

## **STD; Sometimes Ignorance is Not a Bliss**

**Anirban Sinha\***

*Assistant Professor in the Department of Endocrinology at Medical College, Kolkata, India*

**\*Corresponding Author:** Anirban Sinha, Assistant Professor in the Department of Endocrinology at Medical College, Kolkata, India.

**Received:** May 01, 2019; **Published:** May 29, 2019

Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are a group of bacterial, viral or parasitic infections that spread from person to person through sexual contact, including anal, vaginal, or oral sex. Sometimes these infections can be transmitted non-sexually as well, such as from mother to infant during pregnancy or childbirth, or through blood transfusions or shared needles as in iv drug abusers. HIV/AIDS is the most well-known STD. Chlamydia, gonorrhoea, trichomoniasis, human papillomavirus (HPV) infection, and syphilis are examples of other STDs.

April is observed as the STD Awareness Month to raise awareness about the impact of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) on the health of individuals and the important role that health care providers can play in supporting the sexual health of their population in general. STDs can affect people from all age groups, but adolescents and young people (age group 15 - 24) are impacted more even though youth make up only 25 percent of the sexually active population.

Primary care physicians, pediatricians, and other health care providers can help ensure young people receive effective prophylactic or preventive measures. Stigma, lack of information, access to health care, and a combination of other socioeconomic factors contribute to increasingly high rates of STDs among the high risk age groups.

Testing for screening is among the most effective tools for early diagnosis and also to prevent the spread of STDs. For some young people, mustering the courage to get tested for STDs might be difficult, but what is important for them to know is that most STDs are treatable and many are curable too! Early detection is the key, as many STD can be asymptomatic, yet can cause infertility and other serious health issues. By taking an active initiative in monitoring their patients' sexual health, health care providers can help reduce disease burden and long-term health consequences of STDs for the high risk population today and in their future generations.

Health care providers can raise awareness among the patients by discussing the 5 "Ps" with them: partners, practices, protection, past history and prevention of pregnancy.

Behaviours that put people at risk for HIV also increase their risk for infection with other STDs. These include the following:

- Having vaginal, anal or oral sex without a condom.
- Having promiscuous sex with many partners, especially anonymous partners.
- Having sex while using drugs or alcohol. Using drugs and alcohol affects the brain, which can lead to poor decisions and risky behaviours.
- Not getting tested at appropriate time after becoming sexually active.
- Injecting drugs: Needle sharing in iv drug abusers may spread many serious infections, including HIV, hepatitis B and C.
- Certain drugs prescribed for treating erectile dysfunction - such as sildenafil (Viagra), tadalafil (Cialis) and vardenafil (Levitra) - have higher rates of STIs.

Similarly, having some other STD can make it easier to contract HIV. For example, an STD can cause a sore or a break in the skin or mucosa, which in turn can make it easier for HIV to enter the body. Moreover, having HIV and another STD together may increase the risk of HIV transmission.

- To prevent STDs, including HIV, avoid risky sexual behaviours and use condoms every time you have vaginal, anal, or oral sex.
- Jab stain. The most effective way to avoid STIs is to abstain from sex.
- See a doctor immediately if:
  - 1) You are sexually active and may have been exposed to an STI.
  - 2) You have signs and symptoms of an STI
- Get vaccinated. Different specific vaccines are available to prevent human papillomavirus (HPV), hepatitis A and B.
- Combination drug emtricitabine-tenofovir (Truvada) can reduce the risk of sexually transmitted HIV infection in high risk groups.
- ART can't cure HIV infection totally, but it can definitely reduce the amount of HIV in the body which in turn will reduce your risk of passing HIV to your partner
- Pre-exposure prophylaxis is an HIV prevention option for people who don't have HIV but who are at high risk of becoming infected with HIV. Pre exposure prophylaxis involves taking a specific HIV medicine every day to reduce the risk of HIV infection
- Certain STIs - such as gonorrhoea, chlamydia, HIV and syphilis - can be passed from an infected mother to her child during pregnancy or delivery. Hence, all pregnant women should undergo screening for these infections and effectively treated.

Most STIs can be diagnosed through examinations by your doctor, a culture of the vaginal or penile secretions, or through a blood test.

STI Awareness Month draws attention towards the signs and symptoms of STI's. The concept of "disease", as in STD, suggests a clear medical problem, usually with some obvious signs or symptoms. However, it's possible to contract sexually transmitted diseases from people who seem perfectly healthy, and who may not even be aware of the infection. STDs don't always cause symptoms, which is one of the reasons experts prefer the term "sexually transmitted infections" to "sexually transmitted diseases". This is true of chlamydia, gonorrhoea, herpes, and human papillomavirus (HPV), to name a few.

Examples of possible STD symptoms include painful urination (peeing), unusual discharge from the vagina or penis, fever, Sores or bumps on the genitals or in the oral or rectal area, Pain during sex, lower abdominal pain and scaly rash over trunk, hands or feet. Some STDs may not cause any symptoms. Even if a person has no symptoms from an STD, it is still possible for the STD to be transmitted on to other people. Untreated STDs may lead to serious complications. For example, untreated gonorrhoea in women can cause problems with pregnancy and infertility. Similarly, untreated HIV will eventually lead to AIDS and cause death. Other possible complications can include pelvic pain, eye inflammations, heart diseases and arthritis.

STDs caused by bacteria or parasites can be treated with antibiotics, but there's no cure for STDs caused by viruses though treatment can relieve symptoms and help keep the STD under control.

The awareness colour for STDs and STIs is Light Green.



**Light green awareness**

- Chronic Pelvic Pain
- Human Papilloma Virus (HPV)
- Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs).

**Volume 4 Issue 4 June 2019**

**©All rights reserved by Anirban Sinha.**