

Preventing Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Editor's note: Our Tailgate Training Tip Sheets are [available in Spanish at www.gemplers.com](http://www.gemplers.com).

KEY POINTS:

- Many people with sexually transmitted diseases look healthy and have no symptoms.
- Pregnant women can pass STDs onto their unborn babies.

Note to trainer: Follow this script or use it to help guide you through a 10- to 15-minute training session for your ag/hort workers. You may photocopy this sheet for your employees' personal use. However, it may not be published or sold. Good sources of additional information on STDs are your local public health department, migrant health clinic, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) web site at: www.cdc.gov/std/ and the CDC National STDs and AIDS Hotlines – 800/342-2437 (English) or 800/344-7432 (Spanish).

What are sexually transmitted diseases?

- Sexually transmitted diseases or STDs are infections that are spread by having sexual contact with another person who is infected.
- Some STDs can be cured, but others cannot, and can result in long-term health problems – in some cases, even death.
- Many people who have STDs don't know it because they look healthy and don't have any symptoms.
- Both males and females can become infected with an STD. Yet you can't tell if someone has an STD just by looking at the person.
- Pregnant women can also get STDs and can pass them onto their unborn babies.

What do STDs do?

- There are many different sexually transmitted diseases. Some of the ones you may have heard of are HIV or AIDS, hepatitis B, syphilis, gonorrhea, herpes, and genital warts.
- Some of these, such as HIV and AIDS, disable the immune system. They can make the human body susceptible to many infections, viruses and pathogens that a normally healthy body can defend against.
- Others can be effectively treated with medication.
- Depending on the specific STD, symptoms may include: growths, bumps, painful genital sores, a discharge or itching; a rash on the palms of the hands or bottom of the feet; a fever; swollen glands; muscle aches; fatigue; stomach pain; weight loss; or a burning sensation when urinating.
- If left untreated, some STDs can result in damage to such body organs as the heart, liver or brain; an inability to coordinate muscle movement; an inability to have children; cancer; gradual blindness; or even death.
- Unborn children who are infected with an STD may be born prematurely or may die at birth.



Many people with sexually transmitted diseases look healthy.



Women as well as men can have sexually transmitted diseases.



Symptoms of STDs vary, but may include muscle aches or fatigue.

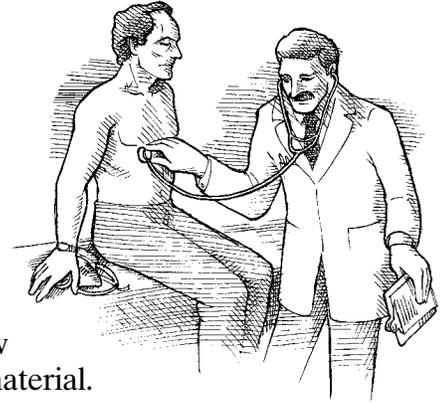
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Preventing Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Prevention of STDs

- There are certain things you can do to reduce your risk of becoming infected with a sexually transmitted disease.
- The most important is for men to wear condoms made of latex every time they have sex.
- While latex condoms will not protect against all STDs, they are the only effective protection against most. A pharmacist at your local drug store or a health care professional can help you if you are uncertain how to correctly use a condom or whether one is made of latex or another material.
- Another step you can take is to only have sexual contact with one partner you know and trust. This won't completely eliminate your risk of getting an STD because the person may have been infected by someone in the past. But limiting the number of persons with whom you have sex helps reduce your risk of getting a sexually transmitted disease.
- It's also important to be aware that STDs can be spread not only through sexual intercourse but also through other types of sexual contact, such as oral sex, or through skin-to-skin contact – for example, through skin contact with a genital wart or syphilis sore.
- If you think you may have a sexually transmitted disease, be sure to see a health care professional as soon as possible.



See a health care professional as soon as possible if you think you may have an STD.

More information on STDs

- If you think you may have an STD, it's important that you not have sex until you can get tested by a health care professional. Otherwise, you may infect your partner without knowing it.
- Sexually transmitted diseases **cannot** be spread by merely working with an infected person, by sharing drinking fountains, lunchrooms, rest rooms, tools or machinery, eating utensils, or by drinking out of the same cup.
- If you have questions about sexually transmitted diseases, including AIDS, the national Centers for Disease Control has a free telephone number you can call for information in English or Spanish. The English hotline number is: 1-800-342-2437; the number to call for information in Spanish is: 1-800-344-7432.



Sexually transmitted diseases CANNOT be spread by sharing food, eating utensils or drinking cups with a co-worker.

Are there any questions?

Note to trainer: Take time to answer trainees' questions.

Then review the Sexually Transmitted Diseases Do's and Don'ts.

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES DO'S AND DON'TS

DO:

- Know that anyone can get a sexually transmitted disease.
- Know that if you are pregnant, you can transmit a sexually transmitted disease to your unborn child.
- See a health care professional as soon as possible if you think you may have a sexually transmitted disease.

DON'T:

- Think that you can look at someone and tell if the person has a sexually transmitted disease. Many people with sexually transmitted diseases look healthy.
- Think you can get an STD by merely working with an infected person.
- Be afraid to ask questions about sexually transmitted diseases.

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