

# Basic Information on Sexually Transmitted Infections

1. Proper use of latex (or polyurethane) barriers – either condoms or dental dams – prevents against most sexually transmitted infections most of the time.
2. STIs are most easily diagnosed while symptomatic. Therefore, it is best to visit your health care provider while you are having symptoms that might be from an STI: itching, rash, or sores on your genitals, anus, or sometimes mouth; burning upon urination; or an unusual discharge from your urethra, genitalia, or anus. Please note that even if symptoms disappear, you are probably still infected and may infect others.
3. Most STIs can be treated and/or cured. The social stigma surrounding STIs is out of proportion to the health consequences of the great majority of them.
4. Several vaccines available at the health service are effective at preventing some STIs. These include:
  - **Gardasil (HPV 疫苗)** – 3 shot series that provides immunity against several strains of **human papillomavirus (人乳头状瘤病毒)**, which could lead to genital / anal warts, or unusual cell growth on the cervix, in the anus or rectum, and in the mouth or throat, and is associated with cancer – **approved for all people 45 and under**
  - **Hepatitis A & B (甲型和乙型肝炎)** – often bundled together as **Twinrix (肝炎疫苗)**, 3 shot series that prevents against infection with two hepatitis viruses that can be transmitted sexually
  - **Menactra (脑膜炎疫苗)** – vaccine against bacterial meningitis, small outbreaks of which have occurred among men who have sex with men in New York City; most college undergraduates receive the vaccination when moving into a dorm; re-vaccination after 5 years encouraged for MSM in NYC.
5. It is advised that **cis women and everyone with a cervix** visit a gynecologist or other provider for an annual exam (or, if not annual, some other periodic exam decided on by you and your provider). It is during this exam that people are periodically screened for unusual cell growth due to HPV (human papillomavirus), which may lead to cervical cancer. Also, your provider may test you for **gonorrhea and/or chlamydia (淋病或衣原体)**, bacterial infections that are usually asymptomatic in these populations but that left untreated (by antibiotics) can lead to PID (pelvic inflammatory disease) (盆腔炎).
6. The CDC (Centers for Disease Control) recommends that men who have sex with men get bi-annual or quarterly screenings for **sypilis (梅毒)**, a bacterial infection that is curable with antibiotics but can lead to serious health consequences if left untreated.
7. Chlamydia and gonorrhea infections occur in not only the urethra and genitalia, but also the throat and rectum. Although infections at these sites usually have no symptoms, they may be marked by a sore throat or painful swallowing, or by rectal bleeding, discharge, or unusual pain on defecation or anal intercourse. A medical provider can test for infections at these sites, which is recommended for **men who have sex with men** in particular.\* If you have a sore throat, it is important to let your doctor or nurse know if you have recently performed fellatio, as your symptoms may be caused by one of these infections. Many STIs produce inflammation (發炎) and a preponderance of white blood cells, both of which increase the risk of HIV transmission if HIV were to come in contact with the site of infection. \*If you don't identify as an MSM, ask your provider if 3-site testing is appropriate.