

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES

Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are a group of infections which may be acquired through sexual contact with an infected partner. These are a broad group of infections which may be caused by bacteria, parasites, or viruses. These organisms can cause a variety of symptoms, such as vaginal discharge, external vaginal growths or sores, pelvic pain, and irregular vaginal bleeding. The complications from STDs vary, but can be as minor as a discomfort, to as serious as lifelong pelvic pain, infertility, female genital cancers, and even death. Prevention is the key to avoiding the serious side effects of STDs. Reducing the number of sexual partners, as well as the use of condoms can play an important role. All STDs can be treated, but some may not be cured despite treatment. Any unusual symptoms such as vaginal discharge, irregular bleeding, pelvic pain, or the presence of any external bumps or sores should be evaluated by your doctor immediately. Also, regular Pap smears and pelvic examinations should be performed once you reach the age of 21 years, or once you become sexually active.

For specific information on this group of infections, please make an appointment with your physician for a consultation and examination. Please also refer to <http://www.cdc.gov/std/> for more information.