



## **STI Basics and Prevention: What Women Need to Know**

### **1. What Are Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)?**

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) are infections passed from one person to another through sexual contact, including vaginal, anal, or oral sex. Some STIs can also be transmitted through blood contact or from mother to baby during pregnancy or childbirth.

### **2. Common Types of STIs**

Common STIs include HIV, Gonorrhea, Chlamydia, Syphilis, Trichomoniasis, Human Papillomavirus (HPV), Hepatitis B, and Herpes. Some STIs are curable, while others can be managed with treatment.

### **3. Signs and Symptoms of STIs**

Some STIs show no symptoms, especially in women. When symptoms occur, they may include abnormal vaginal discharge, itching, sores or rashes, pain during urination or sex, lower abdominal pain, or unusual bleeding.

### **4. Why STIs Are a Serious Health Concern for Women**

Untreated STIs can lead to serious complications such as infertility, ectopic pregnancy, chronic pelvic pain, cervical cancer, pregnancy complications, and increased risk of HIV infection.

### **5. STI Testing and Diagnosis**

Regular STI testing is important, even when there are no symptoms. Testing may involve urine samples, blood tests, or swabs. Early diagnosis allows for timely treatment and prevents complications.

### **6. Treatment and Care**

Many STIs can be treated or cured with medication if detected early. It is important to complete prescribed treatment and avoid sexual contact until treatment is finished. Sexual partners may also need testing and treatment.

## **7. STI Prevention Methods**

Prevention includes correct and consistent use of condoms, limiting the number of sexual partners, regular testing, avoiding sharing sharp objects, and ensuring safe blood transfusions.

## **8. Dual Protection**

Using condoms alongside another contraceptive method provides dual protection—preventing both STIs and unintended pregnancy.

## **9. STIs, Pregnancy, and Newborn Health**

STIs during pregnancy can affect the baby, leading to low birth weight, premature birth, infections, or stillbirth. Early testing and treatment during pregnancy protect both mother and baby.

## **10. Stigma, Confidentiality, and Rights**

Women have the right to confidential, respectful, and non-judgmental STI services. Fear or stigma should not prevent anyone from seeking testing or treatment.

## **11. When to Seek Help**

Seek medical care if you notice symptoms, have had unprotected sex, have a new sexual partner, or believe you may have been exposed to an STI.

## **12. Where to Get Information and Support**

Women should know trusted health facilities, hotlines, and community services that provide STI information, testing, treatment, and referrals.