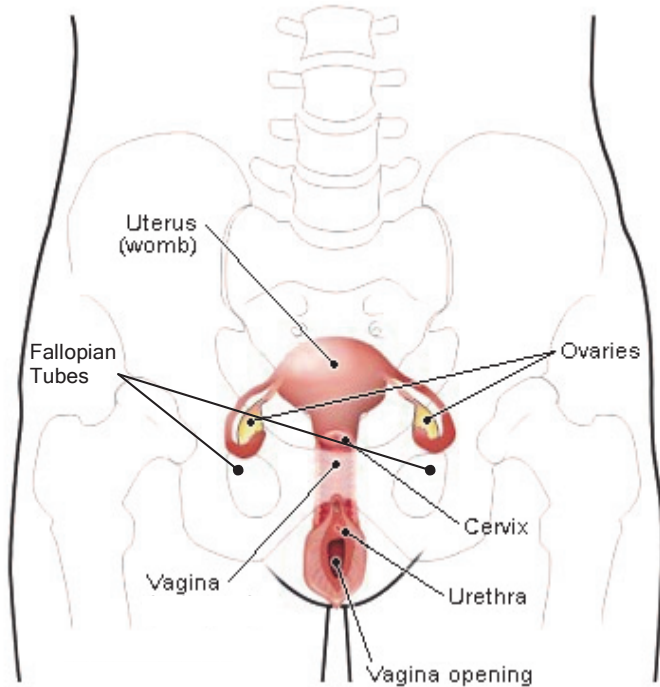


Learn the facts. Protect yourself. Get tested.

Women and STDs

What do I need to know about STDs?

STDs can cause special problems for women. STDs are infections of the **vagina, urethra, cervix, uterus, and fallopian tubes.**



Some STDs are caused by **bacteria**:

- Chlamydia
- Gonorrhea
- Syphilis

Bacteria can be cured with **antibiotic pills or shots.**

Without treatment, some of these infections could lead to long-term health problems, including **infertility** (not being able to get pregnant or have a baby) or **pain** in the lower abdomen.

Some STDs are caused by **viruses**:

- Herpes
- HPV (human papillomavirus which can cause genital warts and cervical cancer)
- Hepatitis B
- HIV (human immunodeficiency virus—the virus that causes AIDS)

Viruses usually **can't be cured.** Your doctor might give you some medicine or other treatment that keeps you from getting sick or helps control your symptoms.

Can STDs cause problems if I'm pregnant?

Yes. Some STDs can put your baby at risk of being born too early. Other STDs can be passed to your baby during birth. This can lead to other problems like blindness, breathing problems, or even death.

If you're pregnant, get tested for all STDs, including HIV. There are medications that you can take to keep you and your baby healthy.



How do I know if I have an STD?

Many STDs don't have symptoms women can see or feel. Learn what is normal for your body. Some things that may not be normal:

- Unusual discharge (yellowish or white fluid) coming out of your vagina
- Unusual bleeding that is different from your period
- Pain when you have sex or urinate
- Bumps or sores around your vagina, anus, or mouth
- Fever and pain in your belly
- Rashes on your body

The only way to know for sure if you have an STD is to have regular testing for STDs.

What are the tests like?

A doctor or nurse may do an exam and wipe the area around your **cervix** with a small swab. They may also ask you for a sample of urine or a blood test.



Each year, women should go to their doctor for a **pap smear** (a test to check for signs of cancer). That visit is also a good time to get tested for STDs.

What can I do to protect myself?

- You can choose not to have sex
- You can reduce your number of partners if you choose to have sex
- You can use condoms when you have sex
- You can talk with your partner(s) about STDs
- You can talk with your health care provider and get tested
- You can call a crisis counselor (1-800-841-8371) for help if you are being forced to have sex or are afraid your partner will hurt you

To find out more about STDs (sexually transmitted diseases) or for information about where you can go to get tested, call (617) 983-6940 or visit www.mass.gov/dph/cdc/std