

# SAMHS INFO BULLETIN



Compiled by Corporate Communication

## STI/CONDOM WEEK 12 – 18 FEBRUARY 2012

### **Protect yourself against STI's**

Sexually transmitted infections or STI's as they commonly called are a major health concern in South Africa. Not only can these infections have painful symptoms for those who suffer from them, certain STI's can also increase the chances the chances of contradicting dangerous illnesses, sometimes even lead to death.

Records indicate that over four million people received treatment for STI's every year in our country. However many people are embarrassed by their conditions and do not report them to the doctor as they should and this can have a serious consequences for the sufferer.

### **What is an STI**

A STI, previously known as sexually transmitted disease (STD) or venereal disease (VD) is a type of infection that is contracted by having some form of sexual contact with a person carrying that infection. This does not have to include penetration as some STI's are passed in the skin-to-skin contact. Some of these infections can also be transmitted in other ways, such as from mother to child during birth, through blood transfusions and from sharing needles in hypodermic syringes.

## **How do I know if I have a STI**

The symptoms of a STI vary depending on the infection that has been contracted. Certain STI's may not even cause any symptoms at all, making it difficult for the sufferer to know that he or she has it. There are a number of symptoms that may point to a STI, including:

- Pain during urination
- Sores and/or bumps in the oral
- Sore or swollen lymph nodes, or glands, in the groin area and sometimes elsewhere in the body.

## **When am I at risk of contracting a STI**

- Having sex without a condom is one of the greatest causes of contracting STI's. It is vital that you use a condom at all times when having sexual intercourse.
- The more people with whom you have sexual contact of any nature, the more likely you are to get a STI.
- Previous infections with one or more STI's make it easier for a new STI to develop in your body.
- Injecting drugs and sharing the needles you use can expose you to a number of STI's, including HIV.

## **When should I go to see the doctor**

- As soon as you start experiencing any signs of a STI
- If you are being treated for a STI but the symptoms have not stopped or have changed
- If you have not used a condom during sexual intercourse with a partner whose HIV status you don't know.
- Before you start having sexual intercourse with a new partner you should both tested for STI's before having sex.

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