

# Sexually Transmitted Infections & the Filipino community in Canada

- The National Institute of STIs of the Vietnamese Ministry of Health recorded 202,856 cases of new STIs in Vietnam in 2006. However, the actual number of cases must be much higher as many patients went to private doctors and pharmacists who did not report to the Ministry of Health.<sup>1</sup>
- In 2001, out of a population of 82,662,800, the persons infected with syphilis were 21,2732, gonorrhea 243,1253, and chlamydia 1,215,629.<sup>4</sup>
- In Ho Chi Minh City there were 6,224 new cases of HPV infection, and 3,334 patients died from HPV in 2002.<sup>5</sup>
- The infection rates for men having sex with men (MSM) were higher. In 2005, 11.5% and 5.4% in Ha Noi had rectal gonorrhea and rectal chlamydia, respectively with lower rates in Ho Chi Minh City at 6.7% and 3.8%, respectively.<sup>6</sup>
- In 2006, syphilis, gonorrhea, and chlamydia rates were analyzed in female sex worker (FSWs) in two large cities of Vietnam, Ha Noi and Ho Chi Minh City<sup>6</sup>, as follows:

	Syphilis	Gonorrhea	Chlamydia
Ha Noi:	1.09%	17.5%	1.8%
Ho Chi Minh:	9.06%	0.3%	6.4%

- There is a high prevalence of infection with HPV 16 and/or 18 (that cause cancer) in Vietnam, and cervical cancer is the most frequently diagnosed cancer among women in southern Vietnam where its incidence is the highest observed in the world.
- Cervical cancer ranks as the 4th highest cause of female cancer in Vietnam and the 2nd most common cancer in women between 15 to 44 years of age.<sup>7</sup>
- Diagnostic tests for treatable STIs are largely unavailable in Vietnam. Where the testing is available, it is often expensive and geographically inaccessible. Therefore, STI treatment usually relies on symptom management which is not reliable and repeat infections after treatment are common.

- WHO has reported drug resistance to antibiotics used to treat gonorrhea. This may have been due to treatment based on symptoms at many healthcare levels.<sup>6</sup>

## HIV/STIs Co-infection

A study published by the Vietnamese Ministry of Health concluded that:

- Individuals with STIs seem to get HIV infection easily, especially if they have ulcers.
- Those who have HIV are more easily infected by STIs, and these cases are even more difficult to treat because their immunity is reduced.
- HIV is also more easily transmitted from one person to another if one or both of them have STI. The rate of infection increases by 2 to 9 times in these cases.
- Furthermore, those having STIs without skin lesions are also more susceptible to HIV because their genital discharge contains more white blood cells where HIV invades and multiplies.
- Cases of STIs without skin lesions also occur more frequently and more attention should be paid to these cases when checking for co-infections.

## Government Control Strategy for STIs:

Descriptions of causes, incubation period, symptoms, personal and public preventative measures, and treatment methods for STIs are prepared in Vietnamese and published by the Ho Chi Minh City Public Health Institute.

A website was set up by the Preventative Medical Association of Vietnam (Hội Y học dự phòng Việt Nam) on September 8, 2012 to receive and disseminate information on HPV. It included the factors affecting the spread of chlamydia and other STIs and the detrimental effects of these diseases on individuals, and presents the goals of preventative programs.

References  
 1. <http://www.dalieu.vn/chia-se-chuyen-mon/chia-se-chuyen-mon-cung-dong-nghiep/4-T%E1%BB%95ng-quan-v%E1%BB%81-nhi%E1%BB%85m-tr%C3%B9ng-LTQ%C4%90TD-v%C3%A0-HIV-AIDS-t%E1%BA%11-Vi%E1%BB%87t-Nam.html> 2. <http://www.rightdiagnosis.com/s/syphilis/stats-country.htm> 3. <http://www.rightdiagnosis.com/g/gonorrhea/stats-country.htm> 4. <http://www.rightdiagnosis.com/c/chlamydia/stats-country.htm> 5. <http://tudu.com.vn/vn/y-hoc-thuong-thuc/suc-khoe-phu-nu/benh-phu-khoa-ung-thu-co-tu-cung-va-nhiem-human-papillomavirus/> 6. WHO-Western Pacific Region. 2012 HIV and sexually transmitted infections in the Western Pacific Region 2000-2010. Manila, Philippines: 7. [www.hpvcentre.net/statistics/reports/VIET\\_FS](http://www.hpvcentre.net/statistics/reports/VIET_FS) (2014)



# Some facts about sexually transmitted infections

## What are Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI's)?

STIs are infections which are passed from one person to another through sexual contact, such as vaginal, anal, and oral sex.

### What are the most common STIs?

Among the most common STIs are the human papilloma virus (HPV), human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), syphilis, gonorrhoea, and chlamydia.

### What are the symptoms of STIs?

The majority of STIs have no symptoms. Some symptoms that may occur are: unusual discharge from genital organs, genital ulcers, abdominal pain, unusual bleeding, etc.

### How are STIs spread?

Some are spread by skin-to-skin sexual contact or through non-sexual means like body fluids (blood, semen, and vaginal and anal fluids), blood products, etc.; or transmitted from mother to child.

### Who is at risk of getting STIs?

Behaviours that increase the risk of getting an STI are:

- Having unprotected sexual contact
- Sharing drugs or drug-related equipment with someone who has an STI.
- Sharing sex toys without using protection.

### Is there a treatment for STIs?

STIs caused by bacteria (syphilis, gonorrhoea, and chlamydia) can be treated and cured. STIs caused by viruses (HIV and HPV) usually cannot be cured, but they can be treated and managed.

### Are STIs preventable diseases?

Yes, by adopting the following behaviours:

- Practice safer sex.
- Never share drugs or drug-related equipment.
- Always use a condom with shared sex toys.
- Get tested.
- Abstinence is the ONLY sure way to prevent getting most of the STIs.

### What are the tests for STIs?

- Visual inspection.
- Blood test.
- Urine test.
- A swab taken from the genital organs, or other areas of the body where there may be sores.

### What can people do to live well with STIs?

- Practice safer sex.
- Get tested regularly.
- Implement lifestyle changes, eating a well-balanced diet, exercising regularly.

### STIs Co-infection:

*Co-infection is when a person has more than one infection at a time.*

- Some STIs increase the risk of acquiring HIV by approximately three times.
- STIs can be more virulent when the infected person has HIV.
- People living with HIV are at a greater risk of getting some STIs.
- Approximately 10-40% of the adults seeking treatment for STIs show evidence of a past or current hepatitis B infection.
- The presence of HIV and/or other STIs has been known to increase the risk of transmission of hepatitis C virus.

*Co-infections can be treated and treatment options should be discussed with a doctor.*

### Where to go for more information:

Healthcare providers, public health departments, healthcare clinics in communities, and websites of World Health Organization ([www.who.int/tb/data](http://www.who.int/tb/data)) and Public Health Agency of Canada ([www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/std-mts/](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/std-mts/)).

Getting tested is the only way to know your status. There are effective treatments, and they work best when started early.

For more information, please consult the Canadian Ethnocultural Council website: [www.ethnocultural.ca/HepC](http://www.ethnocultural.ca/HepC)

The information provided in the fact sheet is for reference only. For specific medical concerns, please seek advice from a medical practitioner.