



SEXUAL  
HEALTH

# SEXUAL HEALTH TOOLKIT PART I

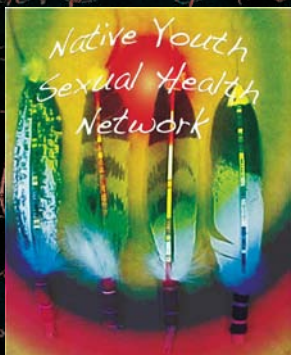


Sex·u·al·ly Trans·mit·ted  
In·fec·tions (STIs)

SEXUALLY  
TRANSMITTED  
INFECTIONS

HIV/AIDS  
(THE FACTS)

EXPLAINING  
STI TESTS



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The National Aboriginal Health Organization advances and promotes the health and well-being of all First Nations, Inuit and Métis through collaborative research, Indigenous Traditional Knowledge, building capacity, and community led initiatives.

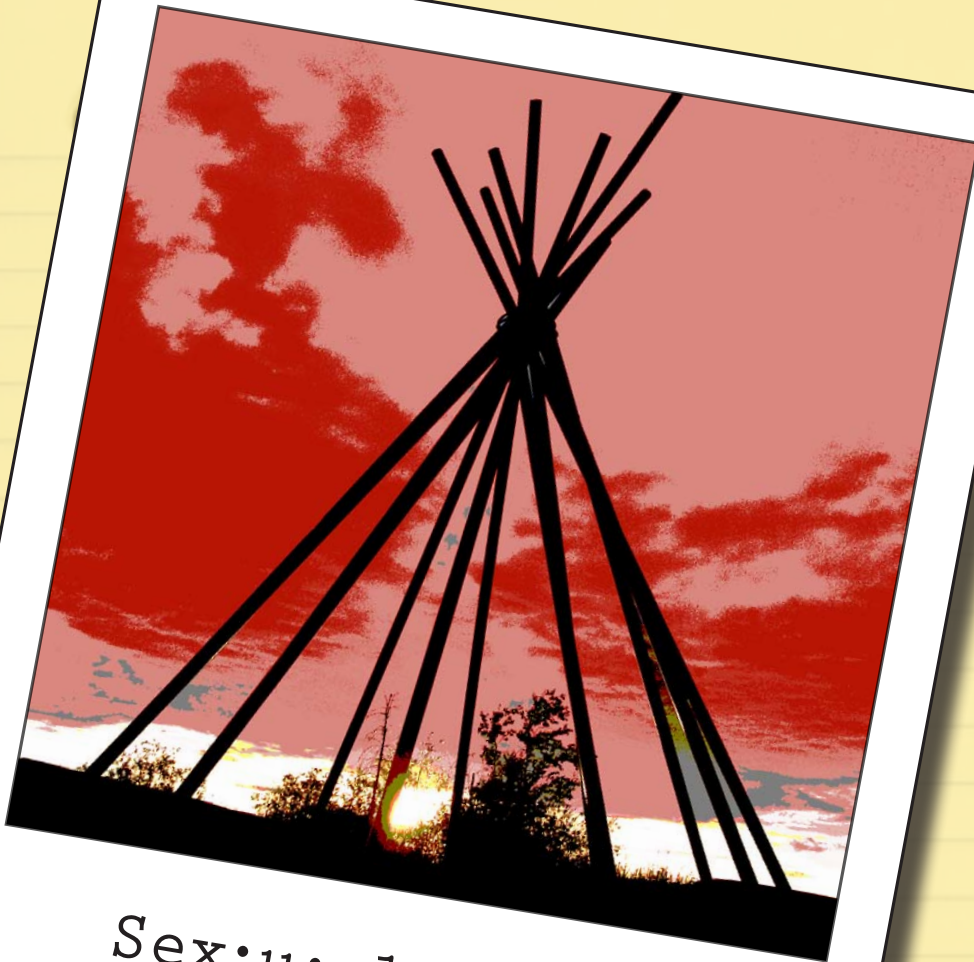
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Under the Canadian Constitution Act, 1982, the term Aboriginal Peoples refers to First Nations, Inuit and Métis people living in Canada. However, common use of the term is not always inclusive of all three distinct people and much of the available research only focuses on particular segments of the Aboriginal population. NAHO makes every effort to ensure the term is used appropriately.

# SEXUAL HEALTH



## Sex·u·al Health

This toolkit has two parts. Part 1 has information on sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. It also has information on getting tested. Part 2 has information on sexuality and relationships. The purpose of the toolkit is to provide you with some of the basic information you need to keep yourself sexually healthy. It will also give you links to web sites that might have more information that you'll find useful. **This toolkit has been created in collaboration with the Native Youth Sexual Health Network (NYSHN).** NYSHN is a North-America wide organization working on issues of healthy sexuality, cultural competency, youth empowerment, reproductive justice, and sex positivity by and for Native youth.

You can find them at <http://www.nativeyouthsexualhealth.com/>.

### Sexual Health

Sexual health doesn't just mean not having a sexually transmitted infection (STI). Sexual health is part of your overall health. Overall health includes your physical health as well as your mental and social health. Health means well-being. It doesn't just mean not being sick. Sexual health requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships. It also means having the possibility of pleasurable and safe sexual experiences - free of coercion, discrimination or violence (PHAC, 2003, p. 5). There are many benefits to sexual

health including better relationships, both sexual and non-sexual, and feelings of being involved and included in your community. Being sexually healthy can improve your self image and self worth, can help you respect yourself and others, and can help you better accept your own sexuality (Nova Scotia Department of Health, 1999, p. 45; PHAC, 2003, p. 8).

Sexual health includes a range of connected elements from sexual behaviour, attitudes, spirituality, and social factors, to biological risks. It is affected by society and what is considered “normal”. It is also affected by access to information and services as well as community factors like poverty, violence, isolation, and discrimination. Understanding sexual health requires considering many factors such as mental health, physical health, appreciation of sexuality, and understanding the influence of gender roles and power. To be sexually

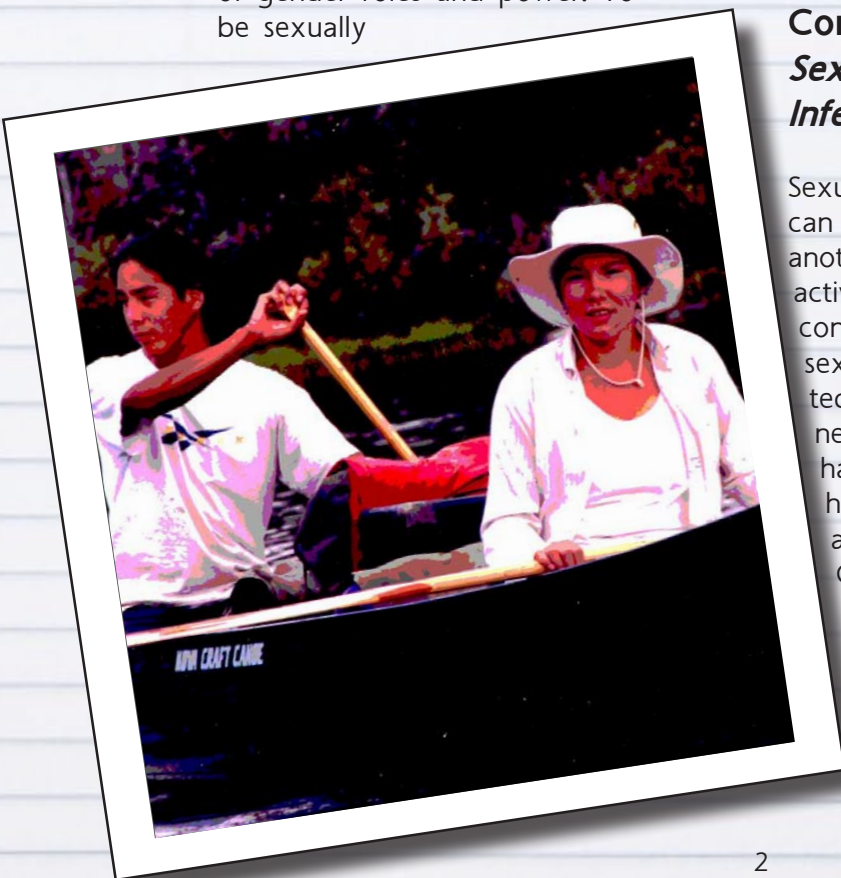
healthy, sexual rights must be respected, protected and fulfilled.

In historical First Nations views, sexuality was not shameful and children were taught openly about their bodies, sexual and reproductive passages, and moon time (ANAC, 2002). The loss of traditional knowledge, language, land, ceremonies and cultural practices, including gender roles and birthing ceremonies, has influenced sexual health and sexuality for First Nations.

Sexual health is a part of your overall well-being. The mind, body, and spirit are connected. But, this also means that the effects of unsafe and risky sexual behaviours can affect not only your body but also your mind and spirit.

### **Considerations for Sexual Health *Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)***

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) can spread from one person to another during unprotected sexual activity, including genital to genital contact and oral, vaginal and anal sex. Since some STIs are transmitted by contact, penetration is not needed. You can't tell if a person has an STI because many people have no obvious symptoms. STIs are becoming more common in Canada. There are many types of STIs, including:



# SEXUAL HEALTH

## Parasites

- Pubic lice (crabs)
- Trichomonas
- Scabies

## Bacteria

- Chlamydia
- Gonorrhea
- Syphilis

## Viruses

- Genital herpes
- Human papilloma virus (HPV) (genital warts)
- Hepatitis B
- Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). HIV is the virus believed to be the cause of Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS).

- Some STIs can be cured with antibiotics, such as Chlamydia and gonorrhea.
- Some STIs can't be cured but are "managed" with treatment or medications, such as genital herpes and HIV.
- Some STIs can lead to cancer, such as HPV and hepatitis B.

**Protect yourself from STIs:** If you are sexually active the best protection from STIs are latex condoms, female condoms, or dental dams used during oral, vaginal and anal sex. These methods only work if used properly and only protect you in places they cover.

It's never too late for safer sex! Even if you haven't been safe in the past, there is no reason you can't be safe now and in the future. If you think you might have a STI get tested even if you don't have any symptoms. Testing is the only way to know for sure.

To get complete screening for STIs you have to ask for it. There are many places you can get tested including: general health clinics, sexual health or birth control clinics, nursing stations, or your usual health care provider. See the "explaining STI tests" section of this toolkit for more information. Your test and results will be confidential.

## Pregnancy

If you are sexually active pregnancy can happen. Men and women are both responsible for planning when to have children and for preventing unplanned pregnancies. Using condoms combined with another method of birth control, such as the birth control pill, diaphragm or cervical cap, makes STI and pregnancy much less likely. Some birth control methods, such as "withdrawal" and the "calendar method", don't work well. They also don't prevent STIs. For a complete list of birth control methods visit: <http://sexualityandu.ca/adults/contraception.aspx>

Birth control pills are covered by the Non-Insured Health Benefits for Status First Nations women. Birth control pills require a prescription from a health care provider. **Birth control pills do not protect against STIs. Use a condom even if you or your partner use the pill.**

Emergency contraception is available if you've had unprotected sex, if the condom slipped or broke, if you or your partner forgot to take the birth control pill, patch or ring, or if you were forced or coerced into sex. There is a three day window in which the "morning after pill" can be effective. It should **not** be used as your regular method of birth control and **it does not protect against STIs**. Emergency contraception is covered by the Non-Insured Health Benefits for Status First Nations women. You don't need a prescription for emergency contraception pills. They are available over the counter in most drugstores. If used within 24 hours of unprotected sex, the emergency contraceptive pill prevents 95% of pregnancies.

If you are pregnant or think you might be, speak to a health care provider, an Elder, or someone you trust. You have options including: deciding to have an abortion, choosing to place the baby for adoption, or choosing to raise the child. Making a decision about your pregnancy is difficult and life-changing. Your health care provider or counsellor has a responsibility to give you all the information you need without judgement and to support the decision you make. Links to pregnancy and child birth information are provided at the end of this section.

**SEXUAL ASSAULT OCCURS WHEN ONE PERSON APPLIES FORCE TO ANOTHER WITHOUT CONSENT AND SEXUAL ACTIVITY IS INVOLVED. SEXUAL ASSAULT HAPPENS MORE OFTEN TO WOMEN THAN MEN. MOST WOMEN WHO ARE SEXUALLY ASSAULTED ARE ASSAULTED BY SOMEONE THEY KNOW.**

## **Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse and drug-facilitated sexual assault occur more often than you may think. Men and women can be victims of abuse but it is more often directed towards women. Violence against women is often about power and control. Sexual abuse can affect a person's sexual health and self esteem. In a healthy relationship there should be safety, honesty, acceptance, respect, and enjoyment. For more information on sexual abuse or healthy relationships see Part 2 of this toolkit.

**PROTECT**



# SEXUAL HEALTH

**DID YOU KNOW? THE MOST COMMON DRUG USED IN DRUG-FACILITATED ASSAULTS IS ALCOHOL. LEGALLY, A PERSON CAN BE TOO DRUNK TO CONSENT TO SEXUAL ACTIVITY AND IT DOES NOT MATTER IF THE PARTNER IS ALSO DRUNK. FOR MORE INFORMATION, CHECK OUT SEXUALITYANDU: [HTTP://WWW.SEXUALITYANDU.CA/MEDIA-ROOM/MATTE-STORIES-4.ASPX](http://www.sexualityandu.ca/media-room/matte-stories-4.aspx)**

## Effects of Alcohol and Drug Use

Young people who drink alcohol are more likely to have multiple sex partners (Harrison & Kassler, 2000, p. 346). Alcohol is commonly viewed as a “sex facilitator” and its use is seen as a way to relax and improve communications. For women, drinking alcohol increases the risk of becoming victims of sexual violence and therefore increases the risk of STIs and pregnancy. About 1 of 4 rape victims reports that drugs or alcohol were a factor. But, many of these rapes are unreported so the number is probably much higher (Sexualityandu, 2008).

Alcohol and drug abuse affect your ability to make good decisions and healthy choices. **Under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs people may be more likely to have unprotected sex or may engage in sexual activities they wouldn't normally do.**

## REMEMBER:

- Alcohol and drug use affect our ability to make good decisions and healthy choices and make us less likely to pick up on cues or hints that assault may occur.
- Safer sexual activity includes the regular use of condoms to prevent pregnancy and STIs along with other forms of birth control.
- Understanding your sexual health includes regular visits to your doctor or nurse.
- Information about sex and your body will help you make more healthy decisions.
- Discussing your sexual health and sexuality with someone you trust will help you share your concerns, fears, answer your questions, and give you support.

The Native Youth Sexual Health Network works on issues related to healthy sexuality, cultural competency, youth empowerment, reproductive justice, and sex positivity by and for Native youth. <http://www.nativeyouthsexualhealth.com/>

This site has excellent resources for youth interested in finding out information about sexual health. [www.teensource.org](http://www.teensource.org)

The Canadian Federation for Sexual Health promotes sexual and reproductive health and rights in Canada and internationally. [www.cfsh.ca](http://www.cfsh.ca)

Finding Our Way: A sexual and reproductive health sourcebook for Aboriginal communities. <http://www.anac.on.ca/sourcebook/toc.htm>

Teachingsexualhealth.ca: <http://www.teachingsexualhealth.ca/index.htm>

The American Social Health Association website presents a comprehensive understanding of sexual health including a short video on how to properly use condoms. [http://www.ashastd.org/condom/condom\\_introduction.cfm](http://www.ashastd.org/condom/condom_introduction.cfm)

“Spiderbytes” is a website produced by Planned Parenthood Toronto that provides excellent sexual health information for youth. [www.spiderbytes.ca](http://www.spiderbytes.ca)

Options for Sexual Health is a non-profit provider of clinics, education programs, and the 1-800 SEX SENSE information line. <http://www.optionsforsexualhealth.org/>

## For More Information

### General Sexual Health Websites:

The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada administers a website that provides up-to-date information and education about sexuality. [www.sexualityandu.ca](http://www.sexualityandu.ca)

BC Centre for Disease Control, Chee Mamuk Aboriginal Program: <http://www.bccdc.ca/prevention/Cheemamuk/EducMaterials/default.htm>

The World Health Organization provides international perspectives on sexual health and other issues regarding sexuality. <http://www.who.int/reproductive-health/gender/sexualhealth.ht>



# SEXUAL HEALTH

## STI Information:

The Public Health Agency of Canada provides Provincial and Territorial helpline phone numbers for STIs. <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/std-mts/phone-eng.php>

Health Canada gives a good overview of HIV and other STIs that can result from participation in sexual risk behaviours. <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hc-ps/dc-ma/sti-its-eng.php>

Nine Circles Community Health Centre: HIV/STI section: <http://ninecircles.ca/services/hiv-testing.html>

Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network: <http://www.caan.ca/english/>  
The Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network also has a site specific for youth: [http://www.caan.ca/youth/html/index\\_e.html](http://www.caan.ca/youth/html/index_e.html)

## Contraception Information:

The American Social Health Association website presents a comprehensive understanding of sexual health including a short video on how to properly use condoms. [http://www.ashastd.org/condom/condom\\_introduction.cfm](http://www.ashastd.org/condom/condom_introduction.cfm)

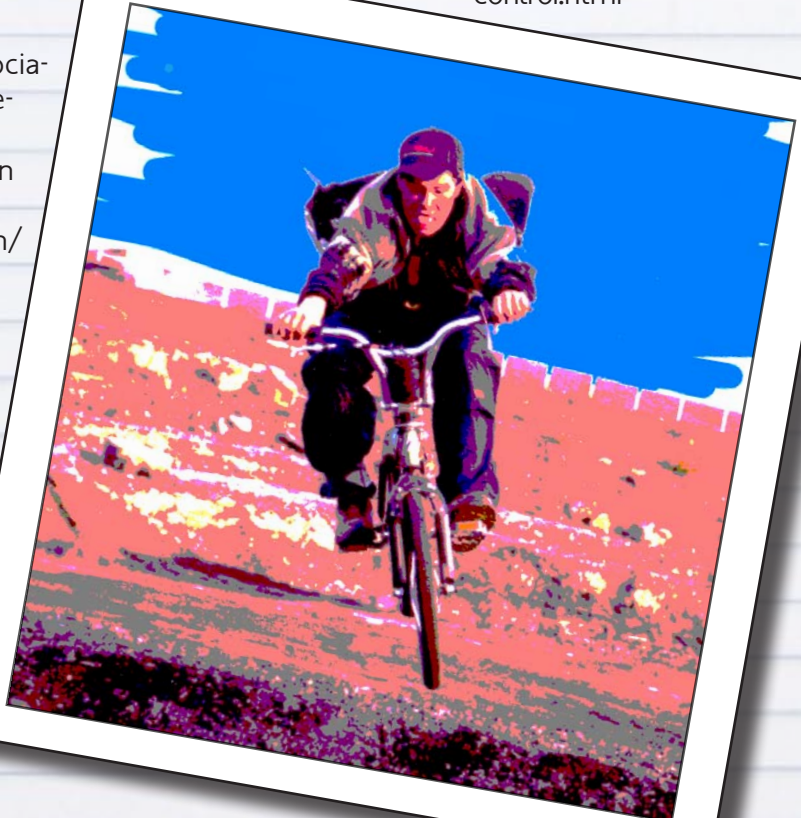
York University's Health Education Department provides a great list of contraceptive methods, what they are and how they work. [http://www.yorku.ca/sclد/healthed/health-topics/birth\\_control.html](http://www.yorku.ca/sclد/healthed/health-topics/birth_control.html)

The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada administers a website that provides up-to-date information and education

about sexuality including information on contraception for adults (<http://www.sexualityandu.ca/adults/contraception.aspx>) and teens (<http://www.sexualityandu.ca/teens/contraception.aspx>)

Sexuality and U also contains contraception information specific for Aboriginal communities: <http://www.sexualityandu.ca/acap/>

York University's Health Education Department provides a great list of contraceptive methods, what they are and how they work. [http://www.yorku.ca/sclد/healthed/healthtopics/birth\\_control.html](http://www.yorku.ca/sclد/healthed/healthtopics/birth_control.html)



### **Pregnancy and Child Birth:**

National Aboriginal Health Organization – Birthing through First Nations midwifery care: <http://www.naho.ca/firstnations/english/documents/Midwifery.pdf>

National Aboriginal Health Organization – Gestational Diabetes Factsheet: <http://www.naho.ca/firstnations/english/gestationdiabetes.php>

National Aboriginal Health Organization – First Nations Families and Doulas: [http://www.naho.ca/firstnations/english/documents/2009-02-09\\_DoulaBrochureEnglish\\_final.pdf](http://www.naho.ca/firstnations/english/documents/2009-02-09_DoulaBrochureEnglish_final.pdf)

National Aboriginal Health Organization – Aboriginal Midwifery in Canada: [http://www.naho.ca/firstnations/english/documents/2009-02-09\\_Midwiferypaper\\_English\\_final.pdf](http://www.naho.ca/firstnations/english/documents/2009-02-09_Midwiferypaper_English_final.pdf)

Aboriginal Nurses Association – Birth Control and Pregnancy Options: [http://www.anac.on.ca/sourcebook/part\\_2\\_unit\\_8.htm](http://www.anac.on.ca/sourcebook/part_2_unit_8.htm)

Health Canada – Programs offered on-reserve for Children and Youth and Maternal Child Health: [http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fniah-spnia/pubs/aborig-autoch/2007\\_compendium/1\\_comm\\_prog-eng.php#\\_1\\_1](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fniah-spnia/pubs/aborig-autoch/2007_compendium/1_comm_prog-eng.php#_1_1)

Aboriginal Act Now – Health Choices in Pregnancy: [http://aboriginalactnow.ca/s\\_23.asp](http://aboriginalactnow.ca/s_23.asp)

### **Sexual Abuse Information:**

Along with many other helpful resources that consider various aspects of relationships and sexual health, the Native Women's Association of

Canada has a checklist for women called "Am I in an Abusive Relationship?" <http://www.nwac-hq.org/en/youth/toolkit/yvptoolkit-domestic-5.html>

The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada administers a website that provides up-to-date information and education about sexuality including information on sexual assault including drug facilitated sexual facilitated sexual assault for adults (<http://www.sexualityandu.ca/adults/assault.aspx>) and teens (<http://www.sexualityandu.ca/teens/assault.aspx>).

### **References**

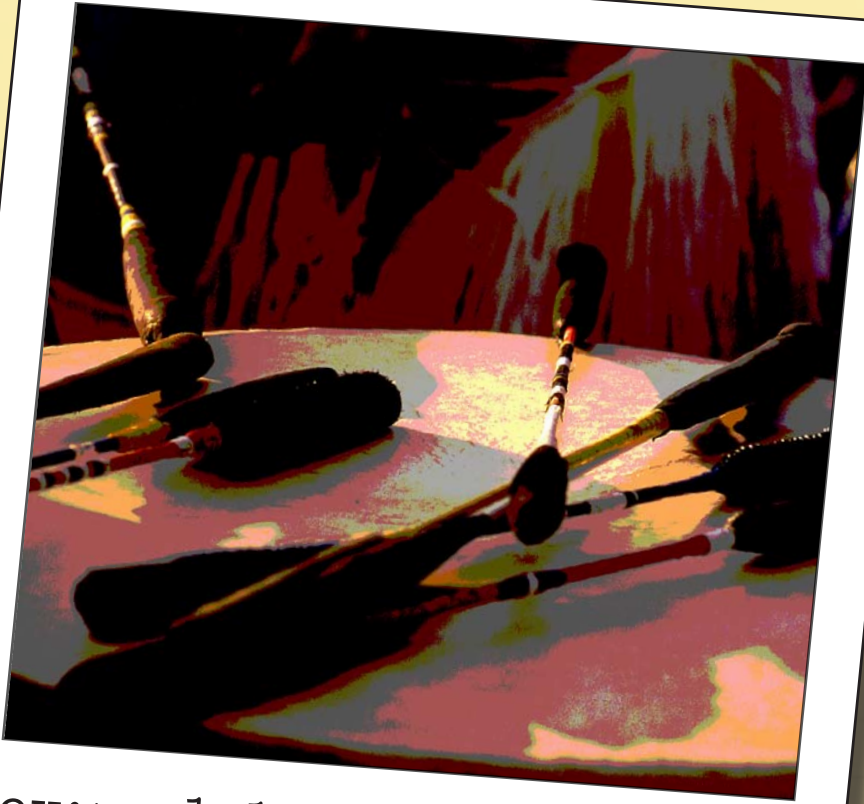
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Public Health Agency of Canada (2003). Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health Education.

# SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS



## Sexually Transmitted Infections (Men & Women)

This toolkit will describe some of the common symptoms of sexually transmitted infections (STI).

STIs are spread through genital to genital contact, and through unprotected oral, vaginal, or anal sex. Some STIs can be spread from a mother to her baby during pregnancy and birth. Many infected people have no symptoms so they can spread the infection to other people without knowing it.

This information is not a substitute for medical advice. If you think you have an STI see a health care professional.

### Bacterial STIs

STIs caused by bacteria can be cured with antibiotics.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN STI AND STD? THE TERMS "SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTION" AND "SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASE" MEAN BASICALLY THE SAME THING. STI IS A BETTER TERM BECAUSE THE INFECTION IS WHAT IS TRANSMITTED FROM PERSON TO PERSON. THE DISEASE IS WHAT HAPPENS ONCE A PERSON HAS BECOME INFECTED.

### Chlamydia

This is the most common bacterial STI among young people in Canada. Most infected people have no symptoms. If you do have symptoms in the genitals, they may include:

- a burning feeling when peeing
- a watery or milky discharge from your penis
- vaginal discharge
- burning or itching around the hole of your penis
- pain in your testicles
- pain in your abdomen
- pain during sex,
- bleeding between periods or after sex

HPV IS THE MOST COMMON STI IN THE WORLD...IT IS BELIEVED THAT UP TO 7 TO 10 PEOPLE IN CANADA WILL HAVE AT LEAST ONE INFECTION WITH HPV IN THEIR LIFE.

Untreated Chlamydia can lead to pelvic inflammatory disease\* (PID) which can have life-long effects such as infertility. If a pregnant woman has untreated Chlamydia there can be effects on the baby such as eye infections or pneumonia.

- a thick greenish-yellow discharge from the penis
- burning or itching around the hole of the penis
- burning or painful urination
- a change or increase in vaginal discharge
- yellowish vaginal discharge
- bleeding when it is not your period or during or after sex
- pain in the testicles
- pain in the lower abdomen

\* PELVIC INFLAMMATORY DISEASE (PID) IS AN INFECTION THAT CAN AFFECT YOUR WOMB, OVARIES, FALLOPIAN TUBES, AND THE SURROUNDING TISSUE. IT IS OFTEN CAUSED BY STIS. THE SYMPTOMS INCLUDE:

- LOWER ABDOMINAL PAIN
- FEVER
- PAIN DURING SEX
- LOWER BACK PAIN
- ABNORMAL VAGINAL BLEEDING OR DISCHARGE
- NAUSEA OR VOMITING

IF LEFT UNTREATED PID CAN LEAD TO INFERTILITY, ECTOPIC PREGNANCY (PREGNANCY THAT IMPLANTS OUTSIDE OF THE WOMB, USUALLY IN THE FALLOPIAN TUBES), AND CHRONIC PAIN.

### Gonorrhea

This infection can affect the penis, cervix, rectum, throat, or eyes. It may have no symptoms, but possible symptoms are:

If a pregnant woman has untreated gonorrhea it can be passed to the baby at birth and can cause joint infections or blindness. Gonorrhea can also lead to PID.

UNTREATED CHLAMYDIA AND GONORRHEA INFECTIONS CAN SPREAD TO THE TESTICLES AND CAUSE SWELLING, PAIN AND IN RARE CASES INFERTILITY.

### Syphilis

The first symptom of syphilis infection is a painless sore usually found on the genitals or in the mouth or rectum. Most people with syphilis will not notice the sore. The sore goes away without treatment but the person is still infected. Symptoms of the second stage of syphilis may include a body rash and flu-like symptoms. These symptoms will go away without treatment but the person is still infected. With-

# SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS

out treatment syphilis can cause heart, brain, and other organ damage. Syphilis can be cured with antibiotics, but antibiotics won't fix damage that has already been done to organs. After treatment with antibiotics you'll need a blood test to make sure the treatment worked.

## ***LGV (lymphogranuloma venereum)***

LGV has become more common in Canada. The first symptom of LGV may be a painless sore or lump where the bacteria enter the body. The sore could be on the penis, vagina, cervix, rectum, or mouth. The later symptoms are flu-like, such as fever, chills, and muscle aches. Without antibiotic treatment LGV can cause scarring and deformity of the genital area that may require surgery. In rare cases it can also cause "meningitis", which is swelling of the membranes of the brain and spinal cord.

## **Viral STIs**

STIs caused by viruses are harder to treat. In most cases there is no cure available and some viral STIs can lead to cancer.

## ***Genital herpes***

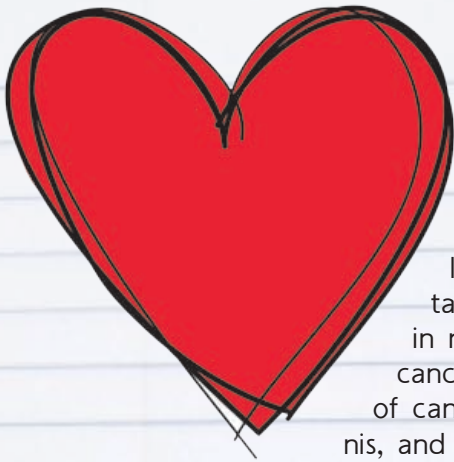
Herpes can cause painful sores on the mouth, called cold sores or on the genitals, called genital herpes. There are many types of herpes viruses. Some people with herpes infection will have no symptoms. For most people the first symptom is itching or tingling on the skin that develops into blisters or sores. Herpes can keep coming back, especially when you're tired or stressed, if you have a fever or you're sick, or if you get too much sun.

There is no cure for herpes but there are treatments to manage and prevent outbreaks.

## ***Human papillomavirus (HPV)***

HPV is the most common STI in the world. This virus causes genital warts. It is believed that up to 7 in 10 people in Canada will have at least one infection with HPV in their life. There are many different types of HPV. Some can cause genital warts and other types can cause cancer. Most HPV infections will go away on their own. There is no treatment to get rid of the virus but there are treatments for genital warts.





HPV causes cervical cancer in women, and is also linked to certain rare cancers in men. Most anal cancers, about half of cancers of the penis, and even some cancers of the mouth, head, and neck are caused by HPV. Cervical cancer screening, called the Pap test, can find changes to the cervix that might mean there is an HPV infection or cancer. Pap tests are recommended for all sexually active women over 18. There is no test available to detect HPV in men but men can be looked at by a health care provider if they notice any warts, blisters, or sores on their genitals. There is an HPV vaccine that can prevent some types of HPV. It is available for women and men between 9 and 26 years old. The vaccine is most effective if given before the start of sexual activity. The vaccine cannot cure HPV but it can give protection from the types of HPV that cause the most cases of cervical cancer, other cancers, and genital warts. The vaccine does not protect against all types of HPV so a Pap test is still needed for women who have been vaccinated.

### ***Hepatitis B***

Hepatitis viruses can cause serious liver disease and even liver cancer. Hepatitis B is spread through contact between body fluids like blood, saliva, semen and vaginal fluids. You can also get it through sharing needles with an infected person. You might have no symptoms

or you might feel tired, have dark urine, have yellowish skin, or have pain in your abdomen. A vaccine for hepatitis B is available.

### ***Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)***

HIV is the virus that causes AIDS. A person with HIV might have it for years before developing AIDS. HIV makes it hard for your body's immune system to fight off other infections. You might get a mild flu between two and four weeks after being infected but then you might not have any other symptoms for years. To find out if you're infected you need to get tested. Some people may need to have another test at a later time to make sure they are not infected. More information on HIV is available in the "HIV" section of this toolkit.

### ***Parasitic STIs***

#### ***Pubic lice ("crabs") & Scabies***

Lice look like tiny crabs and are grey or brownish-red. They lay eggs at the base of hair follicles so you might see whitish eggs on your pubic hair. Scabies are tiny mites that burrow under the skin and lay eggs. If you have pubic lice or scabies, you will feel itchy. Scabies may cause a rash that may not be on your genitals since scabies can travel to other body parts. Both infections are treated with special creams, lotions, or shampoos. You'll need to dry clean or wash all your clothing, bedding, and towels in hot water. If you can't wash them, you'll have to keep all blankets in closed plastic

**IF YOU'RE UNSURE, GET TESTED!**

containers for a week and you'll have to vacuum everything else, such as couches and rugs.

### ***Trichomoniasis***

If you have this STI you may not have any symptoms. If you do have symptoms, you might have:

- a burning sensation when you pee
- discharge from your penis
- a strange vaginal discharge
- an itchy vagina
- burning or itching around the hole of your penis
- pain during sex

Trichomoniasis can lead to PID. If a pregnant woman has trichomoniasis the baby may be born early or may weigh less than normal. Trichomoniasis can be treated with antibiotics.

## **SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS**

**Protect yourself from STIs.** If you are sexually active use condoms. Condoms are your best protection from STIs.

Talk to your health care provider about STI testing, Pap testing, and available sexual health services. Women over the age of 18 should have a Pap test every year until two tests in a row are clear. For more information on STI testing refer to the “explaining STI tests” section of this toolkit.

### **For more information:**

#### **First Nations Specific**

The Native Women's Association of Canada – Sexually Transmitted Infections: <http://www.nwac.ca/programs/sexually-transmitted-infections>

The Native Youth Sexual Health Network works on issues related to healthy sexuality, cultural competency, youth empowerment, reproductive justice, and sex positivity by and for

Native youth. <http://www.nativeyouthsexualhealth.com/>

#### **General**

The Public Health Agency of Canada provides Provincial and Territorial helpline phone numbers for STIs. <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/std-mts/phone-eng.php>

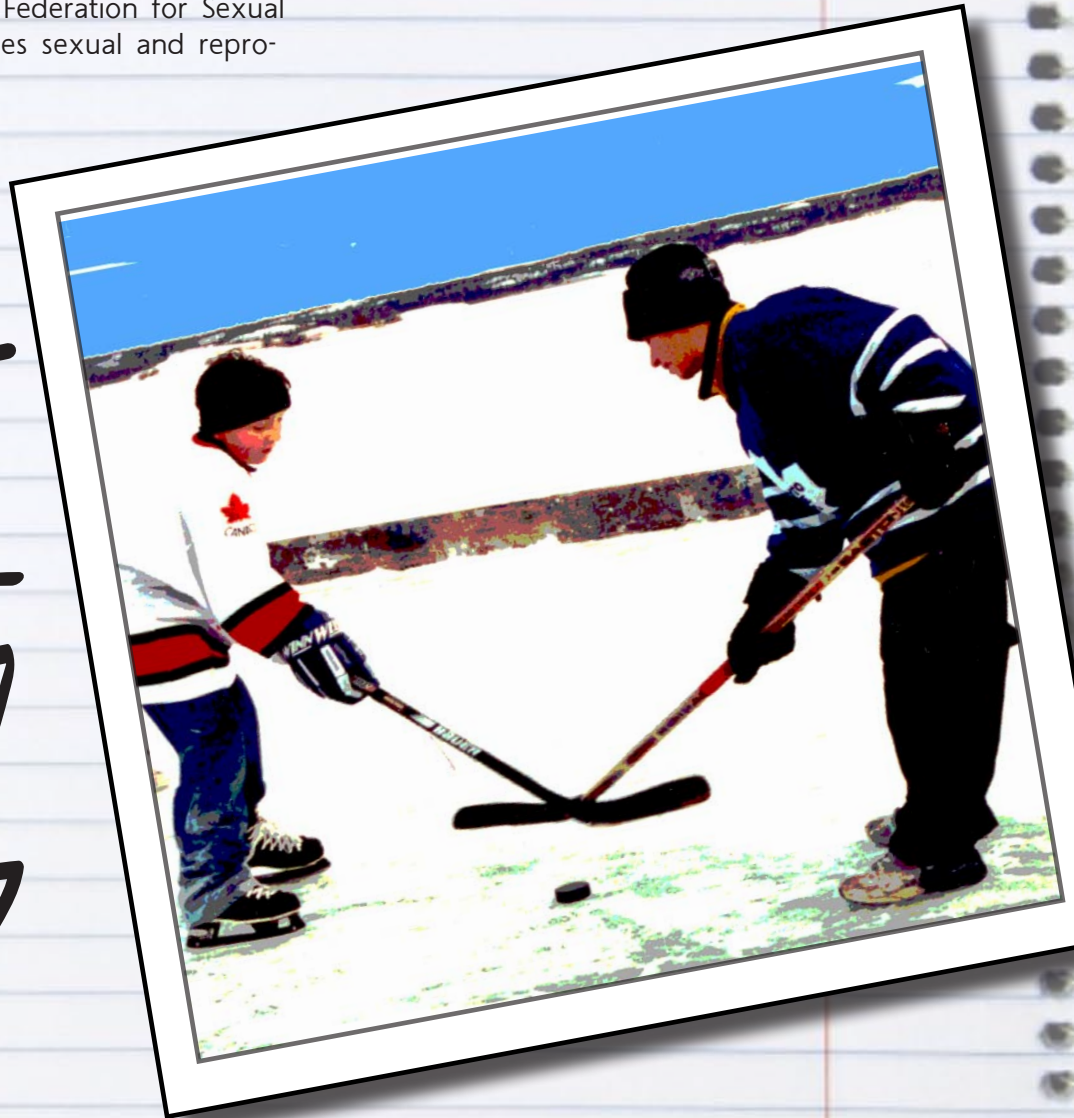


The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada administers a website that provides up-to-date information and education about sexuality. [www.sexualityandu.ca](http://www.sexualityandu.ca)

HPV info has HPV information for teens, adults, and teachers. <http://www.hpvinfosite.ca/hpvinfo/home.aspx>  
The Canadian Federation for Sexual Health promotes sexual and repro-

ductive health and rights in Canada and internationally. [www.cfsh.ca](http://www.cfsh.ca)  
The Public Health Agency of Canada's Safer Sex and You website gives information about condoms: <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/epiuaepi/std-mts/condom-eng.php>

SAFER  
AND  
SMART



condoms





### **What is HIV?**

HIV stands for “human immunodeficiency virus”. It is the virus that causes AIDS. This virus affects your body’s immune system. HIV stops your body from being able to fight certain infections that most people without HIV can fight off easily. The immune system contains white blood cells which fight bacteria, viruses, and other germs when they enter your body. HIV affects a certain type of white blood cell called “CD4”.

HIV treatment is called “Highly Active Anti-Retroviral Therapy” (HAART). It helps a person’s immune system stabilize and build up their CD4 count and lowers the amount of virus in their blood, called the “viral load”. There is no cure or vaccine for HIV but there are treatments to stop or slow the progression to AIDS.

### **What is AIDS?**

AIDS stands for “acquired immunodeficiency syndrome”. A person with HIV infection is considered to have AIDS when they develop an “AIDS defining illness”. AIDS can take many years to develop in a person with HIV. The average length of time from HIV infection to AIDS is about 10 years. There is no cure for AIDS.

### **What kinds of infections are AIDS defining illnesses?**

AIDS defining illnesses are mostly uncommon in people who don’t have HIV or other conditions that might affect their immune system. People who do not have AIDS can also get these illnesses and it does not mean that they have AIDS. In most cases, these illnesses be-



come  
 “AIDS defining” when  
 they are chronic and do not clear up.  
 A person must have HIV to be diag-  
 nosed with AIDS.

Some examples of AIDS defining ill-  
 nesses are (AIDS info, 2009; Health  
 Canada, 2000, p. 61):

- **Pneumocystis pneumonia (PCP)**  
 – this is a type of pneumonia  
 caused by a fungus.
- **Candidiasis** – also called  
 “thrush”, this is a yeast infec-  
 tion. Yeast is a fungus that  
 is commonly found in the  
 mouth, vagina, skin, and stom-  
 ach/intestines. When it infects  
 the windpipe, lungs, or esoph-  
 agus it is considered an AIDS-  
 defining illness.
- **Recurrent bacterial pneumonia**  
 – pneumonia that keeps com-  
 ing back.
- **Herpes** – This could be gen-  
 ital herpes or cold sores/fever  
 blisters. This is an AIDS defin-  
 ing illness when herpes sores  
 last longer than 1 month.
- **Cryptosporidiosis** – this infec-  
 tion causes stomach or intes-  
 tinal symptoms and diarrhea.  
 This infection is spread from  
 person to person, from animals  
 to people, or through contami-

nated food or water. It is an  
 AIDS defining illness when a per-  
 son has had it for over a month.

- **Cervical Cancer** – when the  
 cancer is invasive and HIV has  
 been confirmed this is an AIDS  
 defining illness.
- **Cytomegalovirus** – this virus  
 most often affects the eyes  
 and can lead to blindness.
- **Histoplasmosis** – this infection  
 is caused by a fungus that is  
 inhaled into the lungs.
- **Kaposi’s Sarcoma** – this is a  
 cancer that develops on the  
 skin or in the body. On the  
 skin, the cancer might look like  
 bruises that do not fade over time.
- **Lymphoma - Burkitt’s, im-  
 munoblastic, or primary lym-  
 phoma in the brain** – Lym-  
 phomas are cancers of the  
 blood - specifically the white  
 blood cells, the disease fight  
 ing parts of the blood.
- **Tuberculosis** – this infection  
 most often affects the lungs  
 but can also affect the skin,  
 bones, lymph nodes, liver,  
 brain, and spinal cord.

### People affected by HIV/AIDS

HIV can affect anyone regardless of  
 sexual orientation, gender, gender ori-  
 entation, ethnicity or race, or age.  
 Aboriginal people in Canada have  
 higher rates of HIV infection than the  
 non-Aboriginal population (Govern-  
 ment of Canada, 2005, p. 3). The  
 rates are highest for people younger  
 than 30, women, two-spirited people,  
 and injection drug users. About 42%  
 of reported AIDS cases between 1978  
 and 2008 for First Nations occurred  
 through injection drug use (Public  
 Health Agency of Canada, 2010,



p. 4). About 19% of cases are in people younger than 30 (PHAC, 2010, p. 6).

People in prison are at increased risk of HIV because of certain high risk behaviours such as unprotected sex, and injection drug use without clean needles. Coerced sex can also occur. There is usually a lack of condoms and clean needles for drug use or tattooing which contributes to the spread of HIV (Canadian AIDS Society, 2004, p. 15). This is a concern, given that Aboriginal People are over-represented in the prison system (Perreault, 2009).

### How is HIV transmitted?

You can get HIV when the virus enters your blood through contact with infected blood, or bodily fluids like vaginal fluids, semen, or breast-milk. The following is a list of ways the HIV can be spread:

- HIV can be transmitted through unprotected vaginal, anal, or oral sex or by sharing drug use needles and other equipment, razors, or toothbrushes that have infected blood on them. Unprotected sex and sharing drug use needles and equipment are high risk behaviours.
- HIV can be spread through unclean needles used for tattooing, piercing, acupuncture, and unsterile medical equipment.
- HIV can be spread through oral sex especially if the person receiving oral sex has HIV and the person giving it

has bleeding gums or tiny cuts or sores in their mouth.

- HIV can be passed from an infected mother to her baby during childbirth or through breastfeeding. **If a pregnant woman knows she has HIV there are drugs she can take so the virus may not be passed to the baby.** Proper HIV treatment and care can reduce the risk of the child being HIV-positive to less than 2% (CATE, 2010). Speak to a health care provider for more information.
- In the past HIV was transmitted through medical procedures such as blood transfusions. Now all blood products used in Canada are tested for HIV and other viruses before being given to another person so there is very little risk (Canadian Hemophilia Society, 2010).

The presence of another sexually transmitted infection, such as herpes, gonorrhea, or chlamydia increases the likelihood of HIV transmission during sex.

**HIV is not transmitted through casual contact such as talking to, kissing, hugging, or shaking hands with someone who is infected with HIV. It is also not transmitted through towels, toilet seats, doorknobs, dishes, cutlery, swimming pools, or coughs and sneezes.**

# CANADIAN ABORIGINAL AIDS AWARENESS WEEK

IS DECEMBER 1ST TO 5TH.

[HTTP://ABORIGINALAIDSAWARENESS.COM](http://aboriginalaidsawareness.com)

## How can I protect myself from HIV?

If you are sexually active, using condoms for anal and vaginal sex can provide you with the best protection against HIV. For oral sex condoms or dental dams can provide protection.

Get tested for STIs often. Having an STI can increase the risk of getting HIV (CATIE, 2010).

To reduce your risk of getting HIV from other non-sexual activities, such as injection drug use, visits the following websites for more information:

Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network  
[www.caan.ca](http://www.caan.ca)

Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange: <http://www.catie.ca/eng/PreventingHIV/fact-sheets/epi-idu.shtml>

Canadian AIDS Society: <http://www.cdn aids.ca/web/backgrnd.nsf/pages/cas-gen-0097>

National Indian & Inuit Community Health Representatives Organization:  
[http://www.niichro.com/hiv/hiv\\_7.html](http://www.niichro.com/hiv/hiv_7.html)

Health Canada: [http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hc-ps/pubs/adp-apd/injection/health\\_social-sante\\_sociales-eng.php](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hc-ps/pubs/adp-apd/injection/health_social-sante_sociales-eng.php)

## How can I find out if I have it?

HIV can only be detected through a blood test. An HIV test is not routinely offered in most cases, and if you want to be tested you have to ask your health care provider to test you. Where available a rapid HIV test can give an initial sign of whether you have been exposed to HIV. In this case, results are available within minutes. This kind of test still needs to be confirmed by a regular HIV blood test.

**If you're unsure, get tested.**

## Treatment

If you test positive for HIV here are some links to information that you may find helpful regarding HIV treatment:

Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network (CAAN) - HIV & the Non-insured Health Benefits (NIHB) Program for Aboriginal People in Canada:  
<http://caan.ca/new/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/NIHB%20-%20Lg%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf>

Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange – Treating HIV:  
<http://www.catie.ca/eng/publications/publicationsIndex.shtml#fs-g>  
Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange - HIV/AIDS Information Support toll-free phone line: 1-800-263-1638.

Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange – Free Subscriptions for AIDS information: <http://orders.catie.ca/subscription/subscribe.shtml>



WORLD AIDS DAY IS DECEMBER 1ST.  
HTTP://WWW.WORLDAIDSDAY.ORG/



### For more information:

Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network  
[www.caan.ca](http://www.caan.ca)

Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network  
– Listing of Aboriginal Readings:  
<http://caan.ca/new/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Aboriginal%20Readings.pdf>

Advocates for Youth: [http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=439&Itemid=177](http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=439&Itemid=177)

Canadian AIDS Society – A new look at homophobia and heterosexism in Canada: <http://www.cdnaids.ca/web/repguide.nsf/cl/cas-rep-0188>

Canadian Journal of Aboriginal Community-Based HIV/AIDS Research (CJACBR): <http://caan.ca/resources/caan-journal/?lang=en>. This journal is published once a year for anyone with an interest in Aboriginal Community-Based Research.

Native Youth Sexual Health Network: <http://www.nativeyouthsexualhealth.com/index.html>  
National Native American AIDS Prevention Centre: <http://www.nnaapc.org/>

The Red Circle Project: [http://www.apla.org/native\\_american/RCP/](http://www.apla.org/native_american/RCP/)

Sexuality and U: [www.sexualityandu.ca](http://www.sexualityandu.ca)

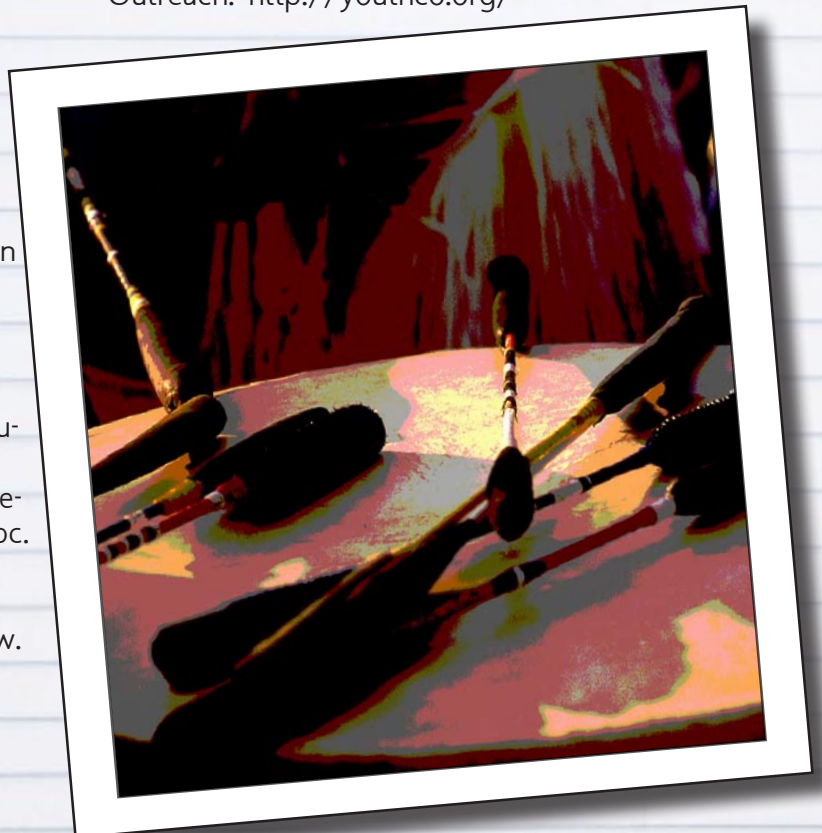
Canadian Federations for Sexual Health:  
[www.cfsh.ca](http://www.cfsh.ca)

The Public Health Agency of Canada:  
[www.publichealth.gc.ca/sti](http://www.publichealth.gc.ca/sti)

Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange: <http://www.catie.ca/eng/Home.shtml>

Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange - HIV/AIDS Information Support toll-free phone line: 1-800-263-1638.

YouthCo – HIV and Hep C Community Outreach: <http://youthco.org/>

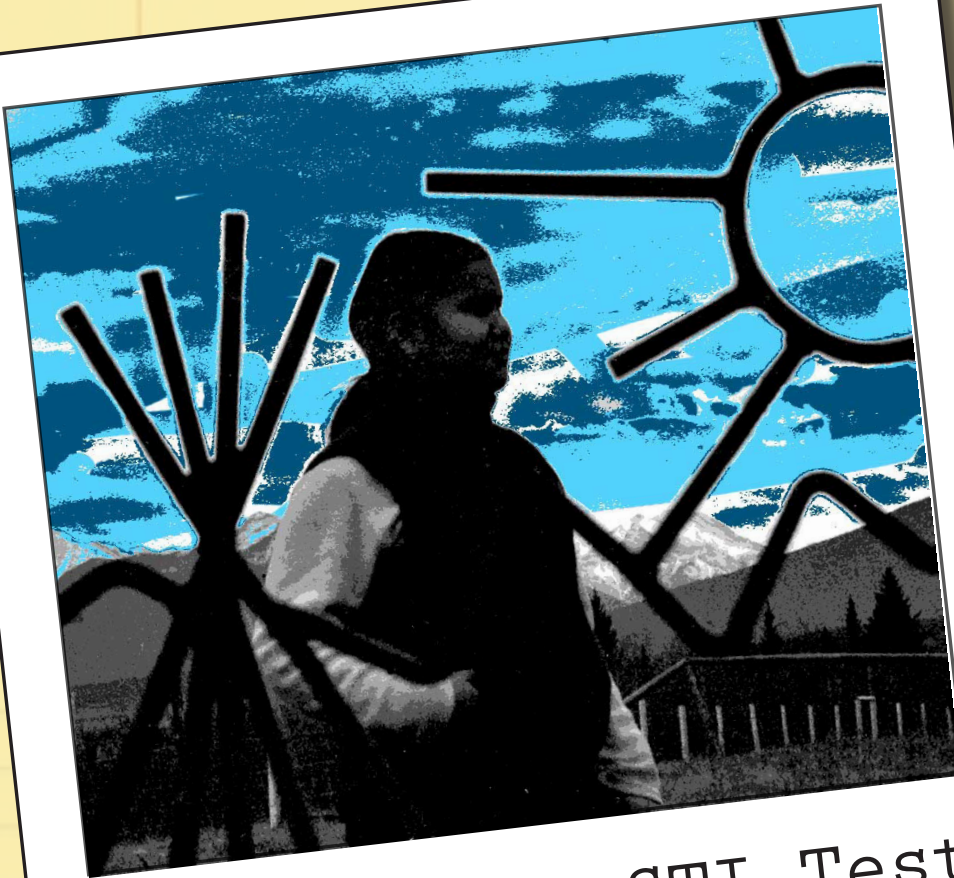


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- The Public Health Agency of Canada (2010). HIV/AIDS among Aboriginal People in Canada. HIV/AIDS Epi Updates. Centre for Communicable Diseases and Infection Control.

**KNOW YOURSELF.**

# EXPLAINING STI TESTS



## Ex·plai·ning STI Tests

Most people infected with a sexually transmitted infection will have no obvious symptoms. In many cases the only way you find out that you have an STI is by getting tested. Remember - even if you don't have symptoms you can still give the infection to your partner(s).

been sexually active and has not been tested. Encourage your partner to get tested as well.

**Most health care providers don't automatically do a full screening for all STIs and HIV. If you want to be tested, you have to ask.**

When should I be tested?

- If you have symptoms see your health care provider.
- If you don't have any symptoms but have had unprotected sex you should be tested.
- Before you have sex with a new partner.
- If you are forced to have sex or think you have been, you should be tested.
- If you have been sexually active but have not been tested or if your partner has

What happens during STI testing?

- The health care provider (HCP) may ask for a urine sample.
- The HCP may examine your genital area for sores and other signs of infection.
- The HCP may take a swab of the opening of the penis or may perform an internal examination to see your vagina and cervix.
- The HCP may take a swab from your anus or throat.
- You may have a blood test.

## IT IS IMPORTANT THAT BOTH MEN AND WOMEN TO GET TESTED FOR STIS.

It may take up to two weeks to get the results of your test. Depending on your province or territory, a Pap test or HIV test may take longer. For an HIV test, your health care provider may ask you to come back at a later time to be retested to confirm the results. It is important to follow your health care provider's advice about follow up testing.



You can get tested for STIs at a general health clinic, including walk-in clinics, a sexual health clinic, or from your usual health care provider. Your visit and your test results will be confidential between you and your health care provider. If you are tested and do have an STI, your sexual partner(s) need to be notified so that they can be tested and treated as well. This can be done by you, your health care provider, or the local public health

office. It will be confidential. Some diseases are "reportable" so your health care provider or the local laboratory will have to report your positive test result to the local health authority. This is done so that your partner(s) can receive treatment and to stop the spread of the disease.

**Clinic Locator:** <http://www.sexualityandu.ca/teens/tips-9.aspx>

Most on-reserve health clinics offer STI testing. Speak to your health care provider about getting testing.

**If you have a treatable STI do not have sex until you have completed your treatment because you will spread the infection.** If your partner doesn't get treated you can be re-infected the next time you have sex.

Condoms are the only birth control method that can help to prevent STIs. They have to be used properly and you have to use them every time to be protected.

### Why should I be tested?

1. Because many STIs don't have symptoms and testing is the only way to know for sure!
2. For your personal safety and your physical and mental well-being. For peace of mind!
3. To protect your partner from STIs.
4. Because untreated STIs can lead to serious health complications like pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) for women, and



# EXPLAINING STI TESTS

- infertility for men and women.
5. If you become pregnant there could be serious health risks to your baby without appropriate care.
  6. Because many STIs can be treated and cured!

## For More Information:

The Public Health Agency of Canada:  
<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/std-mts/redrisk-eng.php>

Province and Territory Health Line  
Phone Numbers: <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/std-mts/phone-eng.php>  
SexualityandU.ca: <http://www.sexualityandU.ca/>

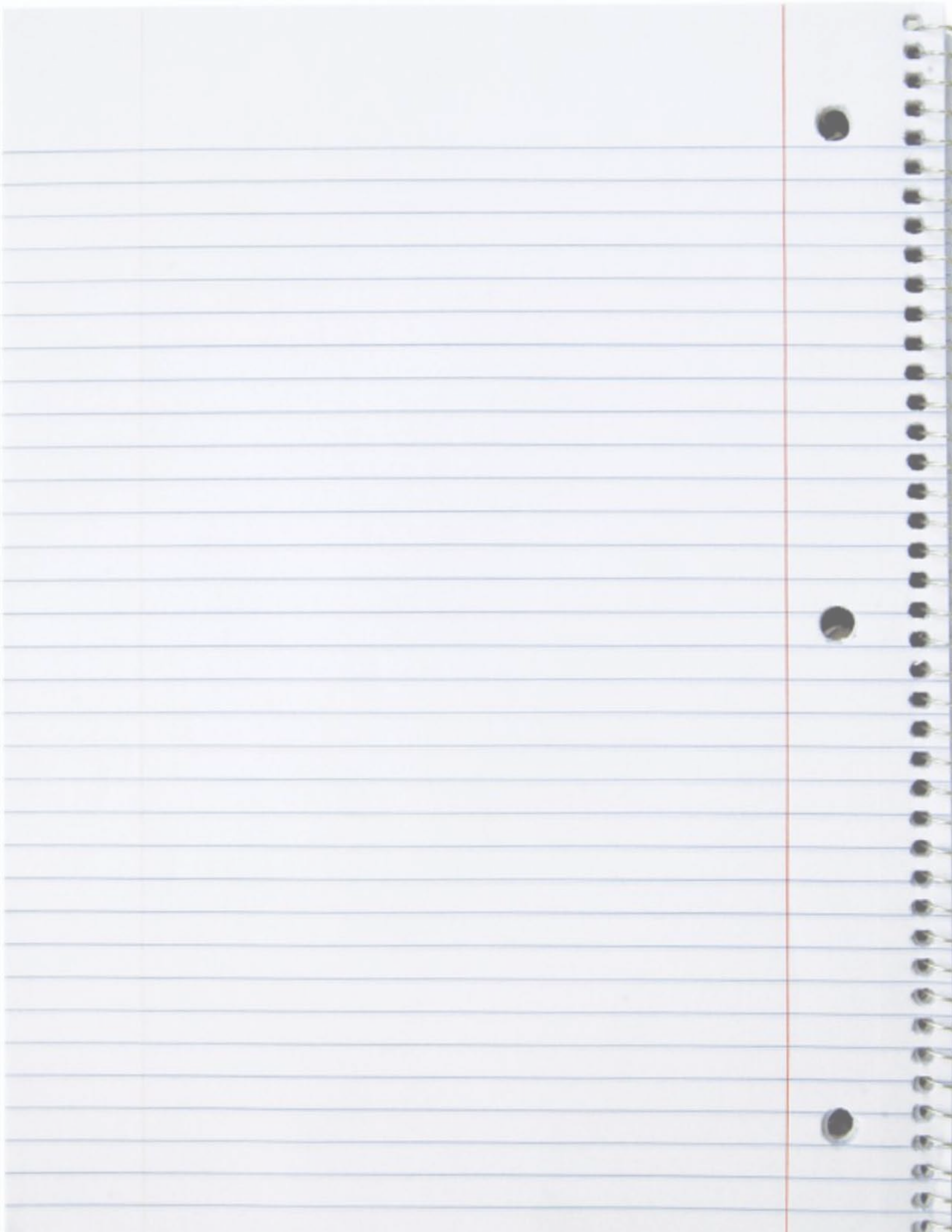
Options for Sexual Health (BC): <http://www.optionsforsexualhealth.org/>

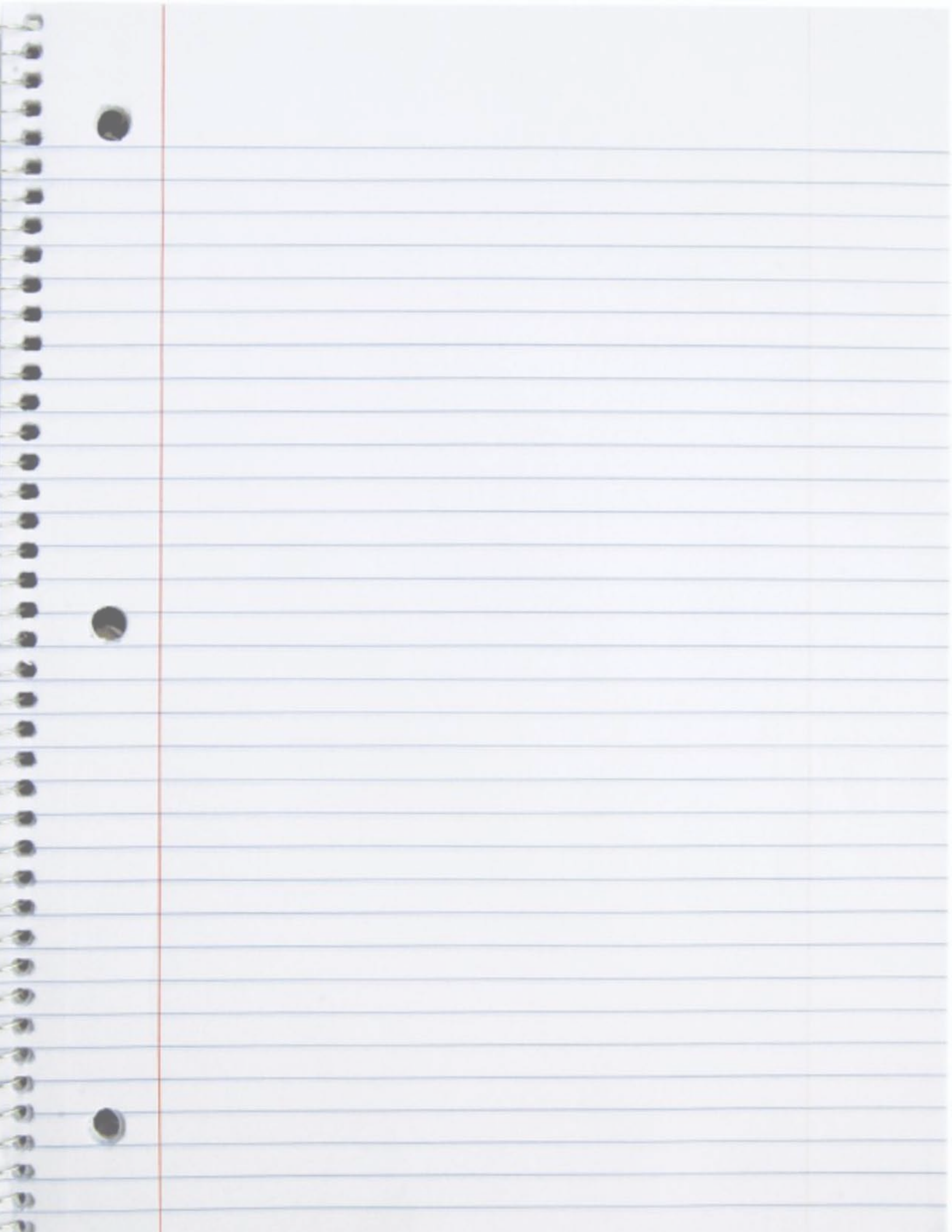
Teachingsexualhealth.ca: <http://www.teachingsexualhealth.ca/index.htm>

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PEOPLE WHO HAVE MANY EXCLUSIVE SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS IN A ROW, CALLED "SERIAL MONOGAMY", HAVE A HIGH RISK OF STIs. THIS IS BECAUSE IN MANY OF THESE RELATIONSHIPS NEITHER PARTNER IS TESTED FOR STIs. YOU DON'T KNOW IF YOU OR YOUR PARTNER HAS AN STI BUT BECAUSE YOU'RE BOTH HAVING SEX ONLY WITH EACH OTHER YOU MIGHT STOP USING CONDOMS. IF YOU HAVE MANY RELATIONSHIPS LIKE THIS WITHOUT BEING TESTED YOU ARE STILL AT HIGH RISK OF GETTING AN STI (MCKAY, 2004, P. 76).







# SEXUAL HEALTH TOOLKIT PART I



National Aboriginal Health Organization (NAHO)  
Organisation nationale de la santé autochtone (ONSA)  
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