



FYI Reproductive System

There are certain infections that can only be spread through sexual contact. Known collectively as **sexually transmitted diseases** (STDs for short), these infections spread from one person to another through the mucous membranes in the reproductive organs.

You've probably heard about **HIV/AIDS**, which is the deadliest STD (if not, please watch the BrainPOP movie on AIDS). HIV is frightening because there is currently no cure. Most STDs are less thoroughly devastating to the human body than AIDS, and many can be cured with antibiotics and other drugs. Still, their symptoms can be painful and unpleasant.

The most common STD is probably **human papillomavirus (HPV)**, which can cause uncomfortable warts on the reproductive organs.

HPV isn't curable, but in most cases no real health problems develop—though some strains *have* been associated with cervical cancer. Doctors estimate that at least half of all sexually active men and women will get HPV at some point in their life.

Syphilis and **gonorrhea** are two STDs caused by bacteria, so they can be cured with penicillin and other antibiotics. Syphilis causes skin lesions, rashes, flu-like symptoms, and other problems. It can be deadly if left untreated. Gonorrhea can cause difficulty urinating and a painful discharge of pus from the genitals.

Another common STD is a virus called **herpes simplex II**, which causes periodic outbreaks of watery blisters on the genitals. A close relative of the virus that causes cold sores on people's mouths, the herpes II virus cannot be cured, but there are treatments that reduce the likelihood of painful outbreaks.

