



# STI Misconceptions

I can't get an STI from oral sex

*False. Although the risk of getting an STI through oral sex is generally less than from vaginal or anal sex, there is still a risk. The infections most commonly passed on through oral sex are herpes simplex, gonorrhoea and syphilis.*

I can get herpes from a toilet seat

*False. Herpes simplex virus (HSV) is spread by direct contact of mucous membranes (the soft tissue located at your genitals and mouth) with a herpes sore, saliva, or genital secretions of a person with a herpes infection. Transmission of herpes usually occurs during kissing, or oral, anal, or vaginal sex.*

Getting an STI test is painful and embarrassing

*False. Many STI tests are as quick and easy as giving a urine sample. Some tests might also involve having blood taken, a visual examination to look for signs of infection, or using a swab (like a smaller, soft and rounded cotton bud) on the genital area. If a swab is needed, some services will offer you the option of using it yourself. Health professionals carry out sexual health check-ups every day – and they don't look at an STI test as a reflection on your behaviour, but as a responsible health choice.*

The pill can protect you from contracting STIs

*False. The contraceptive pill is effective against preventing pregnancy. It is not effective against protecting against STIs.*

People with many sexual partners have STIs

*False. STIs do not discriminate against the number of partners a person may have. Anyone can get a STI, it doesn't matter if you have one partner or multiple. STIs can be passed through unprotected sex.*

STIs will go away on their own

*False. It is unlikely that an STI will go away by itself. Getting tested is the first step in seeking treatment for an STI. Delaying treatment could lead to unintended long-term consequences.*

