

HIV & STI Treatment

for All Bodies *MADE SIMPLE*

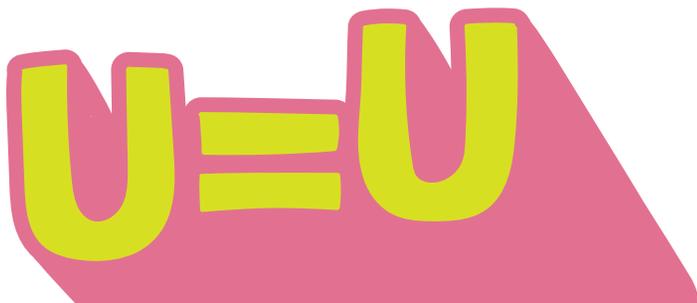


HIV and Sexually Transmitted or Blood Borne Infections (STIs/STBBIs) can have a variety of impacts on a person's health and wellbeing. Some of these impacts are pretty minor (even unnoticeable). On the other hand, some can be far more serious, potentially resulting in severe illness. The great news is, thanks to scientific and medical advances, most STIs can be cured or controlled effectively through treatment. Through this section, we explore some of the health impacts of HIV and different STIs as well as their associated treatments and results.

If you've been sexually active and experience any of the symptoms below, consider speaking with a healthcare provider and getting tested to ensure you and your partner(s) can access treatment if you need it!

If you test positive for certain STIs, contact tracing may occur to make sure anyone you had contact with receives appropriate testing and care.

Infection	Health Impacts /Symptoms	Treatment	Results	Next Steps
HIV	When left untreated, HIV can weaken a person's immune system, making it more likely that they will experience other infections which can lead to serious illness or even death.	Antiretroviral medication in the form of a pill, taken every day for the remainder of someone's life.	<p>There is no cure for HIV. But when someone takes their medication as prescribed,</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) the virus typically doesn't progress, allowing people living with HIV to lead long, healthy lives, and 2) they will also likely achieve an undetectable viral load. <p>When someone's viral load is undetectable, they cannot pass HIV onto others sexually.</p> <p>Undetectable = Untransmittable!</p>	<p>Your family doctor or nurse practitioner may take on your treatment or refer you to a specialist at an HIV Clinic.</p> <p>Your healthcare provider will support you to make informed decisions about your future sexual activities.</p>



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Hepatitis C	<p>A small percentage of people who get Hepatitis C clear the disease naturally and don't experience any long-term impacts.</p> <p>Unfortunately, the majority of people who get Hepatitis C don't clear it on their own, resulting in chronic Hepatitis C. When left untreated, chronic Hepatitis C can lead to serious liver damage, including cirrhosis (scarring of the liver), liver failure, and liver cancer.</p>	Antiretroviral medication in the form of a pill, taken every day for the remainder of someone's life.	With access to new direct acting antiviral medications, 95% of people living with chronic Hepatitis C are cured within 12-24 weeks.	<p>Your family doctor or nurse practitioner may take on your treatment or will refer you to a specialist.</p> <p>Treatment does not prevent re-infection; you can acquire Hep C more than once in your lifetime.</p> <p>Your healthcare provider will support you to make informed decisions about your future sexual activities.</p>

Hepatitis B	<p>Most adults (90-95%) infected with hepatitis B will naturally clear the virus on their own without treatment.</p> <p>When people are unable to clear the virus on their own, it results in chronic Hepatitis B. When left untreated, chronic Hepatitis B can lead to serious liver damage, including cirrhosis (scarring of the liver) and cancer.</p>	Antiviral medication in the form of a pill taken for life, and/or injections of interferon.	Treatment for chronic hepatitis B does not cure the disease but instead helps suppress the virus and reduce its negative impacts on the body.	<p>There are vaccinations for Hepatitis B. In NS, some people can access this vaccine for free. You can find if you fit that criteria here: novascotia.ca/dhw/CDPC/documents/Vaccine-Eligibility-for-High-Risk-Conditions.pdf.</p> <p>Your family or nurse practitioner may take on your treatment or refer you to a specialist.</p> <p>Treatment does not prevent re-infection; you can acquire Hepatitis B more than once in your lifetime.</p> <p>Your healthcare provider will support you to make informed decisions about your future sexual activities.</p>
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Hepatitis A

Hepatitis A can cause jaundice (a yellowing of the skin and white parts of the eyes), vomiting, diarrhea, fever, and fatigue which can last for several months. Rarely, people can experience lasting liver damage.

Hepatitis A will usually resolve itself after a few months. Treatments are focused on symptom control (such as replacing fluids from vomiting and diarrhea).

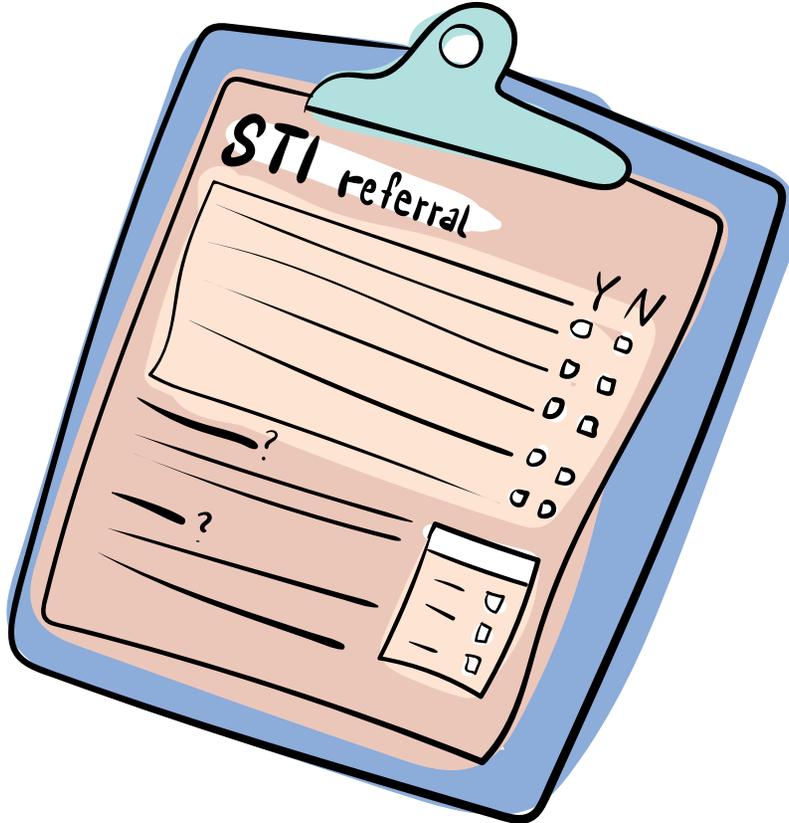
Most people recover from Hepatitis A on their own without any treatment.

There are vaccinations for Hepatitis A. In NS, some people can access this vaccine for free. You can find if you fit that criteria here: novascotia.ca/dhw/CDPC/documents/Vaccine-Eligibility-for-High-Risk-Conditions.pdf

Your family doctor or nurse practitioner may take on your treatment or refer you to a specialist.

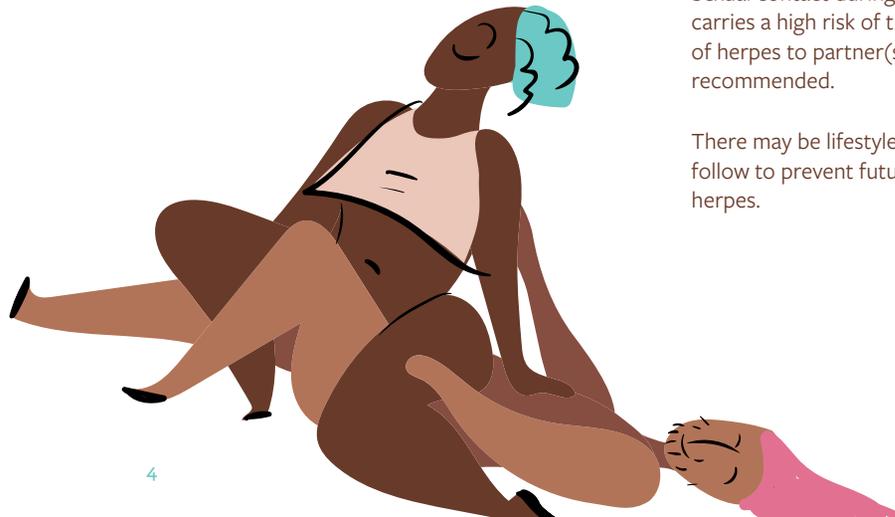
Treatment does not prevent re-infection; you can acquire Hep A more than once in your lifetime.

Your healthcare provider will support you to make informed decisions about your future sexual activities.



Infection	Health Impacts/Symptoms	Treatment	Results	Next Steps
<p>HPV (Human Papillomavirus)</p>	<p>There are more than 100 types of HPV. In many cases, someone with a healthy immune system will clear the virus on their own within two years. Some types of HPV, however, can result in genital warts, abnormal cell growth, and cancer. Types of cancer associated with HPV include: cervical, anal, head and neck, penile, vaginal, and vulvar.</p>	<p>There is no treatment specifically for HPV. Instead, treatment and monitoring focuses on the complications caused by the virus such as genital warts and cancer.</p> <p>For genital warts, the treatment might include creams or removing the warts using chemicals, laser surgery, or freezing with liquid nitrogen.</p> <p>For HPV-related cancers, treatment typically involves the removal of precancerous cells, different types of surgery, radiation therapy, or chemotherapy.</p>	<p>Once infected, there is no cure for HPV. HPV-related complications can be monitored (i.e. through pap tests of the cervix or anus) and successfully treated. In some cases, even after successful treatments, genital warts, precancerous lesions, and cancers can return after several years.</p>	<p>There are vaccinations for HPV. In NS, some people can access this vaccine for free. You can find if you fit that criteria here: novascotia.ca/dhw/CDPC/documents/Vaccine-Eligibility-for-High-Risk-Conditions.pdf.</p> <p>HPV vaccination protects people against many of the most dangerous types of HPV. You can still get this vaccine even if you have been infected with certain strains of HPV.</p> <p>Depending on the strain of HPV you have, you may be followed by your family doctor or nurse practitioner or a specialist. Your Pap testing schedule may be altered.</p> <p>If your HPV infection involves genital warts, there may be periods of time where you cannot have sexual activity. Your healthcare provider will support you to make informed decisions about your future sexual activities. There may be lifestyle changes you can follow to prevent future outbreaks of genital warts.</p>

<p>HSV (Herpes)</p>	<p>Many people who have genital herpes (HSV) do not experience any symptoms. For others, it can cause irritating and painful blisters or sores in the genital area. Some people also experience flu-like symptoms or an abnormal discharge and pain when they pee.</p> <p>Some people who get genital herpes only experience a handful of additional outbreaks throughout their lifetime while others can experience several different outbreaks per year.</p>	<p>Antiviral medication can be taken daily to prevent outbreaks from occurring and/or during outbreaks to help control them and make them heal faster.</p>	<p>There is no cure for genital herpes. Treatment works to prevent and control outbreaks and reduce the chance of passing it on to others.</p>	<p>Your healthcare provider will support you to make informed decisions about your future sexual activities.</p> <p>Sexual contact during an active outbreak carries a high risk of transmission of herpes to partner(s), and it is not recommended.</p> <p>There may be lifestyle changes you can follow to prevent future outbreaks of herpes.</p>
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Syphilis	Syphilis occurs in stages and each stage is associated with unique symptoms, with periods of no symptoms at all. Some of these include: a small, painless sore called a chancre, hair loss, rashes, feeling unwell, and warts. If left untreated, syphilis can cause severe neurological damage, cardiovascular damage, and even death.	Syphilis is treated by antibiotics, most often through injections. Treatment will vary based on your “stage” or severity of infection.	Once you have completed treatment, you should be cured of syphilis. Your provider may request retesting to confirm successful treatment.	Treatment does not prevent re-infection; you can acquire syphilis more than once in your lifetime. You will require follow-up testing after your treatment. It is not recommended to have sex until your treatment is completed, and/or until your doctor/nurse says it is okay.
Chlamydia	Most people who have chlamydia experience no symptoms at all. Others can experience a range of symptoms which can include: genital discharge, swelling, itching, and pain; pain in the stomach or pelvis; burning or pain when peeing; pain during sex; irregular genital bleeding, especially after sex; and discharge, itching, or bleeding from the bum. When Chlamydia is in the throat, it may cause a sore throat, cough, fever, and/or swollen lymph nodes.	In most cases, chlamydia can be treated with antibiotics taken as a single dose or several doses over the course of one week.	Once someone has completed treatment, they should be cured of chlamydia.	You can discuss with your provider about the sexual activities that are safe to have. They will provide you with a timeline of when you can resume your usual sexual activities. Your doctor/nurse may ask for follow-up testing after your treatment.
Gonorrhea	Many people with gonorrhea have no symptoms. While most people with penises develop symptoms, most people with vaginas/front holes do not. When symptoms are present, they may include: genital discharge, swelling, or pain; burning or pain with urination, pain during sex, irregular genital bleeding, and genital itching. When Gonorrhea is in the throat, it may cause a sore throat, cough, fever, and/or swollen lymph nodes. When left untreated, it may cause pelvic inflammatory disease, infection and inflammation of the testicles, rashes, sores, arthritis, infertility, or a severe infection of the blood.	Gonorrhea can be treated with and cured with antibiotics. The treatment usually includes pills and a single injection. This treatment is also effective for treating chlamydia as well.	Once someone has completed treatment, they should be cured of gonorrhea.	You can discuss with your provider about the sexual activities that are safe to have. They will provide you with a timeline of when you can resume your usual sexual activities. Your doctor/nurse may ask for follow-up testing after your treatment.

Infection	Health Impacts/Symptoms	Treatment	Results	Next Steps
Trich (Trichomoniasis)	Trich can affect people with vaginas/front holes. About 70% of people infected with Trich do not experience any symptoms. When people do experience symptoms, they can often come and go. Symptoms may include: genital discharge, sore or itchy genitals, and pain during intercourse or while peeing.	Trichomoniasis can be treated through antibiotics in a pill form.	Once someone has completed treatment, they should be cured of Trich.	You cannot have sex until your treatment is completed and/or until your doctor/nurse says it is okay. Your doctor/nurse may ask for follow-up testing after your treatment.
LGV (Lymphogranuloma Venereum)	Many people with LGV experience no symptoms. When symptoms are experienced, they can include: fever; fatigue; painless sores; swelling of the lymph nodes in the genital area; genital abscesses; mucous discharge and bleeding from the anus (if you've had anal sex); rectal pain and abdominal cramping; and symptoms in the joints, lungs, and liver.	LGV is typically treated over three weeks through antibiotics taken in pill form.	Once someone has completed treatment, they should be cured of LGV	You cannot have sex until your treatment is completed and/or until your doctor/nurse says it is okay. Your doctor/nurse may ask for follow-up testing after your treatment.
Bacterial Vaginosis	Bacterial Vaginosis (BV) affects people with vaginas/front holes. Symptoms include: genital discharge and itching; burning when you pee; and a foul smelling, "fishy" odor to the genitals. BV is not sexually transmitted, but is a common genital infection.	Bacterial Vaginosis can be treated by oral medications (in pill form) or creams that can be inserted in or applied to the genitals. Sometimes BV can be asymptomatic which does not always need to be treated.	Once someone has completed treatment, they should either be free of symptoms or cured of BV. Sometimes BV can reoccur within three to twelve months.	Your doctor/nurse may suggest lifestyle or hygiene changes to prevent future BV infections. Your doctor/nurse may ask for a follow-up appointment after your treatment.
Yeast Infection	People with yeast infections can experience: genital itching, irritation, pain, soreness, and redness/welling; a genital rash; genital discharge – which can be watery or be thick and white with a cottage cheese appearance; a burning sensation during sex or while peeing. Yeast infections are not sexually transmitted, but are a common genital infection.	Yeast infections are typically treated by antifungal medications, either in the form of creams, ointments, or tablets which are applied to or inserted into the genitals or taken orally in the form of a tablet. For mild to moderate cases, treatment is typically completed within several days. More complicated cases might require treatment for several months.	Once someone has completed treatment, they should be cured of their yeast infection.	Your doctor/nurse may suggest lifestyle or hygiene changes to prevent future yeast infections. Your doctor/nurse may ask for a follow-up appointment after your treatment.

Pubic Lice

Symptoms of pubic lice (or *crabs*) include: genital itching; small bugs or eggs in your pubic hair; dark spots where the lice are living; and feeling feverish or run-down.

Pubic lice are typically treated by special liquids, foams, gels, and shampoos.

You may also need to wash and dry clothes, towels, and bedding at hot settings and seal non washable fabric items in an airtight plastic bag for several days.

Upon completion of treatment, pubic lice should be successfully eliminated. In some cases, people may need to repeat treatments.

You can discuss with your provider about the sexual activities that are safe to have. They will provide you with a timeline of when you can resume your usual sexual activities.

Your doctor/nurse may ask for a follow-up appointment after your treatment.

Scabies

Scabies is caused by mites that burrow into the skin. Symptoms of scabies include: severe itching that is generally worse at night; and a rash with tiny blisters or sores.

Scabies is typically treated by lotions and creams.

You may also need to wash and dry clothes, towels, and bedding at hot settings and seal non washable fabric items in an airtight plastic bag for several days.

Upon completion of treatment, scabies should be successfully eliminated. In some cases, people may need to repeat treatments.

You can discuss with your provider about the sexual activities that are safe to have. They will provide you with a timeline of when you can resume your usual sexual activities.

Your doctor/nurse may ask for a follow-up appointment after your treatment.

This information was developed in consultation with queer, trans, and two spirit community members, community-based organizations, healthcare providers, and public health professionals. Information is based on the best guidance available and was informed by the Public Health Agency of Canada, Alberta Health, Alberta Health Services, the BC Centre for Disease Control, the Centre of Disease Control (US), and Planned Parenthood (US). Information has been adapted for succinct, accessible delivery to community and is not intended to be exhaustive or be used for clinical guidance.



