A Healthier Tomorrow Starts Today

Sexually Transmitted Infections, Screenings, & Birth Defects



We want our children to reach their fullest, healthiest potential. Together we can promote healthy pregnancies and lower the risk of birth defects. A healthier tomorrow starts today!

What are Birth Defects?

- Birth defects are health conditions present when a baby is born.
- They can cause problems with a baby's health, how their body develops, or how their body works.
- They can impact a baby's brain, heart, head, spine, limbs, organs, bones, and cognitive development.

Certain actions taken before and during pregnancy can reduce the risk of birth defects.

Six Tips to Reduce the Risk of Birth Defects

1. Eat a healthy diet and get enough folic acid
2. Connect with prenatal care **early and throughout your pregnancy**
3. Stay up to date on vaccinations
4. Avoid tobacco, alcohol, and other substance use
5. Get tested for sexually transmitted infections
6. Get help if your basic needs – **safety, housing, and food** – are not being met

What are Sexually Transmitted Infections? (STIs)



- STIs are infections that are spread from one person to another, usually during sex.
- They are very common and many people who get them don't have any symptoms.

Without treatment, some STIs can lead to serious health problems over time. **The good news is that getting tested is no big deal and most STIs are easy to treat.**

Why get screened for STIs?

IMPORTANT

Different STIs have different symptoms, but not everyone who gets an STI has symptoms. STIs impact everyone differently, which is why it's **important to get tested regularly.**

Where can I get tested for STIs?



- Your primary care provider or prenatal care provider (if pregnant)
- Community/public health clinics
- Planned Parenthood health centers

Call the clinic you choose before you go to find out your testing and payment options.

Many of these locations provide free or low-cost examinations for STIs and can help treat them if needed.

Tips for getting tested:

1. Schedule an appointment with your healthcare provider (if you don't have one, contact Well Badger).
2. Tell your provider "*I would like to be screened for STIs.*"
3. Follow instructions for specimen collection.
4. Your provider will contact you if the test shows you have an STI.
   - Talk with your provider about medications you are on and side effects of STI medications.
   - Pick up the prescription at your local pharmacy.
   - Try to take the prescription as set by your provider.

DID YOU KNOW?

Some antibiotics can impact the effectiveness of some birth control.

Talk with your provider and use an additional form of birth control, like condoms, when taking antibiotics.

Should I get screened for STIs before and during pregnancy?

Absolutely!

When you are pregnant, your body shares not only food, nutrients, and water with your baby, but also things that could be harmful like alcohol, tobacco, and STIs.

Untreated STIs during pregnancy can cause a variety of issues including premature birth, infection after birth and birth defects.

Common STIs	Impacts on Pregnancy & Baby	When to Get Tested	Treatment or Management
Chlamydia	Untreated long-term can impact fertility Infant: eye infections and pneumonia	Under 25 yrs old and those at higher risk: First and Third trimester	Curable, treated with antibiotics
Gonorrhea	Linked to preterm birth and still birth Infant: eye infections	Under 25 yrs old and those at higher risk: First trimester If higher risk: Third trimester	Curable, treated with antibiotics
Syphilis	Linked with preterm birth, stillbirth, and infant death Untreated infants develop problems with the brain, eyes, ears, heart, skin, teeth, and bones	Everyone: First trimester If higher risk: First trimester, 28 weeks, delivery	Curable, treated with antibiotics
HIV	Can be passed to baby any time during pregnancy, birth, and breastfeeding	Everyone: First trimester If higher risk: First and Third trimesters	Not curable, but can be treated with antiretroviral therapy
Hepatitis B and C	Can pass the viruses to baby Infants: if untreated, can develop chronic liver infections Hep C linked with preterm birth, low birth weight and size	Everyone: First and Third trimester	Hep B: Not curable, but can be treated long-term with antiviral medications Hep C: Curable, treated with a direct-acting antiviral
HPV (Human Papillomavirus)	Genital warts or pre-cancerous cervix cells Infant: transmission to baby is very rare	No current screening recommendations	No treatment for virus, but genital warts can be treated
HSV (Herpes)	Linked to miscarriage, preterm birth, passing the virus during delivery. Neonatal herpes can cause deadly infection	If symptomatic or have a history of infection	Genital herpes is not curable, but can be treated with medication during outbreaks. May require C-section
Trichomoniasis	Linked with preterm birth and low birth weight	If symptomatic or have a history of infection	Curable, treated with antibiotics

*High risk can mean previous or other STIs, new or multiple sex partners, inconsistent condom use, and other factors.

Protect yourself and your baby from STIs by practicing safe sex, getting tested regularly, and getting treated when needed.

How can I reduce my risk of getting STIs?

- **Safer sex** using a barrier (condoms, internal condoms, dental dams) every single time you have oral, anal, or vaginal sex.
- **Barriers** protect you and your partner from sexual fluids and some skin-to-skin contact, which can both spread STIs.
- **Condoms** are usually easy to get and are often free from health clinics and community-based agencies.
- **STI screening** should be part of standard prenatal care. If you aren't sure if you've been tested, talk to your provider.

Sexual health care is an important part of overall health.

There is nothing to be embarrassed about if you have an STI.

THE WELL BADGER RESOURCE TEAM IS HERE FOR YOU!

WELL BADGER RESOURCE CENTER

- Need help finding somewhere to get free or reduced-cost STI testing?
- Do you have other questions or needs?

Call 1(800) 642-7837

Text (608) 360-9328

Email help@wellbadger.org

Visit wellbadger.org to chat live or search our online directory of free and low-cost services!

Visit the Reproductive Health and Family Planning Program to find services near you!

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Learn more about other ways to prevent birth defects at healthier-tomorrow.org