

The majority of sexually transmissible infections (STIs) are bacterial or viral infections and are usually passed on during sexual activity.

A few STIs are parasitic or fungal.

The types of sexual activity which can transmit infection include vaginal, oral or anal sex. Some STIs (such as herpes or genital warts) can also be transmitted through skin-to-skin contact.

Blood-borne viruses (BBVs) are transmitted from person to person by blood-to-blood contact.

This occurs when blood from a person infected with the virus passes into the bloodstream of another person through a break in the skin or mucous membrane.

Some BBVs such as HIV and hepatitis B can also be sexually transmitted.

Types of STIs and BBVs

Click on each STI or BBV below for more information.

STIs

Viruses: Can be treated but not necessarily cured. The following STIs can be spread from skin-to-skin contact.

- [Genital herpes \(HSV\)](#)
- [Human Papilloma Virus \(HPV\)](#) - HPV is the virus that causes most cervical and genital cancers. It is vaccine preventable and part of the National school vaccine program (for 12-13 year olds).
- [Molluscum Contagiosum](#)

Bacteria: Can be cured if treated early.

- [Chlamydia](#)
- [Gonorrhea](#)
- [Syphilis](#)
- [Bacterial vaginosis](#)

Parasites: Can be cured if treated early.

- [Pubic lice and scabies](#)

Other: Can be cured if treated early.

- [Pelvic Inflammatory Disease \(PID\)](#) resulting from an STI

BBVs

- [Human Immunodeficiency Virus \(HIV\)](#)
- [Hepatitis B](#) - vaccine preventable and part of National childhood vaccine program.
- [Hepatitis C](#)

Teaching tips

Research shows that information alone is not very effective at changing or modifying health behaviour. Students need more 'functional' than 'factual' knowledge.

For example, it is not as important that students know all about each type of STIs and its symptoms as it is for students to be knowledgeable about:

- condoms - how to use them, where to get them for free, how to negotiate their use
- where to get tested - confidentiality, how to get a Medicare card
- assertive communication skills (functional knowledge) - values, boundaries, help seeking behaviours

The use of 'scare tactic' strategies such as showing explicit and gory photos of STIs is not the most effective way of educating young people.

These images usually illustrate the worst examples of infection and do not represent the average STI symptom. Use of this approach also places undue emphasis on the presence of visible symptoms and is misleading because most people who contract an STI do not experience any symptoms at all.

This strategy also has the potential to cause distress for those students who have already had an STI.

Relevant resources

Websites

[Get the Facts](#), WA Department of Health

[Healthysexual](#), WA Department of Health

Fact sheets/booklets/videos

[Sexual health](#), Healthy WA

[Blood borne viruses](#), Get the Facts

[STI/BBV and sexual health animated slide shows](#), Queensland Health

[Everything a teen should know about the HPV vaccine](#) video, Cancer Council

[How to use a condom animation](#), Get the Facts

This Background Note relates to the following Learning Activities:

- [Ready vs not ready \(for sexual activity\)](#)
- [Sexual consent and the law](#)
- [Power to manage relationships](#)
- [Blood-borne virus safety](#)

- Sexually transmissible infections