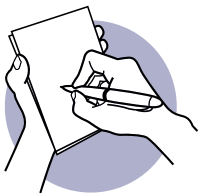
STI	What is it?	Key Symptoms	Transmitted Through
<b>Chlamydia</b>	A bacterial infection caused by <i>Chlamydia trachomatis</i>	Vaginal/penile discharge, painful or burning urination, swollen or painful testicles, bleeding between periods	Sexual contact (intercourse, anal sex, and oral sex)
<b>Gonorrhea</b>	A bacterial infection caused by <i>Neisseria gonorrhoeae</i> (“the clap” or “drip”).	Discharge, painful urination, bleeding between periods, testicular pain	Vaginal, anal, or oral sex with an infected person and can be passed from mother to baby during childbirth
<b>Syphilis</b>	A bacterial infection caused by <i>Treponema pallidum</i> .	Painless sore (primary), rash, flu-like symptoms (secondary), no symptoms (latent), organ damage (tertiary)	Vaginal, anal, or oral sex; direct contact with syphilis sores
<b>Trichomoniasis</b>	An infection with the parasite <i>Trichomonas vaginalis</i> .	Foul-smelling discharge, genital irritation, burning urination	Vaginal, oral, or anal sex, genital contact, and sharing sex toys or towels

# Non-Curable (Treatable) STI's

(Cannot be eliminated from the body, but symptoms can be managed and transmission reduced)

STI	What is it?	Key Symptoms	Transmitted Through
HPV	A viral infection with many strains; some cause genital warts and cancer risk	Often silent; may cause genital warts, itching, or discomfort	Vaginal, anal, or oral sex; skin-to-skin genital contact
HSV-2 (Genital Herpes)	A virus that primarily causes genital herpes	Painful blisters/sores, flu-like symptoms during first outbreak	Vaginal, anal, or oral sex; skin-to-skin contact with sores
Hepatitis B	A virus that leads to inflammation and swelling of the liver	Often silent; possible jaundice, fatigue, joint pain, dark urine	Infected blood, body fluids, or contaminated needles

## Notes:



- Most STIs are asymptomatic at first – regular testing is key
- Many infections (Chlamydia, Gonorrhea, Trich) are easily curable
- Others (HPV, HSV, Hepatitis B/C) are manageable or preventable
- Syphilis and Hep C can be dangerous if untreated
- HPV and Hepatitis A/B are vaccine-preventable

**How does knowing the difference between curable and incurable STIs change the way you think about testing, prevention, or talking to a partner about sexual health?**

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# TYPES OF SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES

Regardless of whether an STD is curable or incurable, all sexually transmitted diseases can cause irreversible damage to the body if left untreated.



## Bacterial

Caused by bacteria that invade the mucous membranes or skin; can be cured with antibiotics; may cause complications such as pelvic inflammatory disease, infertility, ectopic pregnancy, or congenital syphilis if untreated



## Viral

Caused by viruses that infect the cells of the body; cannot be cured but can be managed with antiviral drugs; may cause recurrent outbreaks, chronic inflammation, liver damage, immunodeficiency, or cancer if untreated



## Protozoan

Caused by protozoa that infect the genital tract; can be cured with antiprotozoal drugs; may cause vaginitis, cervicitis, urethritis, or prostatitis if untreated

Consider common sexually transmitted diseases. Using the boxes below, sort them into the appropriate categories based on whether you believe they are curable or incurable.

## Curable

## Incurable

# EFFECTS OF SEXUAL ACTIVITY ON THE BODY

Sexual activity can have serious effects on both your physical and mental health, especially when it involves risky behaviors like unprotected sex, multiple partners, or substance use. Some effects may appear immediately, such as pain, irritation, unusual discharge, or visible sores, while others may take months or even years to develop. These longer-term effects can include infertility, organ damage, chronic illness, or increased risk for certain cancers. That's why it's important to understand how different sexual behaviors are linked to the spread of STDs/STIs and their effects on the body.

Using the word bank on the left, DRAW lines to the sexual behaviors on the right that you think are most commonly linked to each STD/STI. Then STAR the disease(s) and behavior(s) that concern you the most in terms of risk and potential harm.

## WORD BANK

### COMMON STD(S)/STI(S)

1. HIV
2. CHLAMYDIA
3. GONORRHEA
4. TRICHOMONIASIS
5. SYPHILIS
6. HPV
7. HSV -1 (ORAL HERPES)
8. HSV -2 (GENITAL HERPES)
9. HEPATITIS

### RISKY SEXUAL BEHAVIORS

- A. Unprotected vaginal sex
- B. Unprotected anal sex
- C. Unprotected oral sex
- D. Multiple sexual partners
- E. Sex with partners of unknown STD/STI status
- F. Sex under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- G. Sharing needles or injection equipment



# EFFECTS OF SEXUAL ACTIVITY ON THE BODY

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) can show up in different ways in the body. Sometimes, a person may notice signs or symptoms right away, and other times, they might not feel anything at all. Over time, some STIs may affect different parts of the body, especially if they go untreated.

Learning how STIs interact with your health can help you make confident, informed decisions and take steps to protect yourself and your future.

Using the word bank on the left, **DRAW** lines to the areas of the body on the right that you think are mostly affected. Then **STAR** the STI's/STD's and area(s) of the body that concern you the most in terms of "dangerous" effects.

A. CHLAMYDIA

B. GONORRHEA

C. ORAL HERPES (HSV-1)

D. GENITAL HERPES (HSV-2)

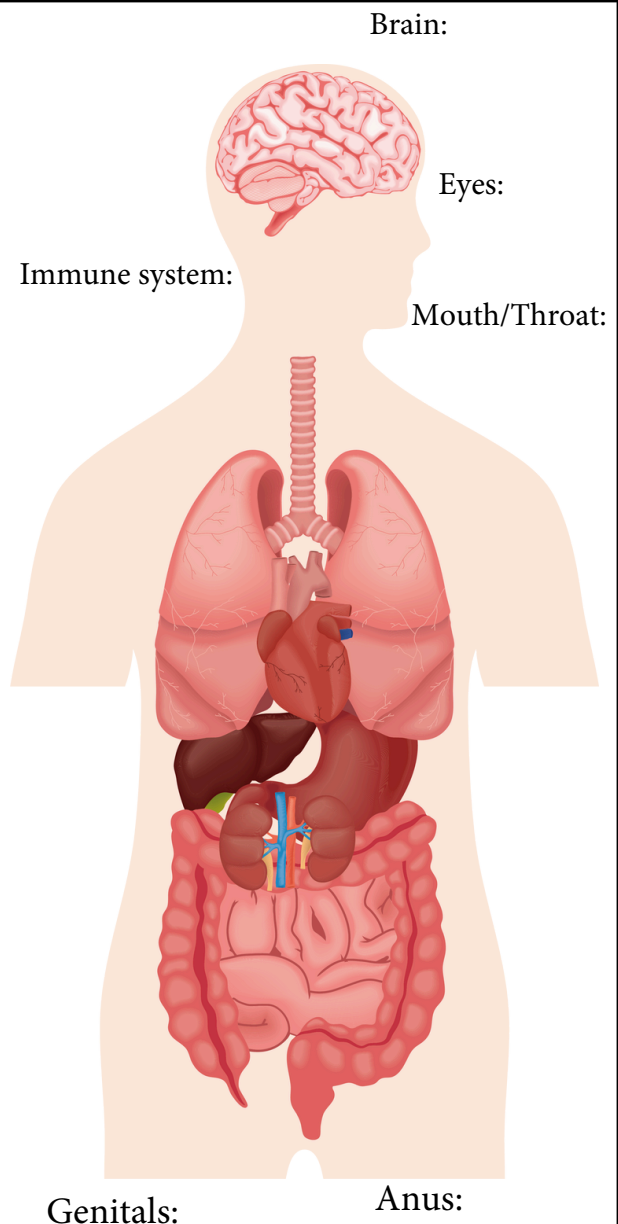
E. SYPHILIS

F. TRICHOMONIASIS

G. HPV

H. HIV

I. HEPATITIS



# EFFECTS OF SEXUAL ACTIVITY ON THE BODY

Please review the section below, which summarizes the how various STDs/STIs impact different body parts and overall physical health.

## EYES

Some STDs can infect the eyes through contact with infected fluids. For example, **gonorrhea** may cause eye infections characterized by redness, pain, and discharge. **Hepatitis B** can lead to eye inflammation, and the virus can enter the body if infected blood or fluids come into contact with the eyes. **HSV-1** can cause herpes infections in the eye, which, if left untreated, may lead to corneal scarring and vision loss.



## MOUTH

Some STDs can affect the mouth area. **HSV-1** commonly causes oral herpes, leading to cold sores or fever blisters around the mouth. **HSV-2** can also cause painful sores in or around the mouth, starting as blisters that may break open and take weeks to heal. The first outbreak of herpes in the mouth may include flu-like symptoms such as fever, body aches, and swollen glands. **Hepatitis B** can enter the body through cuts or mucous membranes in the mouth when exposed to infected blood or body fluids.



## THROAT

Several STDs can affect the throat through oral sex. **Gonorrhea** can infect the throat, sometimes causing symptoms but often showing no signs, and is spread through unprotected vaginal or oral sex with an infected partner. **Syphilis** may cause flu-like symptoms, including a sore throat during its second stage; if untreated, it can progress to more serious stages. HPV infection in the throat usually has no immediate symptoms but can cause throat cancers years later, especially in areas like the base of the tongue and tonsils.



## IMMUNE SYSTEM

STDs like **HIV** and **herpes** can affect the immune system in different ways. HIV attacks the body's immune system, making it harder to fight off germs and illnesses. If it's not treated, it can lead to **AIDS**. **Genital herpes** doesn't usually weaken the immune system, but it can cause more serious outbreaks in people with weakened immunity.

## GENITAL AND ANAL AREAS

STDs can affect the genital and anal areas, including the vagina, penis, anus, and surrounding skin. **Chlamydia** and **gonorrhea** may cause unusual discharge, pain, or burning during urination, and in some cases, bleeding or swelling. **Herpes** can lead to painful blisters or sores on or near the genitals. **Syphilis** may cause hidden, painless sores. **Trichomoniasis** can cause itching, burning, or unusual-smelling discharge, especially in women.



## HEALTH CONDITIONS

STDs can result in a variety of negative health conditions. **Early HIV infection** may cause mild flu-like symptoms such as fever, muscle aches, and swollen glands that last a few weeks. As HIV progresses, symptoms can include night sweats, fatigue, diarrhea, swollen lymph nodes, and infections like oral or vaginal yeast infections. **Syphilis** can also start with flu-like symptoms and rashes on the palms and soles. If untreated, it can lead to serious problems affecting the heart, brain, and other organs many years later. Herpes outbreaks may cause flu-like symptoms like fever, body aches, and swollen glands during the first outbreak. **Viral hepatitis** infections often cause symptoms such as loss of appetite, fatigue, joint pain, stomach pain, nausea, vomiting, fever, and diarrhea.



# STD'S 101

## Curable STD's

(Treated effectively with antibiotics or antivirals — follow-up testing may be needed)

STD	Key Symptoms	Treatment	Prevention
<b>Chlamydia</b>	Vaginal/penile discharge, painful urination, testicular pain, bleeding between periods	Antibiotics (Azithromycin or Doxycycline)	Regular testing, condoms, avoid sex until cleared
<b>Gonorrhea</b>	Discharge, painful urination, bleeding between periods, testicular pain	Antibiotics (Azithromycin or Doxycycline)	Condoms, reduce number of partners, regular testing
<b>Syphilis</b>	Painless sore (primary), rash, flu-like symptoms (secondary), no symptoms (latent), organ damage (tertiary)	Antibiotics (Penicillin)	Condoms, early detection, routine blood testing
<b>Trichomoniasis</b>	Foul-smelling discharge, genital irritation, burning urination	Metronidazole or Tinidazole	Condoms (partial), treat both partners
<b>Hepatitis A</b>	Jaundice, diarrhea, fatigue, nausea	Self-resolving; supportive care	<b>Vaccine</b> , hygiene, clean food/water
<b>Hepatitis C</b>	Often silent, or fatigue, nausea, joint pain	Oral antivirals (8–12 weeks) — <b>95%+ cure rate</b>	Don't share needles, test if high-risk

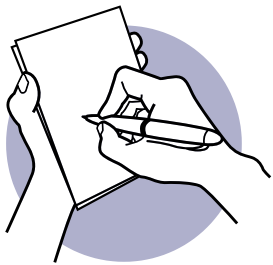
# STD'S 101

## Non- curable but Treatable STD's

(Cannot be eliminated from the body, but symptoms can be managed and transmission reduced)

STD	Key Symptoms	Treatment	Prevention
HPV	Often silent; can cause genital warts, abnormal Pap, cancer	Wart removal; HPV vaccine prevents high-risk types	Vaccine, condoms (partial), Pap smears
HSV-2 (Genital Herpes)	Painful blisters/sores, flu-like symptoms during first outbreak	Daily antivirals (Valacyclovir, Acyclovir)	Avoid sex during outbreaks, meds, condoms
Hepatitis B	Jaundice, fatigue, joint pain, dark urine	Chronic cases managed with antivirals	Vaccine, condoms, avoid blood contact

## Notes:



- Most STDs are asymptomatic at first — regular testing is key
- Many infections (Chlamydia, Gonorrhea, Trich) are easily curable
- Others (HPV, HSV, Hepatitis B/C) are manageable or preventable
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**How does knowing the difference between curable and incurable STDs change the way you think about testing, prevention, or talking to a partner about sexual health?**

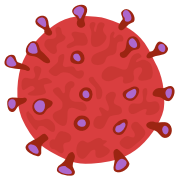
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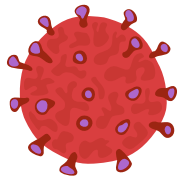
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# HIV 101



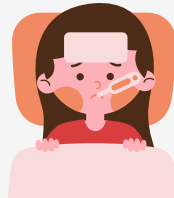
**HIV** (human immunodeficiency virus) is a virus that attacks the body's immune system. Without treatment, it can lead to AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency syndrome).

## SPECTRUM OF DISEASE

EXPOSURE	INFECTION	INITIAL SYMPTOMS	ASYMPTOMATIC PERIOD	HIV ILLNESS	AIDS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No exposure</li><li>• Asymptomatic</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• WINDOW PERIOD*</li><li>• Asymptomatic</li></ul>	<p>Lasts a few weeks</p> <p>Mild, flu-like symptoms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fever</li><li>• Muscle aches</li><li>• Swollen glands</li></ul>	<p>8-11 years (Average progression, may vary based on person)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Night sweats</li><li>• Fever</li><li>• Fatigue</li><li>• Diarrhea</li><li>• Swollen lymph nodes</li><li>• Oral and vaginal candidiasis</li><li>• PID</li><li>• PAP smear positive for HPV</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• T-cells &lt;200</li><li>• 1 or more OLS (PCP, KS, TB, CMV, candidiasis, etc.)</li><li>• Wasting Syndrome</li><li>• HIV-related dementia</li></ul>

**WINDOW PERIOD** is the amount of time your body takes to produce antibodies, usually 2-12 weeks.

In rare cases, it can take 6 months-1 year.



Most people have **flu-like symptoms** within 2 to 4 weeks after infection. Symptoms may last for a few days or several weeks.

## How is HIV Spread?

Most people get HIV from unprotected anal or vaginal sex, or from sharing drug injection equipment like needles and syringes.



Only certain bodily fluids can spread HIV. These include, blood, semen, pre-seminal fluid (pre-cum), rectal fluids, and vaginal fluids.



## U=U

**Undetectable**  
=  
**Untransmittable**

A person living with HIV who is on treatment and maintains an undetectable viral load has zero risk of transmitting HIV to their sexual partners.

# Screening and Testing

To prevent and address STIs, the best wellness practices are to engage in routine screening and testing to identify risks and address issues.

STD	TEST	TREATMENT	PREVENTION
<b>Chlamydia</b>	Swabs to collect samples from infected areas. NAAT via urine	Antibiotics (Doxycycline, Azithromycin)	Use condoms, and have one sex partner who has been tested.
<b>Gonorrhea</b>	Urine Test to test for bacteria in Urethra, Swab Test of Throat, Urethra, Vagina, or Rectum	Antibiotics (Doxycycline, Azithromycin, Ceftriaxone)	Abstinence, Condoms, Limiting Partners, and getting regular screening (Safe Sex Practices)
<b>HPV</b>	Acetic Acid Solution Test, Pap Test, DNA Test	Salicylic Acid, Imiquimod, Podofilox, Trichloroacetic Acid	Avoiding Picking Warts and Biting Nails, Wearing Shoes or Sandals in Public Pools and Locker Rooms, Safe Sex Practices (See Above)HPV Vaccine
<b>HSV-2</b>	Swabs to collect samples from infected sores, Blood test for HSV antibodies	Anti-herpes to prevent or shorten the outbreak	Use condoms, and have one sex partner who has been tested, take anti-herpes medicines daily, and avoid having sexual intercourse during an outbreak
<b>Syphilis</b>	Blood testCerebrospinal fluid (CSF)	Antibiotics	Use condoms and have one sex partner who has been tested.
<b>Trich</b>	Swabs to collect samples from body fluid, Urine Test	Antibiotics	Use condoms, and have one sex partner who has been tested.
<b>HIV</b>	Antibody test via blood or oral fluid, Nucleic acid test (NAT) via blood	Antiretroviral therapy	Use condoms, never sharing needles, syringes, or other drug injection equipment, and Using PrEP and PEP (a medication taken by HIV-negative individuals to significantly reduce their risk of contracting HIV).
<b>Hepatitis C</b>	Antibody test via blood followed by an RNA test if the antibody test is positive	Antiviral (DAA) medications	Avoid sharing needles or other drug injection equipment, practicing safer sex, and avoiding the sharing of personal care items that could come into contact with blood.

## How to Get Tested

SITES	SERVICES
<b>Bienestar</b> <a href="https://bienestar.org/location/pomona/">bienestar.org/location/pomona/</a>	HIV/AIDS prevention, STI testing, clean syringes, and injection drug supplies
<b>APU Student Health Center</b> <a href="https://apu.edu/healthcenter/#services">apu.edu/healthcenter/#services</a>	STD/STI Testing and Screening, Blood Tests, Pap Smear Tests, Referrals to Specialists

# Review and Reflection



## Let's Review

Let's review what we learned so far. Here's a brief summary:

- Sex is a physical activity to stimulate parts of your body, as well as a strong emotional, cultural, and relational bond between partners.
- Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) are divided into curable and incurable, and the most common method of transmission is through sex.
- STDs/STIs affect our bodies and minds.
- Using proper prevention, screening, and testing is necessary to avoid short-term and long-term health problems.

Reflect on things that stood out to you from this section, things you never knew about, and things you will be sharing with others. Use the questions below as a helpful guide: *What was the most impactful information from today's lesson? Did something change your way of thinking about sex and protection? What's one thing that you wish people talked more about when it comes to sex?*

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