

Overview

The majority of sexually transmitted 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 means of 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. That is, some infections are both an STI and a BBV.

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 \(HPV\)](#)
- [Molluscum Contagiosum](#)

Bacteria: Can be cured if treated early.

- [Chlamydia](#)
- [Gonorrhoea](#)
- [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

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BBVs

- [Human Immunodeficiency Virus \(HIV\)](#)
- [Hepatitis B](#)
- [Hepatitis C](#)

Vaccination programs

National Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) vaccination

The Program commenced in 2009 and aims to significantly reduce the burden of cervical cancer and other HPV-related cancers in Australia. HPV is the name for a group of viruses that cause skin warts, genital warts and some cancers, including cervical cancer. The vaccination is now given to all 12-13 year olds, along with the other school-based vaccines.

Further information to help educate and inform parents and students about the vaccine can be found on the Australian Cancer Council's [HPV vaccine](#) website.

Hepatitis B vaccination

In 2000, hepatitis B vaccine was added to the National Immunisation Program Schedule for all infants in Australia. Up to 2012, adolescent doses were offered to year 7 children as part of the school-based immunisation program, for those who had not previously received the hepatitis B vaccination.

Parents who are unsure about their child's immunisation status can contact the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register (ACIR) on 1800 653 809.

Further information about the hepatitis B vaccine can be found on the [Immunise Australia Program](#) website.

Teaching tips for Years 7-10

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:

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- condoms
- where to get tested
- setting and maintaining personal boundaries using assertive communication skills (functional knowledge)

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

[Sexual health and blood-borne viruses](#), WA Department of Health

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

[Could I have it? Chlamydia](#), WA Department of Health

[Play Safe](#), NSW Ministry 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

[Educational books and resources](#) available from SHQ

[Multicultural sexual health fact sheets](#), WA Department of Health

Guest speakers

The Western Australia AIDS Council has an HIV positive guest speaker program '[Talking HIV](#)'. The program offers guest speakers who give presentations designed for schools, universities, TAFEs

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and youth centres and aims to dispel myths about living with HIV. The latest information about HIV, STIs and prevention is communicated in an engaging interactive and age appropriate way.

[Hepatitis WA](#) also provides education about hepatitis, including guest speakers.

Testing services

[Online chlamydia testing](#), Could I have it? - Get a simple test for free

Postscript

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](#)
- [Sexual activity - what are the risks?](#)
- [Sexual risk taking](#)
- [What's OK and what's not OK](#)

- [How to use a condom](#)
- [Everything a teen should know about the HPV vaccine](#)

- [How does a young person know if they have been vaccinated for hepatitis?](#)
- [How common is HIV?](#)
- [What is hepatitis?](#)
- [Are there any STIs that cannot be cured/treated?](#)
- [Why is there more than one needle for the HPV vaccine?](#)

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