

# The Risks of Sexual Activity

## Unit 5.4

### 5.4 Journal

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Quick Quiz: Which of the following statements do you think are true. Explain why you gave the answer you did for each statement.

1. It can only take one sexual contact with an infected person to get a sexually transmitted infection.
2. Even if you've been infected with a sexually transmitted infection before, you can get that same infection again.
3. You can have more than one sexually transmitted infections at a time.
4. You can get a sexually transmitted infection from sharing needles.

### Objectives

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- Identify risky behaviors associated with the current epidemic of sexually transmitted infections.
- Describe behaviors that can help prevent the spread of sexually transmitted infections

### The Silent Epidemic

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- Sexually transmitted infection - any pathogen that spreads from one person to another during sexual contact
- Epidemic - an unusually high occurrence of a disease in a certain place during a certain time period.
- 19 million new cases of STIs in the U.S. each year
  - Over 3 million occur in people under age 20.

## Harmful Effects of STIs

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- Short term - may cause pain, discomfort, and embarrassment
- Long term - increased risk of certain cancers and infertility
- Some STIs can be treated with antibiotics; others are incurable and can be fatal
- Unlike many other infectious diseases, people do not develop immunity to STIs after being infected and can be infected again

## Risky Behaviors and the STI Epidemic

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- Ignoring Risks
  - Being sexually active puts a person at risk for STIs especially if not taking precautions against infection
- Multiple Partners
  - The more sexual partners a person has, the greater chance of getting an STI
- Not Seeking Treatment
  - Embarrassment or lack of symptoms may prevent someone from getting treated, increasing the chances of spreading the STI to someone else

## Avoiding STIs

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- STIs are transmitted mainly through sexual contact, but a few are also transmitted through contact with the blood of an infected person
- **STIs are preventable!!**
- Ways to avoid STIs
  - Practice abstinence
  - Avoid drugs
  - Choose responsible friends

## Practice Abstinence

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- STIs spread mainly through sexual contact
  - Practicing sexual abstinence is the most certain way to avoid STIs
  - Sexual abstinence means no vaginal sex, oral sex, or anal sex
- Using barrier methods to avoid unwanted pregnancy can also help protect against STIs, but are not 100% successful at doing so

## Avoid Drugs

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- Some STIs can be transmitted through blood to blood contact
- People who use illegal drugs or inject steroids run a high risk of contracting certain STIs because:
  - People may be sharing needles that have been contaminated with the blood of an infected person
  - Drugs impair a person's ability to think clearly

## Choose Responsible Friends

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- Choose friends who
  - Practice healthy, responsible behaviors
  - Support your decisions and don't pressure you into things you're not comfortable with
- Going out in groups, rather than as couples, can make it easier to choose abstinence
- Parents, teachers, and other trusted adults can also provide support for healthy behavior choices