

Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Information for VAG Leaders and health committees

VAG LEADER ACTIONS

- Have meetings with your VAG about sexually transmitted diseases (STD). Use this fact sheet.
- Prepare each VAG meeting properly. At the start of each fact sheet there is a list of preparations needed. Make sure you carry out these preparations.
- In other VAG meetings you can discuss other topics in the following order preferred by your VAG.
- If you wish, use the 'key information' in a VAG meeting to discuss all important issues regarding this topic once again. If possible copy this fact sheet and give a copy to each family in your VAG.
- Write down all actions proposed by the VAG members during the discussions and agree how they will be followed up and who will be responsible.
- Keep in touch with the health committees to know whether the situation has improved.

HEALTH COMMITTEE ACTIONS

- Get data from the first aid, dispensary or nearby hospital to what extent STD is a problem and for advise
- If necessary develop plans for the community
- Implement the plan together with VAG's, village leaders, etc.
- Evaluate the success of the project and further action needed.

Preparation for VAG's

- Read this fact sheet; make sure you understand the question and the information.
- Ask the health committee if they have pain-relieving drugs available and how much they cost.

Prevention and treatment

If you have an STD caused by **bacteria** (chlamydia, gonorrhoea, syphilis) or **parasites** (pubic lice, crabs), you can be treated with antibiotics or other medicines, like medicinal shampoos.

If you have an STD caused by a **virus** (aids, herpes, genital warts), there is no cure. Sometimes medicines can keep the disease under control.

Always go to the clinic or hospital if you suspect you have an STD.

Go for testing if you have any of the following problems:

- A sore or sores on or near the genitals. Sores may be either hard or open; either painful or not painful.
- For men, discharge (“drip”) from the penis, and urinating is painful.
- For women, unusual discharge from the vagina.
- For women, pain in lower abdomen along with sores or discharge: see a doctor or nurse quickly. These may be signs of pelvic inflammatory disease (PID).
- If you have a sex partner with any of these signs or who might have an STD—even if you don’t have signs of disease. Since women with STDs often have no noticeable signs, they have to be tested if they think they face a high STD risk.

Why is it important to get treated early for an STD?

If not treated, STD can become very serious - and might cause the person to become infertile (not being able to produce children). People with wounds on the genitals are as well at greater risk of becoming infected with HIV. It is therefore important to be treated at once.

Treatment consists of taking different kinds of medicine, not only the person who is infected but the partner as well, to prevent from re-infecting each other.

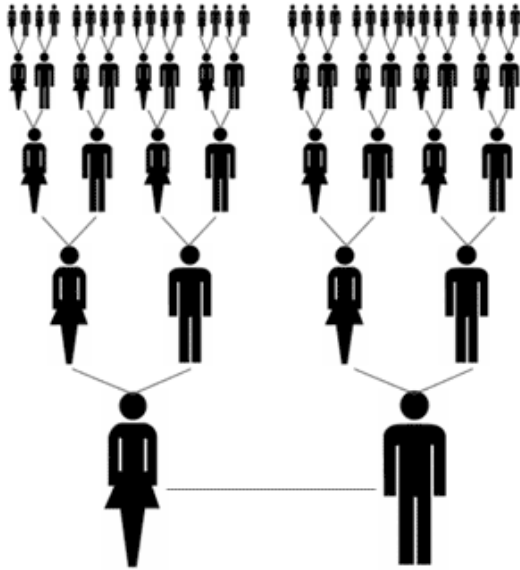
Why is it important that the partner gets treated?

When a person finds out that he or she has a sexually transmitted infection, he should tell everyone with whom he has had sex, so that they can get treatment, too. It is especially important that a man tell a woman, because without knowing she has the disease she can pass it on to other people, her babies may become infected or blind, and in time she may become sterile or very ill herself.

Prevention

If you have **only one** sexual partner who has no other sexual partners, there is virtually no risk of getting infected with STDs. The risk of getting STDs is higher when

- there are more sexual partners involved
- illegal drug habits are involved
- you know very little about your partner’s sexual history



When you have sex with someone, you are having sex
 With everyone they have had sex with, and with
 Everyone they have had sex with, and with
 Everyone they have had sex with, and with
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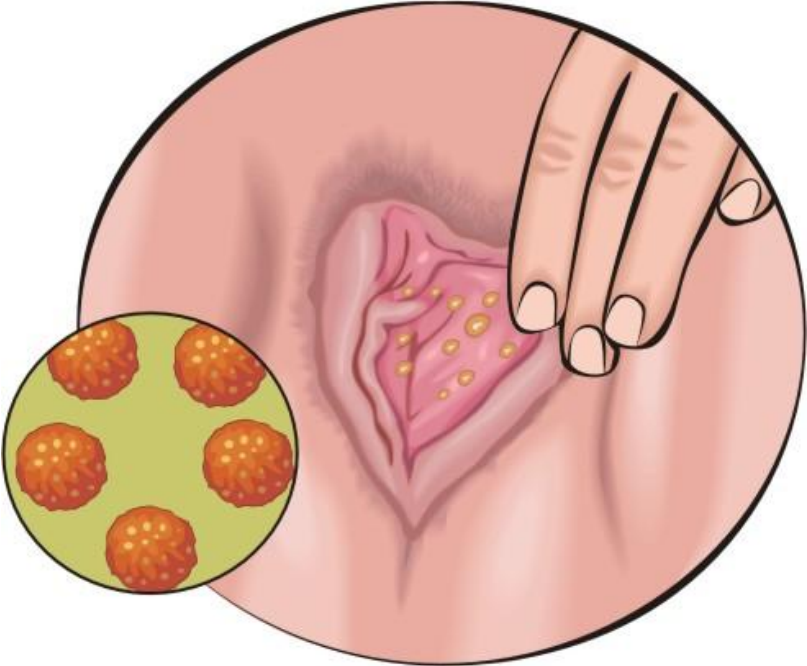
Tips to prevent STDs

- Avoid sex!
- Be faithful to one faithful partner.
- Condom use: always use a condom (men) when having sex. Correct usage of latex condoms greatly reduces, but does not completely eliminate, the risk of catching or spreading STDs.
- Wash your genital area after sex. This may flush away parasites.
- Urinate after sex

Exercise: Discussion

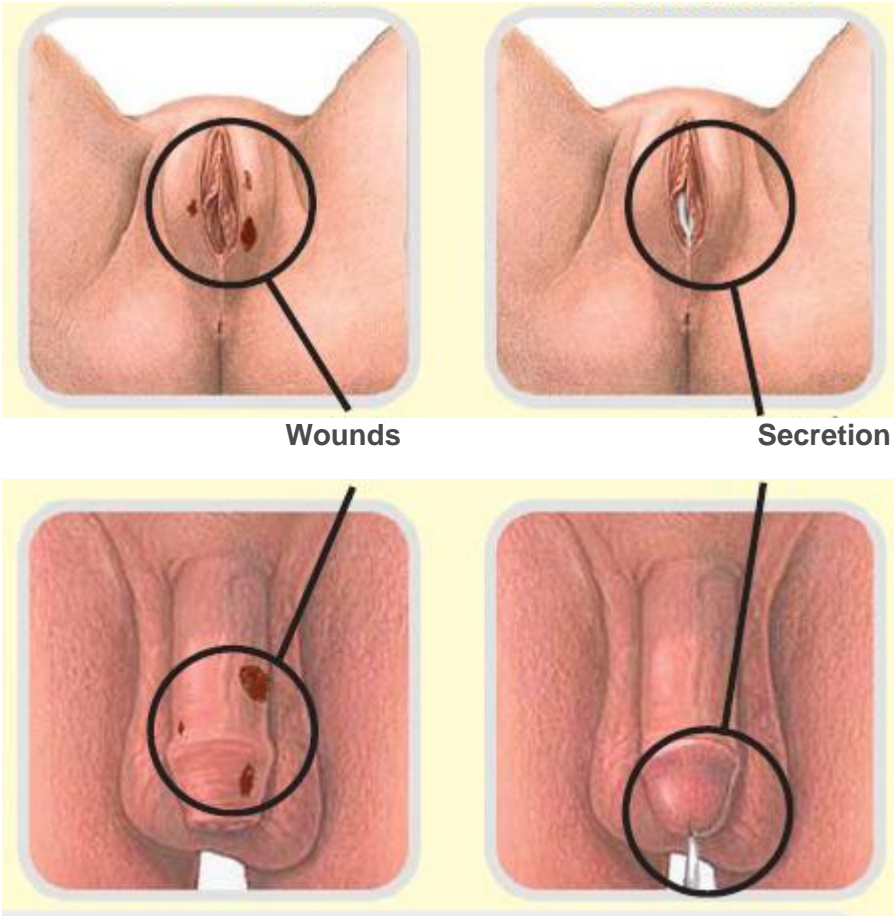
- Ask the group if they know any of these diseases (see illustrations below).
- How can we tell someone that they have been exposed to an STD without blaming them or getting hurt ourselves?
- Where do people in a community go to get tested and treated for STDs? Tell the VAG where the possibility for testing/treatment is offered.
- Are people afraid to go for testing or seek treatment for STDs? Why? Let the VAG discuss freely about this question

Genital warts



Syphilis

Gonorrhea



Key information

What are sexually transmitted diseases (STD's)?

- STDs are diseases that are spread by sex with someone who is already infected. Most people who are infected with an STD do not look or feel sick. They may not know that they are infected. But they can still spread these diseases.
- STDs are caused by *viruses*, *parasites* or *bacteria*. There are different kinds of STD's, such as trichomoniasis, chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis, hepatitis B, and genital herpes. AIDS is a sexually transmitted disease as well.

Symptoms

Common signs of sexually transmitted diseases are:

- Pain and discharge when urinating.
- Swollen glands.
- Burning or itching in the genital area
- Discharge from the urethra or the vagina
- Sores or wounds in the genital, anal or oral area.
- Warts in genital or oral areas
- Foul smell from genital area

Summary

- STD's are some of the most infectious diseases. Not only can they cause sores and foul smelling discharge, they can lead to serious complications such as liver failure, cancers, neurological problems and even death.
- Preventing STDs is possible by following simple sexual hygiene.
- Most STDs caused by bacteria and parasites can be cured if treated **EARLY**.